



## ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE... AND SOME ADVICE TO STAY SAFE

Remember your first love... the butterflies in the stomach and the excitement? If your teen is in love, he is probably floating on cloud nine and riding a rollercoaster of emotions. Are you concerned about your teenager's love life? You would like to help but don't know how?

Well, don't worry as you are not alone! Without invading your teen's privacy you can provide him with the tools he may need in order to face potential risks that may come with falling in love.



Here are some useful tips that will help you guide your teen towards developing a healthy and safe love life:

- **Remind your teen that even when in love, he always has rights:**
  - ✓ To be respected: respect is the foundation of a healthy relationship!
  - ✓ To keep one's identity: you can have different friends and activities;
  - ✓ To privacy: to enjoy being together with one's partner without the scrutiny of others;
  - ✓ To set his own limits: saying « no » being free to change one's mind (even after agreeing to be sexually intimate);.
  - ✓ To feel safe and protected at all times.
- **Respect your teen:** Avoid sharing your child's private stories with family and friends. In order to maintain your teen's trust, it is important to respect his privacy as well as his personal choices without being judgmental or too harsh. Your teen may not necessarily want the entire family to know she just exchanged her very first kiss or that she has started using contraception.
- **Don't take anything for granted:** Although teens have access to a lot more information nowadays, don't hesitate to talk to yours about sexuality, contraception or sexually transmitted infections. You also need to set ground rules for your home. For instance, what would you say if your son asked if his girlfriend can spend the night?
- **Keep the lines of communication open:** If your child is convinced that you will say NO! everytime he asks for something, it may prevent him from confiding in you or stop him from asking for your permission. However, you still need to set limits so that your teen knows which rules still apply as long as he lives under your roof!

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- **Teach your teen to recognize warning signs:** There may be ups and downs in a relationship but mutual respect should always be a constant. Without respect, the relationship becomes unhealthy. Here are some warning signs that may indicate it might "not be love after all":
  - ✓ Jealousy: This is not a healthy sign of one's love!
  - ✓ Derogatory words or actions that damage one's self-esteem;
  - ✓ Excessive control : Always telling his partner what to wear, where to go, which friends to see, etc.;
  - ✓ Threats: Saying they will hurt people close to you or threatening suicide if you break up with them;
  - ✓ Spreading rumors: Saying hurtful things about you in order to damage your reputation;
  - ✓ Harassment : Especially after a break-up for instance;
  - ✓ Telling lies: For example, pretending to be pregnant to stay in a relationship.

Adolescence is a period of tumultuous change and at times you may feel as though your child is living on another planet! Your teenager is seeking his own identity on his way to adulthood and in order to do so, may distance himself from the family. Now, more than ever, it is crucial to keep an open line of communication and to help him verbalize his emotions. By recognizing his feelings, it will help him make safe choices and seek help when needed.

### Useful resources

**Tel-Jeunes - 1 800 263-2266**  
[www.teljeunes.com](http://www.teljeunes.com)

**Ligne Parents - 1 800 361-5085**  
[www.ligneparents.com](http://www.ligneparents.com)

**Project 10 (LGBT\*Q helpline) - 514 989-4585**  
<http://p10.qc.ca/>

**Grossesse-Secours - 514 271-0554**  
[www.grossesse-secours.org](http://www.grossesse-secours.org)

Remember, you don't have to go through this alone ... if you require additional information or assistance, please don't hesitate to contact us or visit our website at [www.missingchildrensnetwork.ngo](http://www.missingchildrensnetwork.ngo)

