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without mental health!**

Back to School: Parent-Child Communication

Most Families Do Not Communicate Regularly

1. From fifth to eighth grade, the amount of time children spend with their families is cut in half. [1]
2. Parents are more likely to consider talks about sex, alcohol, drugs, and violence as happening “regularly.” Their children, on the other hand, remember having these discussions “a couple of times.” [2]
3. While 42% of parents say they have talked to their teens about risky sexual behaviors, less than half (49%) of those teens remember the conversation (Nickelodeon and Talking With Kids, 2001).
4. Sixty percent of 8-11 year olds and 56% of 12-15 year olds say they learn “a lot” from their mothers about issues like sex, alcohol, drugs and violence. Most youth turn to their mothers before their teachers and classes, fathers, the media, and friends (Nickelodeon and Talking With Kids, 2001).
5. Only one in five teens (21%) under 15 years old have ever received advice or information about sex from their parents (Kaiser Family Foundation, 1998).
6. Kids want to know more. Most children (62%) and teens (57%) wish they had more information about guns in school. Youth also want to know more about discrimination, puberty, homosexuality, and alcohol or drugs (Nickelodeon and Talking With Kids, 2001).
7. Parents need to initiate difficult conversations. Most (77%) of teenagers don’t talk to their parents about sexual health because they don’t know how to bring it up (seventeen and Kaiser Family Foundation, 2002).

Benefits of Positive Parent-Child Communication

1. Positive parent-child communication includes the following characteristics: being supportive, listening to the other person, tolerating differences, being understanding, and not pressuring the other to agree. (Smetana et al., 2000).
2. Teens with authoritative parents (warm, firm, and accepting of their teens’ needs for psychological independence) are more successful in school, less anxious and depressed, and have higher self-esteem than teens without authoritative parents (Steinberg, 2001).
3. Children with positive father-child relationships have higher self-esteem and show better school and social adjustment than children without these relationships (Brotherson et al., 2003).
4. When parents and children openly talk about drugs and sex, children have better self-control and develop more negative perceptions these risky behaviors (Wills et al., 2003).
5. Students who talk frequently with their parents are more likely to use contraception. One in five teens (19%) would rather receive information from their parents than from other sources, such as health centers or classes (Hacker et al., 2000).

Consequences of Lack of Communication

1. **Children who do not feel warmth or caring from their parents are more likely to have lower self-esteem, academic problems, and emotional troubles. They are also more likely to use drugs and participate in risky sexual behaviors (Brotherson et al., 2003; Resnick, 1997; Steinberg, 2001).**
2. **When teens do not discuss sexuality issues with their parents, they are more likely to “follow the crowd.” This is especially dangerous if peers do not encourage responsible sexual behavior (Whitaker et al.).**

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