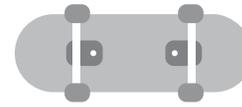


## It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

As a parent, you want to invest your time in things that matter. Like having the right conversation with your child at the right time, with the right things to say at your fingertips. These conversation guides will help you navigate the critical issues you face at each phase, as you imagine the end for your child. They are based on research from **The Phase Project**, a collaborative, ongoing effort assembling classic and innovative research with practical application.



**Middle School**

# SEXUAL INTEGRITY

## PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

. . . for intentional conversations with kids

Your middle schooler is changing fast. Changing their friends, changing their style, changing their interests, and yes—changing physically. As with any change, you have three options. You can resist it, and inevitably fail. You can ignore it, and become increasingly disconnected. Or you can talk about it, and probably suffer a fair amount of eye rolls. During this phase, your role is to...

**INTERPRET**

what is  
changing



So they will . . .

**RESPECT THEMSELVES  
& GROW IN CONFIDENCE**

This guide is designed to help you meet your middle schooler where they are now, giving you some words to say and not to say as you navigate the critical issue of sexual integrity. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal in mind:

**SEXUAL INTEGRITY**

**Guarding my potential for intimacy through appropriate  
boundaries and mutual respect**

## WHAT TO SAY:

"I'm so glad you asked me. "

"Thank you for telling me. You will never get in trouble for talking to me about that." (*Encourage conversation through your words, tone and body language.*)

"I think it would be good for us to talk about this again sometime. Is that okay?" (*Keep the lines of communication open.*)

"You are becoming a beautiful lady/handsome young man."  
(*Give authentic, positive affirmation and affection to the point of embarrassment.*)

"Don't be afraid to talk to a boy/girl. Treat them like you would a friend, and treat them with respect."

"How do your friends talk about the opposite sex? What are some words that would be more respectful?" (*Refine the vocabulary and promote respect for each other*)

Read books like *Teaching Your Children Healthy Sexuality* by Jim Burns to help you answer questions about sex in detail.

### **Start to discuss relationship values by using phrases like these:**

"Honor God with your body."

"Don't let anyone or anything control you."

"Guard your heart."

"Your interest in girls/boys is probably growing and your hormones are kicking in. Creating and deciding on a few boundaries now is an important way to help you make wise decisions. Let's come up with a few of those together."

"Let's talk about a few ways you can respond if you ever get into an uncomfortable situation."

"Looking at, watching, or talking about sex in disrespectful ways dishonors the way God created it to be—a private, intimate part of marriage."

If you haven't yet, inform your child about how both boys and girls bodies will change as they get older and mature. (*Consider covering these topics: body odor, growth spurts, breast/testicular development, growth of hair, menstruation/vaginal discharge and wet dreams.*)

## WHAT NOT TO SAY:

"We don't need to talk about that."

"You're not supposed to be thinking about things like that."

"Don't worry, right now you're just in an awkward phase."

"Remember, kissing a boy will get you pregnant." (Don't tease or give inaccurate information.)

"Why aren't you dating anyone?"

Nothing.

Make sure to involve professional counselors as needed, as well as your ministry leaders.

## JUST REMEMBER

Every PHASE is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The middle school years are the years to affirm their personal journey. Remember, they may not always act like it, but they need you now more than ever. Encourage their questions by being available and relaxed. Keep your cool if a question catches you off guard and be sure and take what they say and how they feel seriously. Keep the conversation going by staying curious about their world and what concerns them.