

it's that easy!

A GUIDE TO RAISING
SEXUALLY HEALTHY CHILDREN

ABOUT IT'S THAT EASY!

Raising sexually healthy children requires a combination of strong relationships, open communication and clear messages regarding values and expectations between parent and child. It may feel like a daunting task for many parents, however, if given the information, tools and support they need, they can integrate this role into their daily lives with more comfort, confidence and courage and begin to feel...***It's That Easy!***

Professionals and community members who work with parents are in a unique position to support parents in their ever-changing role as sexuality educators of their infants, young children, pre-teens and teens. While the questions and concerns change with age, the goal remains the same: to raise well-informed young people who make healthy decisions throughout their lives. ***It's That Easy! A Guide to Raising Sexually Healthy Children* is designed to help parent educators incorporate conversations about sex and sexuality into their work with families.**

It's That Easy! has three key components:

Training: Designed for people who work with parents to give them the theory, research and best practices to promote healthy sexual development. Participants leave with a variety of tools, techniques and interactive activities to use with parents.

Resource Manual: A comprehensive source of activities, lesson plans and other valuable resources to help educators work with parents in their communities.

Website: Web-based resources for people working with parents including information, resources and program ideas. www.itsthateasy.org

In short, *It's That Easy!* offers people who work with parents the training and tools they need to help parents connect with their children, share their family's values and engage in meaningful conversations about sex, sexuality and relationships.

IT'S THAT EASY! COLLABORATIVE

It's That Easy! was developed in response to a need for trained individuals who are comfortable and committed to bringing sexual and reproductive health topics into their work and conversations with parents. The following group of community based partners collaborated to create the *It's That Easy!* training, resource manual and website.

Better Together Hennepin - Hennepin County Public Health;
City of Bloomington Division of Public Health; Health Start/
West Side Community Health Services; Healthy Youth
Development - Prevention Research Center, Division of
General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health, University of
Minnesota; Minnesota Department of Health; MyHealth;
Neighborhood House; Saint Paul-Ramsey County Public
Health; Teen Age Medical Service, Children's Hospital
and Clinics of Minnesota; and Teenwise Minnesota.

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ABOUT THE RESOURCE MANUAL

This manual is designed to help parent educators incorporate conversations about sex, sexuality and relationships into their work with families. It offers a general introduction to these topics and provides a broad sample of activities, lesson plans and other valuable resources to use with parents. The resource manual is not intended to provide all of the background needed to effectively address these topics, but rather to serve as a supplement to the *It's That Easy!* training.

The manual is divided into four content areas:

Messages and Modeling: Sharing values and beliefs about sexuality

Cuddled and Connected: The parent-child relationship:
A foundation for raising sexually healthy children

Ages and Stages: Sexual growth and development

Tech Talks: Helping kids navigate their online world

Each topic area provides the following:

Background: An overview of the topic area including the theory and research guiding best practice.

Key Messages: Key concepts that can be used as talking points when working with parents.

Activities: Ideas for ways to engage parents in the topic area.

Parent Handouts: Additional materials to share with parents. Parent handouts are included after the activity description.

Recommended Reading: Background resources and additional information for the facilitator.

The manual also includes:

Lesson Plans: Outlines of suggested activities for use with parents with children of different ages and for sessions of varying lengths.

Resources: Books, web-based resources, articles and background information for parents and facilitators.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Sexuality is a natural and healthy part of being human.

People experience and express themselves as sexual beings throughout their lives.

Knowledge is helpful not harmful. Learning about sexuality is an ongoing, life-long process. Children of all ages who have accurate, developmentally appropriate information about sex, sexuality and relationships are more likely to make healthy decisions.

Parents are the primary sexuality educators of their children. In the course of daily living, every family teaches their children about sex, sexuality and relationships through spoken and unspoken messages and behaviors. Parents don't always understand the power of their influence, but young people's sexual decision making tends to reflect what they see and hear from their families.

Every parent wants what is best for their children.

Though parents come to their role as "sexuality educators" with different beliefs, values, knowledge and skills, they all want their children to be safe and healthy.

Cultural, family and individual values, histories and experiences impact beliefs and behaviors regarding sex, sexuality and relationships. Children who understand their family's values and expectations regarding sexual health are more likely to make behavior choices consistent with those values.

Families have unequal access to opportunities and supports. Many families face complicated, often structural barriers related to race, class, income, gender, disability, etc. that can profoundly impact how they take on their role as sexuality educators. It is important to recognize and consider these barriers when working with families.

All children deserve to live free of sexual violence.

Prevention of sexual violence requires a multi-faceted approach, including teaching children how to recognize, form and nurture healthy relationships.

The sexual images, messages, and information in media and popular culture impact our beliefs and behaviors regarding sex, sexuality and relationships. It is vitally important that responsible caring adults address the messages their children receive by sharing their values with their children and giving them the accurate information and tools they need to make responsible decisions.

Childhood experiences affect who we are as adults.

Adverse childhood experiences can have a profound impact on sex, sexuality and relationships. Parents who have experienced childhood trauma require a safe space to explore these topics and may need additional resources and support for themselves and their children.

