

# **Top Ten Plays for Teaching Kids and Teens that Violence Never Equals Strength**

## **1. TALK OPENLY**

Encourage open, honest, and thoughtful reflection about relationships. Allow kids—especially boys—to express their ideas and expectations for the relationships in their life. Be careful not to dismiss their ideas as "wrong" or "childish." Rather, encourage dialogue—this will help them come to their own understanding through your guidance.

## **2. TAKE A CLEAR STAND.**

Make sure young people know how YOU feel about disrespect, use of abusive or inappropriate language, controlling behavior, or any forms of violence. If you were exposed to violence as you were growing up, try to recognize how that might be affecting your relationships. Know that there are resources available to help you heal and overcome some of the negative things you may be feeling.

## **3. BE SENSITIVE BUT FIRM.**

We know raising kids isn't easy—especially when it comes to helping him or her navigate their way through relationships. To be effective, you will need to prepare, not scare, kids about the relationships they may encounter. Respect differences of opinion and realize that the decisions you make will sometimes be unpopular with them. But, remember that they're always watching you—even if you don't realize it.

## **4. UNDERSTAND THE PRESSURE AND THE RISKS THAT TEENS FACE.**

Preteens and young teens, in particular, face new and increasing pressures about sex, substance abuse, bullying and dating. While they may not express it, young teens want to have their parents and role models take the time to listen—and help them sift through situations that they face.

## **5. MAKE THE MOST OF “TEACHABLE MOMENTS.”**

Use television episodes, movies, music lyrics, news, sports heroes, or the experiences of friends to discuss healthy and unhealthy relationships. If a professional athlete is found guilty of abusing a woman, for example, take the time to reinforce the message that even famous people are responsible for their actions.

## **6. KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “BYSTANDER” AND “UPSTANDER.”**

Teach young people how to speak up when they see or hear something that's not ok. They may defend their silence by explaining that they don't want to be a "snitch" or get involved. Explain that there are often safe ways to call out bad behavior, and that the lack of action can sometimes lead to even greater dangerous outcomes and abuses.

## **7. ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE.**

Conversations about relationships do not need to focus solely on risky, negative behavior. Take time to give positive feedback, too, when they make healthy choices in their dealings with friends and family.

## **8. YOUR LANGUAGE MATTERS.**

If kids hear you using slang or pejorative terms to describe women (e.g., babes, bitches, etc), they are very likely to model your behavior and your vocabulary. Put-downs and derogatory jokes may seem harmless, but in the grand scheme of things, they're not. Do your best to respect women with language that is empathetic, positive and appropriate.

## **9. NO MEANS NO.**

Pressuring someone to do something they don't want to do is not ok. This applies to both in-person situations, as well as digital correspondence. Teach young people that forcing someone to send provocative, embarrassing, or nude photos is wrong.

## **10. BE PREPARED TO MAKE MISTAKES.**

You will make mistakes. Accept that, but continue to help young people make responsible, smart choices while trying to maintain that delicate balance of being sensitive, but firm.

<http://teachearly.org/playbook-en.html>