

Fathers See Talk With Teens About Sex as Part of Their Role, but It's Not an Easy Task

By Jennifer Grossman, Ph.D., and Amanda Richer, M.A.

We interviewed 43 fathers, 16 mothers, and 22 teens. Here's some information about the fathers:

- 81% biological fathers, 12% step-fathers, 7% adoptive fathers
- 37% white, 33% Black, 23% Latino, 5% Asian, 2% Middle Eastern
- 49% college degree, 19% some college, 21% high school diploma, 9% some high school, 2% no response



Do fathers talk with their teens about dating, sex, and relationships?

74% do

- 38% felt very comfortable talking about it
- 29% felt pretty comfortable talking about it
- 29% felt a little uncomfortable talking about it
- 5% felt not comfortable at all

“I think that [an intervention program] will be a great help because I’m strong and I’m blunt and I’m straightforward and all that. But some of those conversations, I just can’t jump in like that. Like, I don’t want to talk about sex... I don’t want to have those conversations, but I know they are necessary.”

Barriers to talk

- Fathers and teens feel uncomfortable with talk or avoid it
- Fathers think teens are not yet ready or interested in dating or sex
- Hard to start conversations—fathers feel unprepared or don’t know what to say

90% of fathers

would be very or somewhat open to a program that helps them talk with their teens about these topics

What should a program to support father/teen talk look like?

- Focus on peer learning, sharing with other fathers
- Have a leader with similar background or experience to participants
- Provide clear and simple information
- Cover *how* to talk with teens about sex and relationships, e.g., how to start a conversation



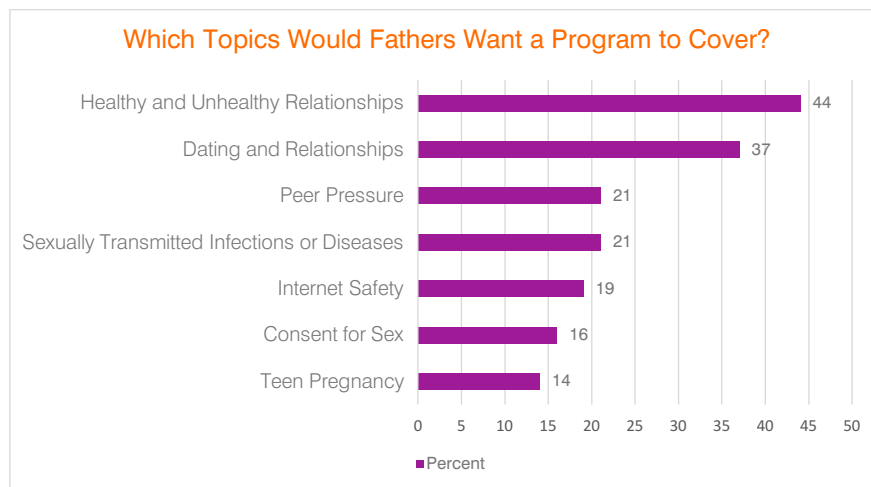
Fathers wanted programs that offer opportunities to learn from each other:

“Having that ability to talk to a dad as a friend, nonjudgmental, gonna listen to me and just be able to say, ‘Dude, I’m running into this. I don’t know how to talk to my son or daughter about sex.’”

Fathers wanted programs to cover *how* to talk to teens:

“Something that gives you discussion topics or, you know, different tactics to initiate these discussions . . . More tricks, more tools, more things to help to get the conversation going . . . things to ease awkwardness.”

Key Findings: **Fathers see talk with teens about sex as part of their role, but it’s not an easy task.** Fathers’ feedback highlights their openness to an intervention and can guide the development of a peer-based, interactive program that addresses what topics to discuss and how to talk with teens about sex.



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