

Kristin B. Hodson

Sex Positivity and Your Values

You can have a sex positive family without compromising your values!

Two friends, Ellie and Allie, were raised in religious homes where they learned the importance of waiting until marriage to have sex. Both girls embraced the value for themselves and chose to wait, even when many of their friends began experimenting. Now young adults, each friend is engaged to be married.

Ellie's parents never talked openly about sex, but at church and home she learned how important it was to be chaste and dress modestly to avoid trouble. She understood God and her future husband would be disappointed if she lost her virginity and was determined to remain pure and worthy – for herself and for them. She was uncomfortable when boys noticed her body and felt guilty for disappointing them when she defended her boundaries, but feeling worthy for her future husband was important to her, so she never gave in.

Now engaged, Ellie is nervous about having sex for the first time. She asks her close friends what it was like to lose their virginity and is relieved to hear that sex isn't really like the porn she saw by accident – but she is worried she won't measure up to her husband's expectations. She knows sex is an important part of marriage and wants to satisfy her husband, so she decides to focus on his needs and work out her own feelings and desires after they begin their life together.

Allie's family shared the same values and attended the same church, but her parents took a different approach. As a girl she learned to talk openly

about her body, to ask questions without feeling embarrassed, and to view puberty as an exciting milestone. Her parents went out of their way to include sexuality in regular conversation – they discussed movie scenes and online content that seemed to contradict their family's values, talked openly about masturbation, desire, and birth control, and taught Allie how to defend her boundaries with confidence.

Allie is excited to get married and create a sexual connection with her husband. She isn't sure exactly what to expect, but since sex has never been a taboo topic, she and her fiancé have already agreed to talk openly and figure things out as they go. She doesn't think about losing her virginity on her wedding night, because in her sexual framework there is no concept of loss, only an exciting new beginning. For Allie, sex isn't dirty, mysterious, or devious – she expects it to be a fun and exciting addition to their relationship.

Which path would you choose for your daughter?

Parenting is not easy, and preparing children for healthy sexuality in the midst of so many conflicting messages can feel especially daunting. We have the best intentions but often don't recognize how easy it is to introduce fear and shame when we opt out of open conversations about sex.

You want something better for your children and you are better prepared than you think you are! It is never too early or too late to nurture healthy sexuality in your home.

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Sex-Positive Parenting

10 Sex-Positive Strategies That Fit Your Values

1. Practice Makes Comfortable

There are no perfect conversations, but talking about bodies, values, sex, emotions, and relationships becomes easier every time you practice. You won't get it right every time – every conversation is practice for the next one.

2. Embrace Tiny Moments

The internet isn't waiting for you to find the perfect moment to have The Talk. The goal should be to have one million one-minute conversations, not one awkward talk. You can start right now.

3. Identify Your Family Values

What are your family's five fundamental values? Write them down, refer to them often, and talk about them with your kids and your partner. Your values can become the framework for your conversations about sex.

4. Be Glad They Asked

Kids are naturally curious, and they're also careful observers. If their questions make you tense they'll learn to stop asking, but they won't stop being curious. Treat every question – about their body, your tampon, or a dance on TV – as a gift. You want them to keep asking!

5. Surrender to the Sexual Lexicon

You know the words your parents avoided: vulva, vagina, penis, scrotum. Practice these words out loud until you can say them calmly. Make eye contact with that mirror until you stop blushing. Then you'll be able to teach your children there is no shame in using to correct language for their amazing bodies.

6. Be Body Positive

Your child's first step probably felt like a miracle. Can you learn to view other changes the same way? Puberty, sex, pleasure, menstruation – when we remember how amazing the human body is we can see change for the miracle it is.

7. Never Stop Growing

Maybe you didn't handle a question very well, or maybe your child just doesn't seem to get it. When that happens, remember the simple word, "yet." Instead of "I'll never be able to talk about sex without getting flustered," try, "I'm not an expert yet, but at least I didn't cry this time!" "Yet" is the only permission you need to keep teaching and keep learning.

8. Keep Planting Seeds

If we judge our garden by the number of plants we see the day after planting, we'll decide we're lousy gardeners. Just keep planting seeds and watering the conversations. The harvest always comes.

9. Think Bigger Than Sex

Sexual health includes boundaries, consent, emotions, anatomy, hygiene, healthy friendships, love, reproduction, sexual behavior and more. Start with a topic that isn't tricky for you.

10. See Opportunities, Not Problems

Remember when your parents were upset by cleavage on TV? Today's world will bring you endless teachable moments. View them as opportunities, not threats, and your child will see your values in action instead of learning to react emotionally.