TIME SPECIFIC LESSON PLANS

TWO HOUR SESSION

Objectives

During this session participants will:

1. Explain how their own experience with sexuality education impacts how and what they share with their own children.
2. Identify the most important values and messages they would like to pass on to their children about sexuality.
3. Gain an understanding of healthy sexual development.
4. Identify teachable moments during which they can share information and family values regarding sexuality.

Time

120 minutes

Materials

One sheet of blank paper for each participant

Markers, writing utensils and tape

Four pieces of paper labeled Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree

Copies of the following parent handouts, worksheets and resources:

- *Growth and Development – What Parents Need to Know* (see Ages and Stages Section)
- *Questions Commonly Asked by Children of All Ages* (see Ages and Stages Section)
- *Resources for Families* (see Resources Section)
- *Four Corners* worksheet (see Messages and Modeling Section)

Preparation

Facilitators for this session should be well versed in the subject matter and comfortable discussing sexuality and sexual development. To prepare for the session, facilitators should read background material, review the activities included in this lesson plan and consider any necessary adaptations for the group.

Instructions**Introduction** (5 minutes)

1. Introduce yourself and provide a brief outline of session.

2. If this is a new group, invite participants to share their name and ages of their children. If in a larger group, get a show of hands for age of children.
3. If applicable, review group ground rules on discussing sensitive topics, consideration of diverse opinions, and confidentiality. (See *Setting Ground Rules* in Resources Section.)
4. Define sexuality as more than “sex”, includes love, relationships, bodies, male & femaleness, etc. Encourage the group to help with the definition.
5. Summarize/read through selected ITE guiding principles and key messages from Sections 1, 2 and 4 of the manual.

Where are we coming from? (30 minutes)

1. Lead activity: *Parents’ Own Experience with Sexuality Education* (see Messages and Modeling Section).

Following the activity:

- Thank parents for sharing. Note many of us didn’t have a role model to show us how to do this. Our parent(s) tried to do the best they could... most of us want to do better.
- Encourage parents to discuss this with their “partners in parenting”- so they can determine what approach to take with the children they’re helping raise together

2. Lead activity: *Stepping Back in Time* (see Ages and Stages Section). This activity works best with parents of children ages 10+.

Family Values and Key Messages (20 minutes)

1. Lead activity *Four Corners* (see Messages and Modeling Section). Adapt to the ages of the children represented by the parents in the group.
2. Lead activity *Defining our Task - Parent Messages* (see Ages and Stages Section). Use the following adaptations for a brief activity.
 - Ask participants to write their key sexuality message(s) on a piece of paper.

continued >

TWO HOUR SESSION [continued]

- When everyone is done, ask for a few volunteers to share their message(s).
- Use discussion prompts from activity description as time allows, making sure to note that few messages, if any, have to do with anatomy or biology. Far more often, these messages concern our family's values and speak to how much we want our children to value and take care of themselves and others.

Break (5 minutes)**Healthy Sexual Development** (20 minutes)

1. Lead the activity *Healthy Sexual Development* (see Ages and Stages Section) using the following adaptations to reduce time.
2. Using newsprint or the white board, write ages of the children of the parent group on the top. This activity can be done together as a small group or a larger group can be divided into smaller groups. Ask group(s) to list typical sexuality and sexual health characteristics for these ages. Allow 5-8 minutes for quick brainstorming.
3. Remind participants that determining what is age-appropriate information depends a lot on the child. Some children ask questions while others do not. Parents have an opportunity to continue to lay a foundation of facts as well as reinforce family values; continuing to model that they are approachable and interested in what the child is considering.
4. Distribute handout *Healthy Sexual Development*. Briefly review the answers provided by participants and make corrections and additions to the lists generated by the group.
5. Distribute the handout *Growth and Development- What Parents Need to Know*

How to start conversations / Using teachable moments (30 minutes)

1. Lead activity *Questions Commonly Asked by Children of All Ages* (see Ages and Stages Section). Focus on the age range of the children of the parents in the group. You may choose to do this activity as a large group to save time.
2. When you have completed the activity, close by asking participants to share any teachable moments they have experienced lately when their child was inquiring about a sexuality related topic.
3. Distribute the handout *Questions Commonly Asked by Children of All Ages*

Resources (5 minutes)

Share *Resources for Families* (see Resources Section) and share a couple favorites for the age ranges represented in this group. Emphasize that parents need to find resources that support them in their role as sexuality educators.

Closing (5 minutes)

1. Conclude by congratulating the group on their commitment to raising sexually healthy children.
2. Remind parents that this is a process and not a one time talk. Ask them, in the next week, to observe what messages their child is already exposed to about sexuality and encourage them reflect on the key sexuality messages they want to share.

SETTING GROUND RULES

Background

Whenever you lead a group or facilitate conversations on sensitive subjects it is important to develop group guidelines for participation. These guidelines, often referred to as “ground rules” or “group agreements,” should provide the group with a framework to ensure open, respectful dialogue and promote participation.

