



# TAKE CARE

HEALTHY TIPS  
FOR  
SPRING

Spring means birds singing, flowers blooming, warmer weather and families wanting to spend time outside. We all look forward to this time of year after a long, cold winter. Here are a few tips for a successful and healthy spring season.



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## Developmental Stages of Adolescence Topic 2: What to expect and how to deal during adolescence

### Emotional Evolutions and Sexual Stirrings

Dr. Jennifer Salerno

*In my last article, I unpacked normal behaviors that occur during the stages of adolescent's physical and cognitive development and what to watch out for—drawing from two very important chapters in my book, Teen Speak, A How-To Guide For Real Talks with Teens about Sex, Drugs and Other Risky Behaviors. In this article, I hope to help you understand how physical and cognitive development influences emotional and sexual development.*

There reaches a point in parenthood where your child crosses the bridge of wanting to hangout with their friends rather than with you. Your coveted afternoon dates to the park are replaced with going to Jessica's house. "What does Jessica have that I don't?" Even though we knew this day was coming, it seems way too soon.

As a mother of two young adults, who have nearly outgrown their teen years, I've been there. It can be difficult to watch your teen become completely infatuated with friends, dating, school activities—essentially anything other than hanging out with you. It's one of the most significant normal changes in emotional development in teens: the sudden shift from the world revolving around family to revolving around friends. If you know why this is happening and how to handle these behaviors, it will make the process much less painful. I promise.

### Emotional Development: What you need to know

During adolescence, you will notice key indicators that your teen is developing emotionally by them:

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- becoming more independent;
- developing close relationships with people outside of their families;
- and developing an increased need and capacity for intimacy (feeling close to another person).

With these newfound traits comes the vulnerability of peer pressure. While friends have a tremendous influence on a teen's day-to-day choices—like clothing or music—**research shows that having family members who teens feel connected to is even more important during adolescence than at any other time**, and has a more powerful effect on their basic values and decisions than you might think.

### Keeping the spark alive with family time

Even though it feels like spending time with you is at the bottom of your teen's priority list, it's a critical time to stay connected. Keep fighting the good fight! This is where family time becomes so important. Eat family dinners together when you can, plan outings for just you and your teen (an offer of shopping is hard for teens to resist), plan a weekend getaway. Some of the best conversations I had with my own teens about life, risky situations, and future goals have been after we have settled in somewhere for the weekend, at dinners that weren't rushed to get somewhere else, on longer drives (while my husband sits in the backseat with one of our kids and the other one sits up front with me), or while watching a TV show or movie. Be sure to create expectations for family time with no distractions—like putting cell phones in another room.

### Sexual development: what you need to know

Sometime around the stage where your son or daughter's world revolves around their friends, sexual development and changing sexual desires becomes prominent.

#### Healthy sexual development is the combination of:

- **Physical development of sexual characteristics**—enlarged breasts for girls and enlarged penis and testicles for boys.
- **Age-appropriate sexual behaviors**—kissing, touching.
- **The formation of a positive sexual identity**—who they are attracted to romantically.
- **A sense of sexual well-being**—a combination of developed sexual characteristics and positive decisions about sexual behaviors.

The undeniable truth is that teens will find opportunities to engage in sexual activities if they choose. A teen's decisions about sex are dependent on several factors, including:

- **Personal readiness.** Predetermined decisions about what sexual activities they will participate (or not participate) in prior to having the opportunity. The more teens think about what they are going to do in a given situation, the more likely they will follow through with this plan.
- **Family standards.** Discussions of expectations related to sexual behaviors.

- **Past exposure to sexual abuse.** Teens who have been abused are more likely to engage in sexual activities.
- **Peer pressure.** Friends' and partner's feelings about sex.
- **Religious values.** Strong internalized values of chastity will delay initiation of sexual activities.
- **Having the opportunity.** Having a willing partner and somewhere to go. Most commonly this is an empty house between the hours when school ends and a parent gets home from work.

### "The talk"

Guiding teens toward making healthy decisions about sex can be difficult. It can be an emotionally charged discussion, especially if you feel strongly that your son or daughter should wait to have sex. The more you use the common tactic of telling your son or daughter not to have sex, the more likely that they will want to do it. The best approach is to start early and talk about it often!

