

The Part of the Book People Skip (also known as the Introduction)

This book might take you a little time to get through.

Why? Because you're going to have to do some work. Don't give me that face. This is to help you. I'm not satisfied to have you simply nod along at the brilliant things I say and laugh at my awesome jokes, only to finish the book, walk away and apply a mere 2% of what you read.

Think about why you're reading this book in the first place. On some level you realize that you cannot indefinitely put off talking about "it" with your child. And if you're going to go through all this trouble, why not do it well? Doing this requires you to engage with this book, think through the questions I ask, then, roll up your sleeves and get a little dirty.

Confession: when books ask me to think about a question, to complete some sort of activity in order to master a life-changing principal...I skip it. Even though it will probably improve me as a person, make me more efficient, and fast track me to the Presidency, it also requires that I think, change my outlook, my habits, and my *life*. Ugh. So much work. So, I understand if your first inclination might be to skim pages and skip the application questions.

However, in this instance, your business won't fail or your leadership potential flat line because you decided to do that.

This time, it will be your child who loses. That kid down the hall who is trying to navigate the changes in their body, the roller coaster of hormones, and the million voices screaming for their attention and control of their life. They will be the one that gets the raw end of the deal, suffering because you didn't put in the work.

Consider that my "Win One For The Gipper" speech. You can do this. You *need* to do this. Not for you. And certainly not for me. For your kid(s). And for every kid they're going to meet, hang out with, and date.

Three things you need to accept before we get started:

1. You're going to make mistakes, which means you will say things that sound great in your head but come out wrong.
2. Talking about sex with your kids does not guarantee they will enthusiastically embrace what you teach, or award you for being Parent of the Year. Yet under no circumstance should you give up. As someone who does this for a living (awkward talks with the world's most hostile audiences), I can assure you that they really do want to talk about all these issues. Not just with anyone, but with you. Nevertheless, you should still brace yourself for some initial arguing, shouting, slammed doors, shrieks and groans of awkwardness.
3. I don't have all the answers. No one does. But I'm willing to share everything I've learned working with thousands of teens.

On that note.....let's do this!

Chapter 8: Latex Parachutes and Other Safety Measures

Ok, so there's risk. BUT we have an answer for that, right? Condoms and birth control! Condoms definitely reduce a person's risk for contracting an STD (make sure your teen knows that birth control offers NO protection against STDs) and should be used if someone is sexually active outside of a committed relationship, such as marriage. But as you learned in your intro quiz, they only offer about fifty percent protection when used consistently and correctly.ⁱ Even less for HPV because it is so contagious through skin-to-skin contact. It reduces risk, which is good, but it doesn't remove risk, which is what many teens mistakenly believe. Why not, you may ask? Simple.

Latex boxer briefs haven't been invented yet.

Condoms don't really cover all that much (no offense, gentlemen). Yes, they cover the penis or can line the vagina, but what about the other skin surrounding those areas? Those are still exposed and vulnerable to infection. If skin-to-skin contact by itself can put someone at risk for an STD, then this still holds true when there's that and more coming by being in "closer" contact.

Birth control pills, patches and rings, IUDs, and the Depo Provera shot, can prevent against pregnancy 95-99% of the time-a woman's doctor can recommend what is best for her lifestyle, body, and general health.ⁱⁱ Condoms, if used consistently and correctly, come in at about 85%.ⁱⁱⁱ Any and all of these are available options for reducing the risk of pregnancy and STDs.

But none of these options offers a guaranteed one hundred percent rate of protection. Even if we could create a condom that was 97% fool-proof, covering all of your teens nether regions, we would still be leaving our kids vulnerable.

How so, you ask?

There's no condom for your heart.

Neither is there a pill to diminish attachment, a patch or a shot to turn your heart off in the moment. There's no way to prevent you from bonding with someone outside of a healthy, committed relationship like marriage.

This is why simply educating about condoms, birth control, teen pregnancy and STDs leaves your kids cheated, with only half of the story. An important half, but nevertheless, half. Too many of our teens are finding out far too late that a broken heart and unwanted memories can be just as serious as an STD.

Chapter 12: Relationships, like Death and Taxes, are Inevitable

At some point your teen is going to get asked out on a date. Or do the asking.

As much as you may like to prevent that from happening until they're 23, accept the fact that they are going to go on at least one date with at least one person in the near future. Eventually, they'll go on a lot of dates with one person who they likely will choose to marry. Which is a good thing. So unless you're planning on arranging their marriage (which I don't foresee going over well), this is a milestone in their life that you will have to face. Together.

The good news:

Talking about relationships is fun! Of all the things you 'get' to discuss with your son or daughter relating to sex, talking about relationships will likely be the least awkward and the most of fun of all.

Picture it: It's a chance for you to share a few horror stories of your own (we *all* have at least one terrible first date story), to laugh over those gender differences that are both infuriating and endearing (why do girls go to the bathroom in groups? Or like to talk about shopping *so* much?), and give your child the tools needed to have a good time, while staying safe.

Maybe this only sounds fun to me, not you. But when it comes to the questions teens have, you might be surprised (and relieved) how many of them have to do with love, emotions, boys, girls, dating, asking someone out, how to know if she likes me, why he doesn't call me the next day; the typical stuff of relationships that everyone deals with until they're married or dead I guess.