The role of the facilitator

Setting ground rules can help to create and facilitate a comfortable and productive learning environment. The facilitator can either use group time to brainstorm and establish ground rules or the facilitator can come prepared with a set list of ground rules and ask for additions and then get group agreement.

Instructions

1. Introduce the purpose of setting ground rules. Share the following points:
 - We have a lot of information to cover in this session and to make the most of our time together we will use some tools so that we get through everything and everyone has a chance to participate.
 - We know that meaningful group discussions rely on the respectful behavior of all participants; so we want to establish some ground rules or agreements to help make this happen.
 - Ground rules are a set of agreements designed to ensure open, respectful dialogue and maximize participation.
 - A safe and open environment is important when addressing sensitive and personal topics like parenting, sex, sexuality and relationships.
2. Ask participants for recommendations for ground rules for this group. When somebody proposes a groundrule, ask the other participants if they agree to it. If most do, add it to the list. The following are examples of ground rules:
 - Listen with an open mind
 - Respect different points of view
 - Take care of yourself
 - Share the time – try not to dominate the discussion
 - Ask any question
 - Recognize your feelings – it is normal to feel a range of emotions when discussing your children
 - Recognize that all parents want the best for their children and are doing the best they can with what they currently know and understand
 - Have fun!
3. Ask the group if the ground rules are agreeable. If everyone is in agreement, you're ready to move on.

Adapted from: Critical Multicultural Pavilion – Awareness Activities, Guide for Setting Ground Rules. Retrieved 2/8/16 from <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/groundrules.html>

PARENTS' OWN EXPERIENCE WITH SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Overview

This exercise is designed to help parents remember their own childhood/adolescent experience with sexuality education, to reflect upon it, evaluate it, and use it as a guide for giving their children what they need.

Objectives

During this activity participants will:

1. Identify the sources of their own sexuality education.
2. Consider the adequacy of their experience with sexuality education.
3. Understand that there is a range of experiences with sexuality education.

Time

15-30 minutes (depends on size of group)

Materials

No materials needed

Preparation

Because this activity involves individual reflection, participants will bring a variety of experiences to this exercise. These can include experiences of sexual violence and grief, so it is especially important that you create a relaxed and safe environment. Allow parents to share or pass during the processing questions.

Instructions

1. Ask participants to make a continuum by placing themselves along an imaginary line in the room in response to these statements. Remind participants that sexuality education goes beyond spoken words to what is observed in the relationships around us.
 - If you feel that you had age-appropriate, correct, and helpful information about sexuality from reliable sources throughout childhood and adolescence stand at one end.
 - If you felt you were in the dark much of the time, given misinformation, or unhelpful messages stand at the other end.

- If you feel your experience lies between these extremes arrange yourself accordingly.

2. Once the line is formed, start at the end where people felt their sexuality education was lacking and ask participants why they chose to stand there. Proceed up the line, taking volunteers as time allows.
3. When you've heard from all sections of the line, ask people to take their seats. Lead a discussion about where in the line they'd like their children to stand 10 or 20 years from now, and what they and their communities can do to ensure that their children get what they need.

Adaptation

In small groups, everyone may get a chance to share their experience with sexuality education. If talking with an individual parent, you can go through the questions and have a conversation.

STEPPING BACK IN TIME

Overview

Parents often judge their children's decision making, including sexual decision making, from an adult point of view. This activity is designed to help parents of pre-adolescents and adolescents remember their own experiences with adolescence and their learning, questions, and thoughts about sexuality and relationships.

Objectives

During this activity participants will:

1. Relax.
2. Remember the time in their own lives that their children are at now.
3. Draw a picture of themselves at that age with key word descriptors.

Time

20 minutes

Materials

Guided Imagery script

Relaxing environment

Paper and drawing utensils (markers, pencils, etc.) for each participant

Whiteboard or newsprint

Preparation

Because this activity involves individual reflection, participants will bring to it a variety of experiences. These can include experiences of sexual violence, grief and loss. As the group leader, you need to set the stage for this activity with the introductory remarks below and work to create a relaxed and safe environment. Allow parents to share or pass during the processing of questions.

When reading the script for the guided imagery, use a soft but easily audible voice. Pause often between sentences to allow participants time to do what you've asked. In the script you will see there is a blank to fill in an age. If you are talking to parents of junior high school students or younger, make the age 12. If you are talking to parents of senior high school students, make the age 15.

Instructions

1. Tell participants that they will spend the next 10 minutes relaxing and remembering their youth. Acknowledge that not all of our memories are good ones. For this activity invite parents to remember what they feel good remembering—either because the memory itself is good, or because what they have made of that memory is good.
2. Lead the group through the Guided Imagery below.

I'd like you to get into a position that would be comfortable enough for you to fall asleep. Take off your glasses, your shoes (if you like) and find a position in which you can truly relax. (Pause to allow them time to get into position.)

I invite you to relax and imagine that a ray of sun is shining on your hair. That warmth and the relaxation it brings spreads down over your forehead, around your eyes, your cheeks and your jaw. Be aware of the softness and smoothness of your face. Relax.

