



Talking to Partners About STI Status

Building Skills and Confidence in Youth

Having conversations about sex with a partner can be difficult, but talking to partners about STI status can feel particularly tricky, especially to young people. How can we help them build skills and boost their confidence to have these conversations?

Sometimes, it can be helpful to have a roadmap for a difficult conversation. This framework can help students plug in their own content and give structure to their conversation when disclosing STI status or asking for testing.

D	<u>D</u> rop the Facts	Disclose your STI Status.
E	<u>E</u> xpress Care	Tell your partner you care about them and want to keep them (and yourself) healthy.
A	<u>A</u> dvice Medical Attention	Tell your partner you'd like each of you to get tested or what kind of protection you'd like to use if you've already been tested.
R	<u>R</u> oll Out a Plan	Make a plan to use it.



Additional Tips

- We've talked a lot about shame in our last few digests and it applies here too. Be sure to avoid any shaming language when talking about STI status in class. Students who feel ashamed of their status will be less encouraged to share their status with their partner. Remind students that lots of folks experience a STI and the most important thing to think about is how to be safe going forward each time they engage in sexual activity.
- Remind students that a certain amount of personal vulnerability is implicit in engaging in sexual activity. Disclosing STI status can make someone feel very vulnerable, which is why it's important to only engage in consensual sexual activity.

This framework can also be used to help students craft a conversation around disclosing STI status after unprotected sex with a partner:

D	<u>D</u> rop the Facts	Tell your partner exactly what happened and how.
E	<u>E</u> xpress Care	Express care and concern for your partner and the situation they are now in.
A	<u>A</u> dvice Testing and Protection	Let them know that they should seek medical care for testing and/or treatment.
R	<u>R</u> oll Out a Plan	Make a plan with your partner about seeing a doctor and what protection you plan to use for future sexual encounters.

Resources

- Planned Parenthood has a [great website for talking to partners](#), with good ideas for conversation starters.
- Teen Health Source has an [excellent page](#) with lots of information about this conversation.
- The [American Sexual Health Association](#) outlines more great tips for talking with a partner about sex that you could incorporate into your teaching.

Additional Tips *(cont.)*

- **Have students keep in mind that disclosing and discussing STI status is only one part of a conversation that should happen before partners engage in sexual activity. This conversation goes along with discussing birth control, desires and hopes, and boundaries. The American Sexual Health Association sums all of this up nicely [here](#).**
- **While having a conversation before engaging in sexual activity is ideal, sometimes it just doesn't work out that way. Make sure students know that there are services like [STDcheck.com](#) where text messages can be sent anonymously to partners who may have been at risk of contracting an STI.**
- **Be sure students know that, in Baltimore City, a medical provider can [dispense antibiotic therapy to any sexual partner of a patient diagnosed with chlamydia or gonorrhea without doing a physical assessment of the patient's partner](#). This is known as Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT).**



For more information, visit uchoosebaltimore.org.

