

# LISTEN, TALK (AND KEEP TALKING)



A few years ago, the Vermont Commission on Women, engaged in a conversation about snowboard products featuring objectionable sexual imagery.

We are younger and older Vermonters, working and retired, conservative and liberal, financially secure and not so well off, rural-living and city dwellers, but we have in common deep dedication and concern for issues facing women and girls in Vermont today.

After much discussion, we decided to take positive action, and gather helpful tools for parents to use when confronted with objectionable sexual or violent language or imagery. Experts suggest that parents “listen, talk, and keep talking.”



So here are some very simple **words to say**:

**“I find that <product, commercial, advertisement, text message, video game, song> inappropriate.”**

**“That <product, commercial, advertisement, text message, video game, song> makes me feel uncomfortable.”**

**Or, simply, “I don’t like that <product, commercial, advertisement, text message, video game, song>.”**

**...Then take a moment to yourself to ask yourself why:**



Is it because it confuses love and sex? Pairs sex with violence? Uses bodies to sell products? Portrays violence or drugs as something fun/cool?

**...And now, here’s your teachable moment: your chance to impart your values, opinions, and beliefs about sexuality, gender roles, violence, and relationships.**

You could think to yourself, or even say, “It’s my job to teach you how to think about this.”

## **TIPS**

Take your cues from your child and respond in an age appropriate way: Children of varied ages are usually at different developmental levels, which means that they need different information, have different sensitivities and require a different vocabulary.

Watch your child's reaction – don't direct or call attention to the inappropriate image if your (particularly young) child has not paid attention to it.

Use simple, short words and straightforward explanations for young children.

With older kids and teenagers, questions often help to deepen the conversation. One option might be "Why is there so much pressure on girls to look a certain way?"

Ultimately, our hope is to help parents counterbalance media images that objectify and dehumanize women with positive and caring conversations...hopefully creating positive change within their family and for the next generation of Vermonters.



## **RESOURCES FOR PARENTS**

### **Adults and Children Together Against Violence**

[actagainstviolence.apa.org](http://actagainstviolence.apa.org)

Parenting resources from the American Psychological Association.

### **Common Sense Media**

[commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org)

Tools for parents and educators to make wise media choices from a national organization led by concerned parents and individuals with experience in child advocacy, public policy, education, media and entertainment providers.



### **Talking with Kids about Tough Issues**

[childrennow.org](http://childrennow.org)

A campaign by Children Now to encourage parents to talk with children early and often about tough issues.

### **Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood**

[commercialfreechildhood.org](http://commercialfreechildhood.org)

A national coalition devoted to limiting the impact of commercial culture on children.



**VERMONT COMMISSION ON WOMEN**

**126 State Street / Montpelier / Vermont / 05633-6801**

**802-828-2841 / 800-881-1561**

**[www.women.vermont.gov](http://www.women.vermont.gov)**