

# Teen girls talk more to parents about their dating habits than do boys

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When it comes to talking to parents about most dating issues, teen girls tend to disclose more than boys, and both sexes generally prefer to talk to their mothers.

However, a new study found that girls and boys are equally close-mouthed about issues involving sex and what they do with their dates while unsupervised. And in this case, teens were no more eager to talk to their mothers than they were their fathers.

Results showed that the amount of information parents hear from their teenagers about dating depend on a variety of matters, including age, gender, and what aspect of dating the topic involves.

"Many parents become frustrated because they feel that the lack of communication with their teenage children is evidence of increasing distance or diminishing influence," explained Christopher Daddis, co-author of the study and assistant professor of psychology at Ohio State University at Marion.

"What we found is that adolescents are willing to talk to their parents about some issues, but those issues may change as they grow older and they feel more autonomous."

The research appeared in a recent issue of the *Journal of Adolescence*. The study involved a survey of 222 adolescents in the 9th or 12th grade at a central Ohio high school. About half of them were boys and half

were girls.

Students were asked to rate how willing they were to disclose specific information to their parents about 22 different issues relating to their romantic lives . Based on the results, Daddis separated dating issues into three categories.

The first category involved the identity of their boyfriend or girlfriend, and information about the boyfriend or girlfriend's family, their personal character and the type of student they are. The second category involved more personal issues such as what the teen did with their partner without parental supervision and if they had sex. The third category involved the types of things they did to show their affection, such as holding hands, kissing and going steady.

Daddis found that adolescents were more willing to talk to their parents about their date's identity and how they showed affection. Specifically, girls disclosed information more often than boys, and with both sexes the mother was their primary confidant. Also, results showed that younger and older adolescents were equally willing to talk to their parents about those two topics.

All adolescents disclosed little about what they did when unsupervised and whether they had sex. There was no distinction between sexes when it concerned issues involving sex and supervision, so neither girls or boys expressed eagerness to talk to their parents about it.

However, on most issues, younger adolescents showed a significantly higher level of communication than older adolescents. The study found that teens who reported a higher level of trust with their parents also disclosed more. Daddis was surprised that the connection between trust and disclosure was especially strong for girls, and particularly for issues related to sex and supervision.

"It is important for the parents to provide an environment where the child can feel comfortable and trusting. The presence of a trusting relationship between parent and teen creates an climate for healthy development of autonomy," said Daddis.

In addition, the researchers found that teens were more likely to discuss issues that they thought could involve harm to others and that may have severe consequences.

"We found that [adolescents](#) were more willing to talk to their parents about an issue if they felt that it would render harm to themselves or have some consequences that may affect others."

Daddis said parents should realize that it is natural for teens to seek more independence and to draw boundaries around what they reveal.

"Developing a trusting relationship is one of the most important things [parents](#) can do to maintain consistent communication," he said.

Provided by The Ohio State University

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