

“What do you think sexual integrity is? Why do you think it matters?”

“What are some common ideas that a lot of high school students have about sex and dating?”

“Do you feel like he/she respects you?”

“What are some of your favorite things about (name of the person they’re interested in)?”

“Does the media you consume matter? If so, why? How can it affect you?”

“How do you think decisions around your sexual integrity might affect your future?”

“What is a boundary you can put in place to help you make a wise decision?”

“What are some ways we can honor the people we date or want to date?”

“Remember, anyone, regardless of history, can practice sexual integrity.”

“Thanks for telling me. This is a place where you can ask or talk about anything.”

## A Volunteer’s Guide to . . .

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# Talking About Sexual Integrity



with High Schoolers

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# How to Talk About Sexual Integrity

Coach high schoolers toward healthy relationships so they will establish personal boundaries and practice mutual respect.

→ Before we can talk about sexual integrity, we have to define it. Sexual integrity is guarding my potential for intimacy through appropriate boundaries and mutual respect.

Sex is ubiquitous in high school culture. Whether or not a student is having sex, they're hearing about it, talking about it, and seeing it in movies or on social media. Giving students a safe place to talk about sex with accurate information is key to helping them develop the wisdom and skills necessary to navigate this topic in their world.

**In this Phase . . .** As a volunteer, your role is to **mobilize their potential** by helping them develop the skills to decide for themselves how they'll treat themselves and others.

**High school students are motivated by freedom** and prone to push back on authority. So, help them come to their own decisions through asking good questions and reminding them that boundaries help us exercise more freedom.

## In Your Conversations . . .

### BEFORE

**Do your research.** Familiarize yourself with HOW teenagers talk about sex by asking what kinds of music they listen to, TV shows they watch, and YouTubers they subscribe to. Consider engaging in this content so you can understand what is influencing them and how they view this topic.

**Bring hope.** Are there any activities or illustrations that might be painful to a teenager with a history of sexual activity or sexual abuse? Be mindful that you don't know the personal history of every teenager and, as a leader, your job is to express hope for their future, not encourage shame for their past.

**Cue the parent.** Keep in mind, parents are VERY much involved in this conversation, so it's important to make parents aware of all conversations around this topic and give them tools to have conversations at home.

### DURING

**Demonstrate curiosity and openness.** Try not to make assumptions in the way you speak about sex in your group. Be open to understanding by asking clarifying questions and asking them to elaborate.

**Create a safe place.** Remember, it's never okay to make jokes at a person's expense (whether or not that person is in the room). Do not permit jokes in your group that degrade someone based on gender, sexuality, or sexual experiences.

### Coach them to think through outcomes.

At this phase, thinking about the future can be difficult, so help them verbally process how making different decisions can lead to various outcomes and consequences.

**Cue them to ask a parent.** By creating a safe place, you may find students asking questions. Remember, you don't have to answer every question. In fact, sometimes it's helpful for them to ask their parents how they might answer.

**Honor the family.** Remind yourself that every family has a different set of values around sexuality, and there may be family members living in situations that conflict with your values. Even if you don't agree with someone's actions, it's important to speak about that person in an honorable way.

### AFTER

**Follow up.** It's important to check back in with any high schooler who may have shared sensitive or personal information. Thank them for trusting you with that information, and let them know you're proud of them. Also, ask how you can help.

**Connect with your ministry leader.** Ask about your church's policies and make a plan for who you'll report to if a teenager shares experiences with sexual harassment, violence, or abuse.