

4 Ways to Coach Your Son Through the Dating Years

Your son is 13, and testosterone is running wild in this young man. He's changing mentally, physically and emotionally. The girls around him are too. His friends are dating, and he has an interest in it as well. The "fun" of fatherhood is about to begin!

Your son may be uncomfortable talking to Mom about what he's going through, so he looks to you. The stories I've heard my friends tell of conversations with their dads around this time are pretty ... let's say *strange*.

What are you going to say? How will you coach your son through the dating years? Here are four ways to coach your son through the dating years. And if you have a daughter, here's how to teach her the difference between boys and men.

1. Ongoing dialogue. When your son reaches this age, you begin to think of "the talk." But "the talk" implies one conversation will take care of it all. How wrong you are if you think that. "The talk" should be called "the talks" because they should be ongoing conversations and "counseling" sessions. Your son will have new experiences and feelings on a regular basis, and those will require new dialogue and new answers to his questions. Make sure you make it a point to discuss as much as needed.

2. Complete honesty. Don't talk about the birds and the bees. If you have to get a book to get the proper names and explanations, then do it. Have no pride in this. Also, be honest and open about your experiences—the good and the bad. This is also a good time to discuss the dangers and pitfalls of pornography that is introduced to many young men at this age.

3. Model it for him. Are you dating your wife, his mother, or someone else? When you do, make sure you speak to him about it. Share what you are doing. Share why you are excited or uneasy about something. Your example in dating and the dialogue about it will model the right way to date.

4. Discuss the future. Have real conversations about the consequences of sex—the possibility of STDs, pregnancy and ties to a person he may never have any plans to be with in the future. You don't want teenage boy "locker room" talk being his frame of reference for this.

The most important part to remember is your son needs a male, his dad, to be there during these new experiences and thoughts. Just like a coach does, work with him, encourage him and challenge him so he can be best prepared for this season.

Are your sons (or daughters) in this season? How comfortable do you feel about coaching them through this season?

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