

# Can We Talk?

## Tips for Talking about Safer Sex with a Partner

- Learn as much as you can about safer sex and HIV. The more you know, the easier it will be to talk about it.
- Remember that the first step to practicing safer sex is talking about it.
- Figure out how you want to start:
  - The straightforward approach: “This is difficult, but I need to talk about something important to both of us ...”
  - Ask a question: “I’m worried about HIV. What do you think we should do to protect ourselves?”
  - Reassure your partner: “I’m feeling really good with you. I hope you won’t mind talking about our safety before we do anything.”
- Plan what you want to say. Sort out your feelings and fears before you begin.
- It’s natural to feel uncomfortable. If you can share your discomfort or embarrassment, it may help both of you relax.
- Think about when you want to bring up the subject. It may be easier to talk when you’re not already in a sexual situation. But also be ready to talk whenever the time seems right, even if it isn’t when you had planned.
- Getting started is the hardest part. Your partner may even be relieved that you brought it up.
- Don’t expect to talk just once. Keeping open lines of communication helps build trust and intimacy.
- Be clear in your own mind about what you will and won’t do sexually. If you’re clear, it’s easier to talk about it.
- Give your partner time to think about what you have said. Your partner may be worried or uncomfortable, too, and may need time to adjust.
- Pay attention to your partner’s response. Slow down if your partner is having trouble taking in your words. If your partner resists safer sex, then maybe you need to think more carefully about the relationship. Is sex more important than a partner who respects your feelings?
- Watch out for situations that make it harder to talk about and practice safer sex. If you are already feeling intimate, it can be harder to slow down or stop to talk. Using alcohol or other drugs can make it hard to make good decisions about safer sex.

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center**

Holmes Student Center, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor

753-LGBT

[lgbt@niu.edu](mailto:lgbt@niu.edu)

[www.niu.edu/lgbt](http://www.niu.edu/lgbt)

Division of Student Affairs

Northern Illinois University