

Talking With Your Child About Sexuality

As a parent or caregiver, you can provide your children with vital information on sexuality and relationships that may help them to make more informed, mature decisions in the future. It isn't easy to talk with your child about sex; however it is very important to do so. The following are some tips that can help to make it easier;

1. **Plan Ahead** – Talk with your partner about the kinds of messages you want to give your children, and clarify any issues before involving your child in the discussion.
2. **Use Opportunities** – When the opportunity arises to provide your children with information, use it! For example; if your child asks why a friend's mother is pregnant, use that opportunity to teach your child about pregnancy.
3. **Listen** – Answer your child's questions when they ask them, try not to put them off until a later time. If you don't have time, say something like, "That is a good question. Let's talk about that when we have more time", and make sure you do. Also, listen carefully to what is being asked.
4. **Pick a Good Time** – You want to be able to talk comfortably with your child, so choosing a good time and location for this is important. Involve your child in deciding when the conversation can occur, and make it a priority.
5. **Keep Boundaries** – Your child will benefit in all areas if you keep your role as parent clear, and not try to be their 'best friend'. You don't need to answer overly personal questions. Gently explain that the information they are asking about is private, and you'd prefer not to answer that question.
6. **Give Accurate Information** – If you are unsure of an answer to a question, don't just make it up, do some research! The internet and the library can be very valuable resources. Just simply state, "That's a great question, but I'm not sure of the answer. Let's find it out."
7. **Be Respectful of Feelings** – Kids can feel awkward and embarrassed talking to parents about topics such as sexuality. Remember that no question is stupid, and that by being supportive of your child, you are fostering a healthier, more open relationship.
8. **Keep It Casual** – By being relaxed and casual in your discussion, you will encourage your child to feel the same way. If used in the right context, a sense of humour can go a long way!
9. **Use Materials** – Getting your child a recommended book about puberty or sexuality can also be helpful. Even if your child is too uncomfortable to talk to you, they will likely look through information you give them. This will provide them with accurate

information that they can look over in privacy. Taking some time to read through it before passing it on will ensure you have the same information, and can help open conversation, i.e. "What did you think about..."

10. **Talk About More Than Just Sex** – Talk with your children about healthy relationships, feelings, peer pressure, body image and responsibility in relationships. This will help your child to identify with the emotional aspects of sexuality and relationships, and to make informed decisions.
11. **Be Ready to Have Your Jaw Drop** – It is possible that your child will ask or say something that takes you by surprise. For example, children and teens often receive misinformation from their peers, and may ask you to clarify. While you may react with surprise, try to compose yourself and respond calmly.
12. **Keep It Positive** – By demonstrating an open, positive view of human sexuality, you are teaching your children to have the same.
13. **Find Out What They Already Know** – Likely, your child already has some information regarding healthy sexuality. Find out what they know and then build on that existing knowledge base.
14. **Remember That You Are a Role Model** – As a parent/caregiver, you are your child's main source of information. How you act in regards to sexuality will be noticed by your child and will likely be copied to some extent.