While there are many strategies that I coach parents and professionals communicating with adolescents on, the biggest advice I can offer is this: encourage your teen to love and value themselves. You may think they love themselves a little too much sometimes, but what they are portraying on the outside is often not what they are feeling inside. Teens struggle with their identity and all of the changes happening during puberty. This causes them to devalue or get down on themselves. When teens understand, accept and value themselves, they are less likely to engage in unsafe sex.

Guiding your teen through sexual and emotional development can be complicated. But understanding what your teen is going through and learning how to talk with your teen about potential risky situations and behaviors is extremely important. In my next article, I will explore strategies for talking with your teen about risk behaviors using the motivational interviewing approach.

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# Building Resilience: How to Start Conversations about Challenges

*Dr. Kristan Collins, MD, Broadway Medical Clinic, Portland, OR*

Remember that each challenge in your child's life can be a "stumbling block" or a "building block". Even though it hurts to see your child sad and in a difficult situation, you can best help them by teaching them to how handle life's challenges. Bouncing back from each tough problem builds confidence and skill to handle the next. When your child is faced with a challenge...

## Step 1:

- Sit and visit with your child about these events. Hear their version of what happened. Listen to their side of things. Everyone wants to feel heard.
- Clearly ask your child how these events made them feel. Helping your child understand their emotions is the key to moving forward.

## Step 2:

- Together talk about actions your child can take that move him away from the unhappy or frustrated feelings. These may be small steps. But help them see that they don't have to stay in an unhappy place.
- It's OK for adults to help work toward a solution. However, a caregiver's role should avoid taking over. Everyone should have their own jobs.

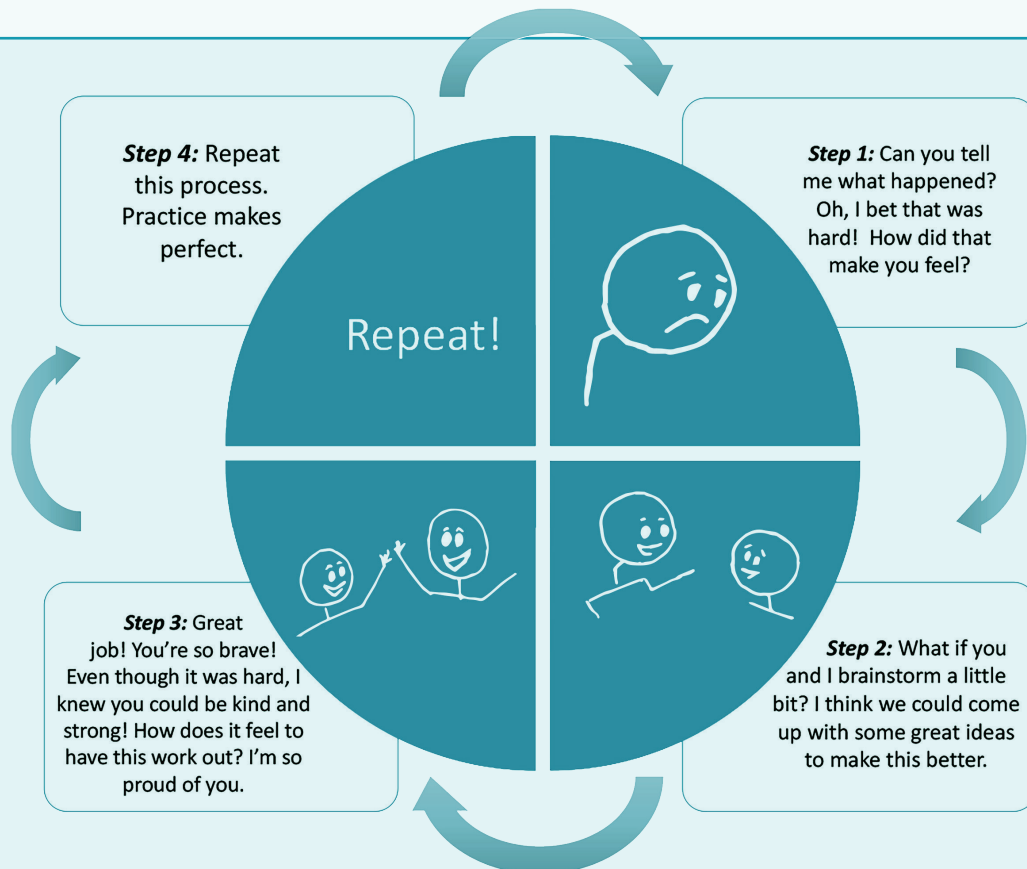
## Step 3:

- When your child is able to take action on these steps, celebrate them!
- Remember it is not important to fix the problem, but it is important that your child believes they have some control to make the situation better.

