

Guidance for using Parent Engagement Conversation Starters in Prevention Education.

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These “Conversation Starters” are available in various formats for prevention educators to use as an outreach and educational tool in your communities. These may be posted on your website, on social media, in a PowerPoint presentation and/or as physical handouts.

The conversation starters are intended to be used as prompts for parents and others involved in the lives of children and youth to help with initiating open conversations about various aspects of dating. They are a way to explore concepts and norms regarding what makes a healthy versus an unhealthy relationship. While discussing what dating abuse and coercion look like, and the tactics often used, cyberstalking is an example that most young people can relate to.

Keep in mind that conversations should focus on promoting the positive behaviors we want to see young people adopt around respectful flirting, consent, fostering equitable and respectful relationships.

Consider how you might intentionally reach out and engage fathers in culturally responsive ways. These conversation starters were strategically written for use by all parents, caregivers, and other adults who have children and young people in their sphere of influence. However, NYSCADV acknowledges that often, in our current social context and for most of the general population, there is an assumption that mothers are the ones talking with youth about dating and flirting, etc. As you work with these conversation starters you may want to further develop and adapt them to use in your communities based on different contexts. We encourage you to find approaches that explicitly reach out to and speak to fathers and father figures within the cultural and community context you are working in.

As you engage parents in conversations about “how” to talk with their child(ren) about dating, you can also educate them on “why” having these conversations is so important. It is widely considered a protective factor for preventing dating abuse and establishing healthy norms to invite children and young people to share their thoughts and feelings on these matters and for parents and other respected adults to listen and engage in a discussion without judgement. It is recommended that prevention educators encourage parents to offer the suggested conversation and then remain quiet – allowing their child(ren) to fill in the silence. They may be surprised how much they learn.

As you engage dads, keep in mind that social norms have generally dictated that mothers and female caregivers are responsible for engaging in these discussions. When dads take the lead with some of these conversations, it sends a powerful message to their children- regardless of their gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation- that it is everyone’s responsibility to care about relationships!

There are plenty of opportunities to engage in conversations about healthy, respectful, and equitable flirting and dating with our kids. Invite and encourage dads to start these conversations in settings and during times that are comfortable. Dads can seize the moment whether they are on the basketball court, driving, working in the yard, preparing meals in the kitchen, or working on a project together.

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These Conversation Starters were developed as part of NYSCADV’s “Because We’re Dads” Initiative. For more information and to see more resources, go to <https://www.nyscadv.org/what-we-do/prevention-toolkit/because-were-dads.html>.