

PARENT Shift!

Experience Options

Normally these conversations work best with a parent of the same gender as the student, but that's not always the case. Marital status, the nature of your relationship with your children and other realities may make this a perfectly natural conversation for you to have with your child. Here are some ideas for environments in which to have this Parent Shift Experience.

1. Take-out food and a long conversation

Have a special night at home. Order a favorite food. Send others out for dinner and movie and stay home with your student. Get comfortable and enjoy the night.

2. Camping/Spa/whatever-they-love-to-do trip

Plan a day doing whatever your child loves to do. The bigger the memory the more likely the conversations you have will stick. Don't fill every second. Be sure to leave plenty of room for conversation.

3. Road trip

Create an adventure. Road trips are perfect opportunities for conversations because you're often on the road with plenty of time for discussion. It doesn't have to be far. It could be taking a trip an hour away meeting up with others. You could even meet up with others who are having a similar conversation with their children and make it a girls/guys day out.

Note: Don't let this be your only time to discuss. Make this experience a mile stone, but make sure you're having ongoing dialogue with your child. By eighth grade you should have already had conversations about this topic because chances are, your children have been talking about it with oth-

Start with Purpose

The goal of this experience is to create a vision for your student of God's plan for him/her and sex. Your student needs to know the goal is simply to abstain. It's to grow into the man/woman God is leading them to become. It's bigger than simply not having sex. The purpose of this Parent Shift Experience is to begin establish guardrails with a vision of what could be in mind. Begin by talking about what you hope and dream of your child and how their sexual identity and fits into that vision.

Share Your Story

Your middle schooler needs role models who are realistic, so share your story. You don't have to share every detail, but consider sharing enough of it so your student knows you understand what it's like to be their age and deal with thoughts, temptations, desires and impulses they're experiencing. One way to do this is by breaking our your old yearbooks, especially your middle-school ones. Look through those and try to recall your experiences.

"What is honest is this: chastity is God's very best for us. God created sex for marriage and that is where it belongs... Chastity might be instantly rewarding, but it doesn't always feel instantly rewarding, and, let' face it, we live in a therapeutic culture in which people often make decisions based on what seems to feel right to them at the time."

Lauren Winner, *Real Sex: The Naked Truth About Chastity*

Tips for How to Share Your Story:

1. Practice it out loud. You need to hear yourself say some things. Without practice, your story may become too long and you'll probably end up sharing more than you need to share.
2. Don't share any more details than needed to make a point. You don't have to tell everything.
3. Ask them if they have any questions about your story. Don't offer more than the answer to their question.
4. Don't make a joke out of it. Many will laugh or make light of something out of nervousness or places of hurt. Rehearsing your story, writing it down, will help if you find yourself nervous.
5. Use the good parts of your story to paint a picture about the good things you hope your student will experience and the bad parts of your story to talk about the things you hope they miss.

Ask how you can help

Ask your student, *“I’d love to hear how you think I/we can help you achieve God’s best for you. What can we do to encourage you?”*

Many students may not know exactly how to answer that question, so here are some things you can talk to your student about:

Technology

Talk about texting, social media, pictures, etc. Install filters or other deterrents. Don’t be afraid to talk about internet pornography. They’ve have already been exposed to it even if they haven’t looked at it themselves. Discuss how establishing these boundaries is intended to encourage them to embrace what God has for them.

Friendships

Your kids will encounter people who don’t embrace the same vision God has for their lives. Talk to them about how to handle those moments. Ask them how they’ve handled that so far.

Love

Begin now to paint a picture of what love is. Physical attraction and love are easily confused. Begin talking to your teen about this. Use Scripture, examples, stories.

Secrets

Emphasize the danger in keeping secrets. Talk about the importance of transparency and accountability. Make sure they know they should feel safe in this area if they fall short. Let them know that you love them unconditionally even if they make a mistake in this area.

End with a question, encouragement, and promise

As you end, make sure you let them know you would like to talk about this again. There are many resources available to continue this conversation. Scripture is always a terrific place to start. You could end saying something like, *“Since, we’ve already had this awkward conversation I hope that we can talk about these things more often. Mind if I check in from time to time?”*

Reaffirm your vision for them. Let them know it’s because you think they are so amazing that you’re having this conversation. This provides encouragement.

Finally, let them know you love them no matter what! You may have already said it, but reaffirm that promise.

