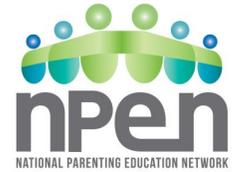




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Research Update for Professionals *Supportive Parenting & Adolescent Sexuality*

Selected Research Article:

Cox, R. B., Shreffler, K. M., Merten, M. J., Schwerdtfeger Gallus, K. L., & Dowdy, J. L. (2015). Parenting, peers, and perceived norms: What predicts attitudes toward sex among early adolescents? *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 35(1), 30-53. doi:110.1177/0272431614523131

What were they trying to find out?

- Early adolescents' attitudes toward sex have been established as an important predictor of sexual behavior, as have parent-child relationships, but few studies have examined which factors, like parenting, directly shape adolescent attitudes.

What did they do?

- Researchers measured supportive parenting, adolescents' endorsement of sex, sibling influence, and perceived social norms by surveying 1,736 seventh-grade students from an urban area.
- Supportive parenting is characterized by the adolescent's perception of frequent behavioral monitoring, open communication, and parental caring.

What did they find?

- Students who reported high levels of supportive parenting were significantly less likely to endorse the belief that it was normal for adolescents their age to have sex.
- For students who believed that sexual activity was normal at their age, parental support did not affect the strength of their belief.
- Students who perceived pregnancy as common in school, who were friends with someone who had become a teen parent, or who were a sibling of a teen parent were more likely to strongly endorse a favorable attitude toward sex at their age.

What does it mean for parenting educators?

- We want to inform parents about the benefits that supportive parenting (behavioral monitoring, open communication, and parental caring) may have for delaying sexual activity:
 - Stay engaged with your child's interests and other things that they find important (e.g. how their friends are doing, their favorite hobbies) and ask about their opinion often.
 - Be an askable parent! Let your child know that they can ask you questions about anything (e.g. talking about a friend's pregnancy, asking about birth control, discussing relationship problems) without fear of punishment or judgment, and follow through when questions arise.
 - Don't wait until your child asks about sex and dating to begin discussions about sexuality, safety, and setting personal boundaries. Use everyday occurrences, like a community member or television character getting pregnant, as opportunities to start conversations.

