

*Sue Atkins*  
The Parenting Expert

Parenting Made Easy System

**NAVIGATING THE CHOPPY WATERS OF  
THE TEENAGE YEARS**

**DAY 11: LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX**

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**In a nutshell** – Today, we are looking at one of life’s BIGGIES ... sex and relationships ...

*Welcome back!*

Coming to terms with your teenager’s or young adult’s love life and sexual identity is one of life’s BIGGIES! It’s perfectly common for parents to feel discomfort or embarrassment when talking about their growing child’s new experiences, so if that sounds like you then you are not alone!

You might worry about whether they are mature emotionally and physically, or are at risk, or have chosen the right person. And you may also resent the sense of rejection you feel as a parent, now that you are not the most important person in their life anymore.

Perhaps you even feel a little bit of envy creeping in too, as your child is experiencing all the excitement and intoxicating romance that perhaps have gone out your life?

If your teenager has chosen a partner of the same sex, you may find yourself experiencing mixed emotions of worry and anxiety – a useful website for advice is [www.fflag.org.uk](http://www.fflag.org.uk) which is especially for families and friends of lesbians and gays.

Just as your kids usually find the idea of their parents being romantic and sexually active distasteful, you probably don’t need to get involved in the up close and personal details of your teenager’s love life either. Not liking the partner your child has chosen is also quite common – after all, you probably have friends whose partners you don’t get on with. It’s true when they say that “love is blind” and so this is where you need to be mature and take the longer-term view.

My own Dad didn't tell me that he couldn't stand one of my boyfriends until years afterwards. He figured that if he made a fuss it would drive me away from my close relationship I had with him, and move me closer towards the boyfriend he didn't like. So he was non-judgemental and the relationship did fizzle out in time.

The secret is to get to know your teenager's boyfriend or girlfriend by making them feel welcomed but not overwhelmed.

## Now it's your turn!

Take out your pen and paper, and give some thought to the following questions:

- In what ways can you be naturally involved in supporting your teenager in their love-life that feels appropriate and nurturing?
- How can you discuss the issues that are worrying you?
- When is a good time to chat these through?
- How do you teach them about what makes a loving relationship?
- How can you make them aware of the dangers of drinking and sexual encounters?
- How can you make them aware of all the sexually transmitted diseases?
- How can you protect them from abusive or overtly controlling relationships?
- How can you come to terms with this new development in your parent-child relationship?
- How can you keep the lines of communication open?
- Who can you talk to about your worries, concerns or emotions?
- What does your partner feel about all these changes and how can you handle them together?

Your teenager is still the same person you have always loved, nurtured and guided and although their sexual identity is an important change in your relationship, it is only a small part of who they are – their personality, character, humour, and need for your love and reassurance are still the same – they still need your acceptance, guidance and love so make sure that you keep talking and sharing and “being there” for them. See this as an opportunity for natural growth and maturity, embrace the situation, and learn to relax. Bringing up children from toddler to teen is all about handling change and this phase is no exception!

# A Quick Recap

- It's entirely natural to feel worried and anxious when your child becomes sexually active.
- Ideally you want to welcome your teenager's partner, without making them feel overwhelmed.
- There's plenty of help, advice and support online.
- Your teenager is still the same person you have always loved, nurtured and guided

## Next time ...

We look at your teenager's peer groups, and consider the issues that can arise involving the friends that they choose to be with ...

*See you then!*



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