Find a comfortable position for your head. Feel the sun shine on your shoulders, your chest and your back. Relax and breathe. Use your breathing and the movement it creates to relax more and more with each breath in...and out. Let your breathing be slow and deep. Let your whole body be soft, smooth, light, comfortable and relaxed.

Picture yourself as a ____-year old.

Think of where you lived and who lived with you. Perhaps you had a good friend. Picture that person; remember what it was about them that you liked and what you usually did together.

Remember what you wore in those days. How you wore your hair. What your body was like and how you wanted your body to look.

Remember someone who you were attracted to romantically.

continued >

STEPPING BACK IN TIME [continued]

Think of what it was about that person that was so appealing. Remember what you did about those feelings of attraction—whether you let that person—or anyone—know how you felt. What you fantasized about them, and in reality, what happened?

Remember how it felt the first time you knew someone that you liked, liked you back—the power, the pleasure of knowing that someone found you attractive.

Now think about what you know now that would have made life easier then. How someone could have helped you learn it. What you needed most from others then—from your parents, your friends, teachers or other significant people in your life.

Think about what you got and how you'd like to make that better for the next generation.

Finally, picture yourself today standing beside your younger self. Be aware of how far you've come. Smile at each other. Say goodbye. And come back.

Stretch and open your eyes.

3. Allow the group to adjust to the environment. Ask the group, before we talk about your thoughts and memories; take a few minutes to draw a picture of yourself as a ___-year old. Write a few key words next to the picture to describe your strongest memories
4. Process the exercise and the self-portrait by asking parents to share their drawings, key descriptors and images they feel comfortable sharing. Depending on the size of the group, they may do that with one other person, a small group, or the group as a whole.
5. Conclude by writing a list of key descriptors/thoughts and images to keep posted in the room during the remainder of your time together.

Adaptation

Parents with younger aged children can complete this activity as written and discuss how they can relate this activity to parenting younger children. The Guided Imagery script could also be adapted to include memories of early childhood friendships, models of romantic relationships, and early discussions of sex, sexuality and relationships. However, the impact may not be as profound due to the intensity of the adolescent experience and the difficulty some may have in recalling early childhood experiences.

FOUR CORNERS

Overview

Beliefs about sex, sexuality and relationships are based on cultural, family and individual values, histories and experiences. Children and young people who understand their family's values and expectations regarding sexual health are more likely to make behavior choices consistent with those values. Parents who hope to convey their values, messages and expectations about sex, sexuality and relationships in a clear and deliberate manner, need to understand their own beliefs and where those beliefs came from. This exercise will help participants clarify their values around sexuality and empathize with the values of others.

Objectives

During this activity participants will:

1. Examine their personal values about sexuality related topics.
2. Consider how their values are different than other parents.

Time

20 minutes

Materials

Worksheet: *Four Corners*

Four pieces of paper labeled Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree

Tape

Writing utensils

A large space where participants can move around

Preparation

Make copies of worksheets for each participant.

Because this activity involves individual values around sensitive topics, participants may bring strong emotions or ideas to this exercise. Be prepared to create a safe environment for all opinions. Allow parents to share or pass during the processing activities.

The four pieces of paper labeled Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree should be posted in the four corners or different areas of the room.

Instructions

1. Introduce the activity by sharing the following: we will be doing an exercise that will help us better understand our values about sexuality as well as the values of others.
2. Ask participants:
 - Why do you think it may be important to understand our own values when discussing sexuality with our children?
 - Where do we learn our sexual values?
 - How might these values change over time?
 - How does culture or the experiences of a cultural group affect our values?
3. Share with the group that it is important to recognize that individual values are to be respected. For this activity we don't have to agree. There are no right or wrong answers to these value statements.
4. Hand out a Four Corners worksheet to participants and ask them to complete the worksheet. Inform parents that these worksheets will be collected and anonymously redistributed. Do not have parents put their name on the worksheet.
5. Collect the worksheets.
6. Point out that there are signs in the four corners of the room that match the possible answers on the worksheet.
7. Mix up the worksheets and redistribute them randomly. Ask participants not to react if they get their own worksheet.
8. Read one value statement and ask the participants to go to the corner of the room that matches what is circled on their worksheet.
9. Ask for volunteers to defend what was chosen on their worksheet. Ask them to respond as if it were their own answer, using respectful language (i.e. do not qualify answers with "I don't agree with this, but..."). Encourage discussion from each corner that has a participant standing in it.

FOUR CORNERS [\[continued\]](#)

10. Continue with the rest of the questions as time allows.

You may have to limit the number of questions depending on the number of people and level of discussion.

11. Process the activity with the following questions:

- Did the range of opinions in the room surprise anyone?
- What was it like to defend an opinion with which you didn't necessarily agree?
- Why is it important to understand our own values before talking with children and teens about these topics?

[worksheet](#) >

Citation: This activity has been used by many parent educators and modified over time; no specific citation is available.

WORKSHEET

FOUR CORNERS ACTIVITY

Circle the answer that best fits your opinion about the following statements.