We know that girls are all about relationships. Isn't that why we find that many of them will give in to sex sooner than they would have liked? They want to keep the relationship, or hope to finally make it official. But that is only half of the story. In a study of young men between 15-18 years old, 71% said that they would rather have a girlfriend and no sex rather than sex and no relationships.^{iv} So relationships matter to our young men as well. More so than sex. I know, shocking. Pick your jaw up off the floor and let's keep moving.

It's obvious then, what you need to do.

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No...?

If our teens are telling us that given the choice, they would prefer a committed relationship over sex, than you need to be talking about that as much as you are talking about sex. Or not having sex. Or at least waiting. You get the point. If your child is aiming to postpone sexual activity until a committed relationship such as marriage, and they actually value relationships, they need to first understand how to build said relationship. It does not happen over-night. And with all due respect to teens, it does not come naturally to them. Let's be honest, does it come naturally to

many of us? We all have broken relationships in our past. And for better or worse, they make us who we are. Your teen will probably have a relationship disaster or two by the time they marry. You can minimize the depth and duration, and give them a head start, by teaching the following five aspects of relationships.

1. Dating Basics

Chivalry is not dead. At least not as long as I have a say in it. But I won't get very far if I'm the only one to champion it. You need to be teaching your son or daughter the basics: basics of how a guy should treat a girl when he takes her out, of how a girl should handle herself on a date. Basics of respect. Or dating. The same thing, really. Don't just talk about this one, live it. My dad opened doors for me and my mom and walked on the outside of the street when we'd go out. I'm a bit ashamed to admit that I went through a phase of yelling at boys for opening the door for me. I've done lots of apologizing since. How was I supposed to know at 13 that it was a sign of respect, not a statement on female inferiority??

Somewhere I did, however, learn to never order a more expensive item than the guy taking me out ordered. And while I'd offer to help pay for dinner, I expected that if this was a date then he should pay. No going Dutch. Unless I had done the asking of course. Which I didn't. At least not the first date.

Does your son know not to ask a girl out through Facebook? Or text? Does your daughter expect a guy to come to the door to pick her up, not just honk the horn? What about appropriate conversation topics and how to actually have a conversation i.e. Ask questions about the other person and be interested in them, not yourself.

Think I'm old fashioned? Or that these basics don't need to be taught? Ask your daughter what she would want in a date. Not the bare minimum she thinks she can expect, but what she would actually want. Ask your son if he knows these basics. Go ahead, ask.

It seems a bit revolutionary I realize, because the art of dating has been so forgotten and discarded. But if we want to train the next generation to build healthy relationships that will actually go somewhere, we need to bring it back. Vintage is in style these days anyway.

2. Keep the end in mind: Marriage

I realize marriage is probably the last thing on your mind for your child. And certainly the last thing on theirs. Good! Child brides = not cool. I got married at 25 years old and personally, I think that was a lovely age. I've done quite a bit of growing up since then, but I have a sneaking suspicion that marriage will do that to you, no matter what age you are.

My marriage, however, was a decade in the making. Not because I dragged my feet that long or even knew my husband for that many years (although it probably felt like a decade to him because of the work I put him through), but because in my teens I started to think about what kind of a man I would want to marry. Not date, but marry. You'll date a lot of people, but there's only one (hopefully) that you'd be willing to marry. And not just anyone, but a particular one. The cream of the crop. The one who brings out the best in you and wants to be around for the hard work of improving the worst in each other. Someone you want to spend the rest of your life getting to know, and whose life you want to be around to witness.

That's who we all want to marry. And that's the type of person I would hope you want for your son or daughter. But it won't come from them waking up one day in their twenties and finally starting to look for him or

her. They have to have been intentional in their dating, and to have dated with the end in mind. That does not mean a ring on the first coffee date. That's just creepy. And desperate. It means they know who they're looking for because they've thought it through. They are dating to get to know that person and find out whether they are someone worth spending more and more time with, or if it was simply a good date and then a good-bye.

Start asking your child if they've thought about the kind of qualities they would want in someone they would be willing to marry. Begin to discuss what makes someone "marriage material." At seventeen, they're not going to find it. But they may begin to see glimpses. By the time they are

in college and especially after, they need to be able to discern whether or not someone is growing in the right direction; if their habits, characteristics and personality are what they are looking for, or if they are trouble waiting to happen.

Some people like to make a list. Fine. If your kid is the list type they can do that, but a word of caution: there is such a thing as expecting too much from a flawed human being, of being unrealistic and putting yourself in a box by sticking rigidly to that list. Don't let your son or daughter get so focused on their "List" that they're unable to let go of what they want for what they need.

ⁱ "Scientific Evidence on Condom Effectiveness for Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Prevention," July 2001, The National Institute of Health and The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Available at <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/about/organization/dmid/documents/condomreport.pdf>, (accessed August 15, 2011).

ⁱⁱ "Birth control methods fact sheet," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health. November 2011. Available at <http://womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/birth-control-methods.cfm> (accessed October 31, 2012).

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} "That's What He Said: What Guys Think About Sex, Love, Contraception, and Relationships," The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2010. Available at <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/ThatsWhatHeSaid.pdf> (accessed January 10, 2013)