

**PREPARING
FOR
ADOLESCENCE**

TRANSITION TO ADOLESCENTS

Parents sometimes try to convince other parents that the teen years will be excruciatingly, unavoidably rough for everyone concerned. Obviously you and your pre-teen are in for a lot of change, but turmoil isn't inevitable. You have the opportunity—before the cataclysmic transition from childhood to adulthood begins—to intentionally navigate your son or daughter through that change in a proactive and positive way. The best way to prepare your child for adolescence is for you to spend time together dedicated to giving their pre-adolescent the framework for what's coming. Here's a quick guide to the when, what, and how of that time together:

WHEN

Often parents are concerned that they will overwhelm their pre-teen or encourage premature curiosity if they discuss adolescent issues. A greater concern, however, is the likelihood that someone else will beat you to it. Children are typically ready before their parents are. Doctors report puberty starting as early as age 9 among some girls, and the average age for first exposure to pornography among boys is around the same age. Since every child is different, it's important to spend time with your preteen getting a sense of where they are developmentally. Though your prime opportunity will be between the ages of 9 and 12, make the timing of your conversations a matter of prayer.

WHAT

In your conversation about the years ahead, you should plan to address the many areas of change your son or daughter will encounter during their transition to adulthood - in their body, their decision-making, and their relationship with you.

Body: It's important to frame the physical changes ahead as much more than a plea for sexual abstinence. Your son or daughter needs a vision for how the internal and external changes ahead are preparing them for the joys of marriage and the miracle of creating new life.

Decision-making: Increasingly, your child will have to make and assume the responsibilities for his or her decisions. As you maintain your overall family values in media choices, individual responsibilities (chores, homework, etc.), and alcohol/drug use, you also need to direct your son or daughter in how to make good decisions for themselves.

Relationship to you: Helping your son or daughter understand and embrace the changes in his or her body while challenging them to bear the responsibility of decision-making will be different from the role you've played before. Instead of communicating like a teacher who teaches the right answer, you should explain that you will become more of a coach who is there to guide them in their transition into independent development.

HOW

Fortunately, there are several great tools available for parents looking for recommendations. My Body God's Plan is a highly recommended Parent-Child experience offered in the spring for 5th graders. yourbodygodspan.com

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- **Preparing for Adolescence** by Dr. James Dobson
- **Raising a Modern Day Knight** by Robert Lewis
- **Passport to Purity Kit** by Dennis and Barbara Rainey
- FamilyLife.org (search sex ed);
- Parenting Your Teenager and Grace Based Parenting video series on RightNowMedia