1. Sexuality is a basic part of being human.

STRONGLY AGREE

AGREE

DISAGREE

STRONGLY DISAGREE

2. Boys and girls should have the same kinds of toys available to them.

STRONGLY AGREE

AGREE

DISAGREE

STRONGLY DISAGREE

3. You can hurt children if you teach them about sex too early.

STRONGLY AGREE

AGREE

DISAGREE

STRONGLY DISAGREE

4. Sexual experimentation is part of growing up.

STRONGLY AGREE

AGREE

DISAGREE

STRONGLY DISAGREE

5. A gay, lesbian or bisexual teenager should be able to take a date of the same sex to the prom.

STRONGLY AGREE

AGREE

DISAGREE

STRONGLY DISAGREE

6. Honesty is the best policy at all ages when addressing sexual questions.

STRONGLY AGREE

AGREE

DISAGREE

STRONGLY DISAGREE

7. It confuses children/teens to talk about gender.

STRONGLY AGREE

AGREE

DISAGREE

STRONGLY DISAGREE

DEFINING OUR TASK – PARENT MESSAGES

Overview

Few parents have given conscious thought to the messages they would like to send their children regarding sexuality and relationships. This activity provides an opportunity for parents to clarify the values they want to transmit to their children.

Objectives

During this activity participants will:

1. Identify messages they would like to share with their children about healthy sexuality.
2. Consider other messages parents would like to share with their children.

Time

15 minutes

(5 minute version — see adaptation)

Materials

Legal size blank paper

Markers that will be easy to read from a distance

Masking tape

Preparation

No advance preparation required.

Instructions

1. Give each participant a legal-sized sheet of paper and marker. Ask this question: If you could pass on just one or two messages to your child about healthy sexuality, what would they be? Ask that they write their message(s) large enough to be seen from anywhere in the room. No names go on the papers.
2. Ask participants to post their messages around the room. Once all are posted, read them aloud to the group. Note that few, if any, have anything to do with anatomy or biology. Far more often, these messages concern how much we want our children to value and take care of themselves and others.

3. Ask parents to consider the current age of their child/children. Ask if there are their different, age-appropriate messages you can give your child now.
4. Discuss whose job it is to send these messages and how. Generally, people agree that it takes trusted adults working in partnership—parents, schools, families, faith communities and others—to accomplish that goal.

Adaptation

In small groups, you will be able to read all the messages.

In very large groups, you may only have time for a representative sample. If talking with an individual parent, you can have them write some messages on a piece of paper or simply state them to you. Talk about the messages using the follow-up questions outlined above.

5 minute adaptation:

1. Ask participants to write their key sexuality message(s) on a piece of paper.
2. When everyone is done, ask for a few volunteers to share their message(s).
3. Use discussion prompts from activity description as time allows, making sure to note that few messages, if any, have to do with anatomy or biology. Far more often, these messages concern our family's values and speak to how much we want our children to value and take care of themselves and others.
4. Conclude by congratulating the group on their commitment to raising sexually healthy children.

HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

Overview

Parents who understand normal patterns of development - from birth to 18 - are in a good position to answer their child's questions and allay their concerns. At the same time, they are better able to calm their own fears, recognize when concern is appropriate, and relax enough to enjoy the developmental process as it evolves.

Objectives

During this activity participants will:

1. Gain an understanding of healthy sexual development.
2. Learn where to go for more information and support regarding child and adolescent sexual development.

Time

60 minutes

(20 minute version — see adaptation)

Materials

Newsprint

Markers

Pens/pencils

Worksheet: *Healthy Sexual Development* (if doing individually)

Handouts:

- *Questions Commonly Asked by Children of All Ages*
- *Healthy Sexual Development*

Preparation

Review stages of child and adolescent sexual development.

Choose 1-2 age groups that best represent the children of the parents in your group.

Prepare newsprint. Each piece of newsprint should have one of the age groups and the three developmental characteristics written on the top:

- Age groups: newborn to toddler (0 to 2), preschool (3 to 5), early elementary (6 to 9), preteen - early teen (10 to 14), mid-late teen (15 to 18).
- Developmental characteristics - how they look, how they feel and act, how they think.

Instructions

1. Introduce topic and provide background on why it's important.
2. Developmental Stages (20 minutes)
 - Break into small groups of 2-4 people or have each parent complete a worksheet individually. Give each group an age specific piece of newsprint. Or if doing individually, give each parent the healthy sexual development worksheet.
 - Ask groups/individuals to list healthy sexual development characteristics for the age group(s) on their newsprint/worksheet. Encourage parents to try to list a few characteristics for each category (how they look, how they feel and act, how they think) on their newsprint/worksheet. Allow 5-8 minutes for quick brainstorming.
 - *If done in small groups*, ask groups to post newsprint on the wall. *If done individually*, post clean sheets of newsprint on the wall with ages on top. Ask parents to add 1-2 characteristics for each age group, trying not to repeat what others have written down.
3. Discussion (30-40 minutes)
 - Go through each of the sheets. Confirm correct information, add missing information, and correct/modify misinformation. Reflect on where we get our information about sexual growth and development - from individual experiences, family, culture, books, etc.
 - Review handouts:
 - *Healthy Sexual Development* - highlight what was not included on their lists and elaborate on the teachable moments that may be encountered during the different stages.
 - *Questions Commonly Asked by Children of All Ages* - review questions and practice possible answers to some of the questions.

