Girl Talk

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How do you help them steer clear of HIV, STDs and sex they're not ready for? Some pros weigh in:

KEEP IT REAL. "If girls feel like you're lecturing them, they'll shut down. I encourage conversations that are interesting enough that they'll want to add input. Start by bringing up boys. Instead of setting a somber tone, I keep it like a comedy."

—Shirlby Jones, hairdresser at First Impression,one of nearly 50 salons in the Barber and Beautician STD/HIV Peer Education Program (tel. 919.560.7760) of Durham, North Carolina

LAY OUT THE LATEX. "Speak to them and not at them—particularly [with] programs that build their skills in communication, assertiveness and self-esteem. Instead of standing in front of a room and saying how to put on a condom, have them actually practice doing it."

—Allyson Iman Morehead, preventive health department, AmASSI Wellness Center (www.amassi.com or 1.800.STOPHIV), Los Angeles

EACH ONE, TEACH ONE. "Girls are looking for someone to listen to them. We really get to know them and become like a mother or older sister."

—Alma Ward-Venisee, HIV prevention educator and executive director, Investing in Our Youth, Quincy, Florida (tel. 850.627.4167)

To order Be Proud, Be Responsible!, an HIV-intervention curriculum for low-income adolescents of color, contact Select Media at800.345.5540; for training in teaching it, call Deborah Haber at the Education Development Center, 800.225.4276

-Ayana Byrd

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