



For some children and teens, going to a summer camp may be their first experience with independence from direct parental supervision. As many of the camps may have both male and female campers, the sensitive topic of personal relationships and risky behaviors should be addressed. Your child's ability to understand and practice safe behaviors is influenced by his age, developmental and educational level. Your personal values should also influence your approach to this topic.

For younger campers, a discussion about appropriate behavior may be needed. Emphasize that camp is supposed to be fun. Tell your child that you expect him/her to treat everyone with respect. By the same token, your child has the right to be treated with respect. If he/she is being bullied or hurt or harmed in any way, they should let an adult know. Your child should also not go anywhere without informing his/her camp counselor.

For teens, older campers, and even teenage camp counselors, a more detailed conversation may be necessary. Your teen is less likely to engage in risky behaviors if you have an open conversation about your expectations. All teens should know that there are potentially serious consequences from sexual activity, including pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and even legal prosecution. A good way to express your concern is to tell your teen that you expect him/her to treat others with respect and behave responsibly. If your teen or anyone else at camp is not being treated with respect, your teen should tell an adult.

The depth and details of the conversation are your decision. The important thing is discussing these relationships to help prepare your child for a new environment and new experiences. Encourage your child to talk to you if they have questions or concerns.

Links to Sexual Health Communication For Parents:

- <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sex-education/CC00032>
- http://www.hhs.gov/opa/news/psu_english_110907_final.pdf

Links to Anti-Bullying Communication For Parents:

- <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Avoiding-Bullying.aspx>

Link to Underage Drinking Communication For Parents:

- <http://www.samhsa.gov/underagedrinking/small-conversations.aspx>

Link to Substance Abuse Communication For Parents:

- <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/teen/substance-abuse/Pages/Talk-to-Your-Teen-About-Drugs-And-Keep-Talking.aspx>