Adaptation

This activity can be done together as a small group or a larger group can be divided into smaller ones. If talking with an individual parent, you can walk through the activity and handouts with them.

[continued >](#)

HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT [continued]**20-minute adaptation:**

1. Using newsprint or a white board, write one or two age groups on the top (based on the parent group and the ages of their children). Ask parents to list typical sexuality and sexual health characteristics for these ages. Allow 5-8 minutes for quick brainstorming.
2. Remind participants that determining what is age-appropriate information depends a lot on the child. Some children ask questions while others do not. Parents have an opportunity to continue to lay a foundation of facts as well as reinforce family values; continuing to model that they are approachable and interested in what the child is considering.
3. Distribute *Healthy Sexual Development* handout. Review the answers provided by participants and make corrections and additions based on the handout. Elaborate on the teachable moments that may be encountered during the different stages to address what children at this age should know.

[worksheet >](#)

WORKSHEET

HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

AGES: _____

SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT CHARACTERISTICS

How they look

How they feel and act

How they think

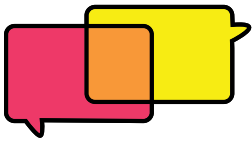
AGES: _____

SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT CHARACTERISTICS

How they look

How they feel and act

How they think



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A GUIDE TO RAISING SEXUALLY HEALTHY CHILDREN

HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT: AGES 6-9

This handout describes what to expect at various stages of a child's sexual development and highlights what parents can do to help their children grow into sexually healthy young people.

Though all children grow and develop at different rates, children this age are likely to...

- Be curious about bodies, theirs and others.
- Be interested in "playing doctor" or "I'll show you mine if you show me yours."
- Joke, giggle and call people names associated with going to the bathroom.
- Start to show more modesty and become more self-conscious; around age 9, most children are closing the bathroom door for privacy.
- Be exposed to TV, music and computer games that have sexual messages/content.
- Start hearing references to sex on the playground or other places; use new words they hear from peers they may not understand, e.g., "doing it", "gay" and "sexy".
- Begin to move away from parents and toward peers (This typically happens at the end of this stage.) Though parents continue to be most important, peers begin to become much more influential.
- Start a transition to puberty with physical changes for some beginning at age 8 or 9. Menstruation may begin for girls as early as 9. Ejaculation for boys begins between ages 8 and 15.

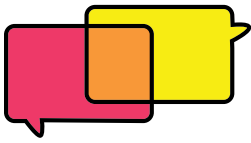
What this means for parents...

- Curiosity about bodies is normal and healthy. You can set limits while still assuring children that their curiosity is normal. There is no need to worry about this behavior unless there is a large age difference between the children involved or the children seem angry or afraid.
- It's OK to acknowledge that bodies can be funny. Encourage good manners by teaching children where and when it's OK and not OK to make jokes.
- Establish boundaries regarding rules about nudity around other people. Rules can be taught in terms of "respect". "Nude bodies make some people uncomfortable and because of that, we have to wear clothes when we're around others." Nudity in the home is fine if everyone in the family is comfortable with it.
- Find appropriate ways to satisfy the 6-9 year olds interest in bodies. Books like "It's So Amazing" are a good resource.
- Monitor TV and computer use. Most kids are able to use technology by this age; make sure there are appropriate controls in place.
- Although it's tempting to watch adult TV shows while children are around, remember that they are watching too.
- When your children see content on the TV or internet that makes you uncomfortable or goes against your family's values, talk to them. Take the time to share your thoughts, opinions and family's values about these topics.
- Clarify any new words your children learn from peers.
- Teach children about the changes that will come with puberty, including wet dreams, menstruation, other physical changes,

HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT: Ages 6-9 (CONT.)

emotional changes, and the possibility of pregnancy. Do this before your child experiences any of these changes. Schools may or may not address puberty in this age range.

- Introduce the topics of sex, sexuality, reproduction and relationships if children haven't brought them up themselves. A book can be a good way to do this. Let your children know that you welcome questions and want to make sure they have the right information.
- Despite their growing independence, continue to spend time with your children every day, eat meals together, play together, help with homework, have strong bedtime routines, etc. It is during these times that important conversations are most likely to take place.
- Acknowledge that different families have different rules and values, and discuss your family rules and values and why you have them.
- Have conversations about what makes a good friend, how to respectfully end a friendship that isn't good for them, how to show empathy (i.e., understanding of what other people are feeling) and how to stand up for themselves when needed. Learning to develop and maintain friendships is an important skill that is learned at this age.
- By age 9, be sure your children know:
 - The correct words for body parts, both male and female, and use them correctly.
 - The basics of reproduction including: sexuality is a natural part of life; sexual feelings are normal; sex can produce babies; and in addition to procreation, people have sex to experience closeness and pleasure.
 - That people can choose when and whether to have children; having children is a big responsibility.
 - How to take an active part in managing their body's health and safety; that their doctor can be a great resource to help them stay healthy.



it's that easy!