- Celebration and praise work best when you cheer on your child's strengths. Name those skills along with saying "good job". That's what they remember.
- Avoid pointing out weaknesses or failure. Your child knows what isn't working. Pointing out failure is less likely to help your child be brave and strong in the future.

## Step 4:

- Repeat!
- Practice makes perfect. The more you and your child work through these steps, the more confident they will become. They will soon realize they don't have to be stuck in a bad situation.
- Keep reinforcing their strengths. Remember it is easier to believe in yourself when someone believes in you.
- Bring on the hugs and "high fives". Your loving touch is the exclamation point on your positive words.





# Hard Facts About Helmets

If you like recreational activities that involve wheels, concrete or asphalt, then protect your brain by wearing a helmet. Helmets with a CPSC approval are good for biking and in-line skating and are available in most sporting goods stores. “Multi-sport” helmets with a Snell B-95 approval are designed for skateboarding, roller-skating, and riding scooters as well as biking and in-line skating. Snell B-95 rated helmets provide more protection but you may have to check out more stores to find one.

Your helmet should sit flat on your head — make sure it is level and is not tilted back or forward. The front of the helmet should sit low — about two finger widths above your eyebrows to protect your forehead. The straps on each side of your head should form a “Y” over your ears, with one part of the strap in front of your ear, and one behind — just below your earlobes. If the helmet leans forward, adjust the rear straps. If it tilts backward, tighten the front straps. Buckle the chinstrap securely at your throat so that the helmet feels snug on your head and does not move up and down or from side to side.

## TEN BIKE TRAILS TO TRY IN THE PORTLAND/VANCOUVER/SALEM AREA

- |                                 |                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Marine Drive Bike Trail      | 6. Fanno Creek Trail        |
| 2. Springwater Corridor         | 7. Edgewater Trail          |
| 3. Willamette Greenway Trail    | 8. Riverfront Trail         |
| 4. Leif Erickson Drive          | 9. Burnt Bridge Creek Trail |
| 5. Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade | 10. Salmon Creek Greenway   |

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## HELMETS...FACT OR FICTION?

**Fiction: Helmets aren't cool.**

**Fact:** Who says helmets can't be cool? If you're shopping for a helmet, there are lots of options, so you can pick out your favorite color. Or decorate your helmet with stickers and reflectors to show your personal style. Helmets are designed to help prevent injuries to your head, 'cause a serious fall or crash can cause permanent brain damage or death. And that's definitely not cool.

**Fiction: Helmets just aren't comfortable.**

**Fact:** Today's helmets are lightweight, well ventilated, and have lots of padding. Try on your helmet to make sure it fits properly and comfortably on your head before you buy it.

**Fiction: Really good riders don't need to wear helmets.**

**Fact:** Bike crashes or collisions can happen at any time. Even professional bike racers get in serious wrecks. In three out of four bike crashes, bikers usually get some sort of injury to their head.



## If I'm Allergic to Nuts, Can I Eat Coconut?

If you have a nut allergy, you need to talk to your doctor about what foods to avoid. Even though coconut isn't a nut, some people who are allergic to tree nuts (like almonds, cashews, and walnuts) are also allergic to coconut. But others are not.

So talk to your doctor to see if coconut is OK for you. Until then, avoid coconut.

You already know that you have to watch out for foods (like candy and desserts) that could have tree nuts in them (or could have come in contact with tree nuts). Coconut also can be found in lots of foods, so you'll have to be just as careful in order to avoid it if your doctor says you shouldn't eat it.

And always make sure to wash your hands before eating and have your emergency epinephrine injector with you.