A GUIDE TO RAISING SEXUALLY HEALTHY CHILDREN

HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT: AGES 10-14

This handout describes what to expect at various stages of a child's sexual development and highlights what parents can do to help their children grow into sexually healthy young people.

Though all children grow and develop at different rates, children this age are likely to...

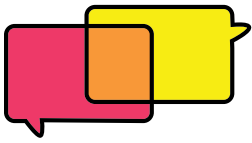
- Have puberty kick into full gear:
 - Both genders - body odor, bone growth starting with feet & legs, pimples
 - Girls - breast buds, pubic & armpit hair, menses (period)
 - Boys - pubic and armpit hair, nocturnal emissions, muscle growth, frequent and quick erections - often for non-sexual reasons.
 - Increased self-consciousness about body. Frequently wonder "Am I Normal?"
 - Mood swings - can be pleasant and happy one moment and angry or teary the next.
 - Anxiety about puberty
 - Surge in brain development with less ability to control their actions and poor judge of other's emotions
- Have a high interest in knowing more about sex, but few are sexually active.
- Be afraid to ask questions and act as if they "know it all".
- Begin to understand sexual identity.
- Begin to masturbate and have sexual fantasies.
- See peers and relationships as more important and stronger, e.g., experience first crushes, focus on best friends and fitting in with peers, etc.
- Experience first steps towards romantic relationships, often consisting of walking home from school together, sitting together at events, phone calls, etc.
- Face peer pressure about drugs and sex.
- Have interest in texting, connecting with friends on the computer, playing video games, etc.
- Be exposed to pornography. The average age of first exposure to pornography is 11 years old.

What this means for parents...

- Help your children understand the body changes that are happening to them
- Teach them about hygiene products and how to use them.
- Talk to girls about who they can go to for help if they begin their period while at school or a friend's house.
- Be clear about expectations about how your children treat those around them, while also understanding that their mood swings are 1) normal and 2) caused by huge hormonal shifts. Reassure young people that it's normal to not quite understand their moods at this age.

HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT: Ages 10-14 (CONT.)

- Assure your children that they are normal and their bodies are developing at the rate that is right for them.
- Talk to your children about:
 - Family expectations around healthy sexual behaviors.
 - The idea that sexual feelings can be enjoyed without acting on them.
 - Identifying adults outside of the family that can act as reliable resources.
 - How to avoid or get out of high-pressure situations.
 - Birth control, condoms and STDs, and where to get services if needed.
 - How to make decisions about when, how and with whom it's OK to have sex.
 - The fact that they should never have to participate in a behavior with which they are uncomfortable.
 - Family rules about dating
- Know that your children still need you, and rely on information from you about values and expectations to make good decisions, even though they may act like their friends are more important.
- If teens question if they are gay or lesbian, they need extra love, understanding and information. You may need extra support in this situation as well. Don't be afraid to seek it out. Remember that sexual identity and sexual behavior don't always match up.
- Respect your child's privacy, i.e., knock before entering their bedroom, and reassure them that being curious about their body is normal and healthy.
- Encourage independence, and give them credit when they stick to their values in difficult situations.
- Provide guidance for facing peer pressure or getting out of difficult situations by practicing "What if" scenarios. For example: "What if you're at a friend's house and they offer you a cigarette?"
- Keep communication open but also realize that sometimes young people need to handle peer relationships on their own. Often social skills at this age are not well developed, and they may have trouble communicating feelings, likes, dislikes, etc. They need practice to get it right, and they will make mistakes. Parents can be a gentle place to fall when things with friends aren't going well. Remember that these relationship skills will be used later in life with partners.
- Keep an eye out for bullying behavior and get involved if necessary.
- Monitor media consumption. Make sure that kids are not being exposed to mature content, especially away from home. Pre-teens need clear expectations and limits.
- Teach children about respectful behavior in the digital world - no bullying, harassing, sexting, etc. Remind them that digital media is permanent, once you press "send" messages and photos never go away.
- Focus on respect and staying true to values.
- Make sure that rules about dating are clear. Have conversations about what is acceptable at this age.
- Ask your child to teach you what it's like to be this age and LISTEN. It is important for them to be the authority sometimes. Then you can share what you remember about your life when you were growing up.



it's that easy!

A GUIDE TO RAISING SEXUALLY HEALTHY CHILDREN

HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT: AGES 15-18

This handout describes what to expect at various stages of a child's sexual development and highlights what parents can do to help their children grow into sexually healthy young people.

Though all children grow and develop at different rates, children this age are likely to...

- Continue to move through puberty, but start to grow into their adult bodies.
- Try out lots of things (ideas, hobbies, people, jobs...) to see if they fit, as they sort out who they are and what they believe.
- Develop a stronger sense of moral values.
- Become more aware of their sexuality and what it means for them. This is true for young people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual as well.
- Have a wide range of sexual experiences – some are involved in romantic/sexual relationships, others are not. Some masturbate and have sexual fantasies, other do not.
- Make thoughtful choices about sex, based on knowledge.
- Feel more freedom to be an individual – not as focused on being just like peers.
- Have the capacity for loving, intimate relationships.
- Have an increased desire for independence from parents.
- Spend more time alone with friends and out in the world.
- Assume more responsibility with driving, jobs, etc.
- Be exposed to adult media content regarding sexuality and other topics.
- Think more about their future.

What this means for parents...

- Make sure your children have access to accurate health information
- Encourage your children to begin taking responsibility for their health. Have them tell their concerns directly to their doctors, track their own appointments, etc.
- Respect your children's privacy, i.e., knock before entering their bedroom and reassure them that being curious about their body is normal and healthy.
- Support your children in making good choices regarding exercise, nutrition, etc.
- Make sure that your children get information that makes sense for them. Remember that sexual identity and sexual behavior don't always match up. Gay, lesbian, transgender or bisexual youth may need different resources and support. Parents can help them find it.
- Encourage your children to pursue their interests, whether it is service work, arts opportunities, academic interests, etc.
- Encourage your children to take positive, healthy risks.
- Encourage your children to find mentors outside the family.

HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT: Ages 15-18 (CONT.)

- Provide a nurturing and structured environment with consistent rules, expectations, and consequences. Discuss family values often.
- Give gradual opportunities for independence. Don't throw it all at them at once! Start slow and build up.
- Make sure that your children understand that with freedom comes responsibility. Don't rescue them from every difficult situation they get themselves into. Let them learn from their mistakes.
- Teens still need family time! Have regular family dinners, spend time doing fun things together, maintain family routines and traditions, etc. These are the times when both connection and conversation can take place.
- Have ongoing conversations about safety. Some important topics are: seatbelt use, drunken driving, condom use, sexual assault, internet use, drugs and alcohol.
- Encourage your children to make plans for the future. Talk with them about their education and career goals. Encourage them to think about how and when a family may fit into their life plans.
- By this stage (or before it), be sure your children:
 - Know how to prevent pregnancy including abstinence and birth control and where to go to get reproductive health services.
 - Know information about sexually transmitted infections, how to prevent them and where to get tested and treated.
 - Recognize the role of drugs and alcohol in poor sexual decision making.
 - Understand individual differences about sexuality, including sexual orientation (being gay, transgender, etc.).
 - Understand the potential dangers of casual sex.
 - Recognize and protect themselves against sexual violence and know how to react to such dangers; understand what it means to consent to sex.
 - Know where to find community resources.

- Have the capacity to learn about intimate, loving, long-term relationships
- Have an understanding of their own sexual orientation (This is different than sexual behavior)

WHAT FAMILIES NEED TO DO TO RAISE SEXUALLY HEALTHY CHILDREN

To help teens ages 13 to 17 develop as sexually healthy youth, families should:

- Clearly articulate your family and religious values regarding sexual intercourse. Express that, although sex is pleasurable, young people should wait to initiate sex until they are in a mature, loving, and responsible relationship.
- Express that we all have a variety of options for experiencing intimacy and expressing love.
- Discuss together the factors, including age, mutual consent, protection, contraceptive use, love, intimacy, etc., that you and your teen believe should be a part of decisions about sexual intercourse.
- Reinforce teens' ability to make decisions while providing information on which they can base those decisions.
- Discuss contraceptive options and talk about the importance of condom use.
- Discuss teens' options, should unprotected intercourse occur — including emergency contraception and STI testing and treatment. Discuss teens' options, should pregnancy occur, including abortion, parenting, and adoption.
- Discuss exploitive behavior and why it is unhealthy and (in some cases) illegal.
- Help youth identify various physical and verbal responses to avoid/get away from sexual situations that make them feel uncomfortable.
- Acknowledge that teens have many future life options, that some may marry and/or parent while others may remain single and/or childless.
- Use inclusive language that recognizes that some youth may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

Compiled by Barbara Huberman, RN, MEd, Director of Education and Outreach

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10 TIPS ON INITIATING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GROWTH:

Initiating conversations about growth, development, and sexuality may be difficult for some parents because they did not grow up in an environment where the subject was discussed. Some parents may be afraid they do not know the right answers or feel confused about the proper amount of information to offer. To help, here are 10 tips to:

1. First, encourage communication by reassuring your children that they can talk to you about anything.
2. Take advantage of teachable moments. A friend's pregnancy, news article, or a TV show can help start a conversation.
3. Listen more than you talk. Think about what you're being asked. Confirm with your child that what you heard is in fact what he or she meant to ask.
4. Don't jump to conclusions. The fact that a teen asks about sex does not mean they are having or thinking about having sex.
5. Answer questions simply and directly. Give factual, honest, short, and simple answers.
6. Respect your child's views. Share your thoughts and values and help your child express theirs.
7. Reassure young people that they are normal—as are their questions and thoughts.
8. Teach your children ways to make good decisions about sex and coach them on how to get out of risky situations.
9. Admit when you don't know the answer to a question. Suggest the two of you find the answer together on the Internet or in the library.
10. Discuss that at times your teen may feel more comfortable talking with someone other than you. Together, think of other trusted adults with whom they can talk.

Growth and Development, Ages 13 to 17

What Parents Need to Know

Human development is a lifelong process of physical, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional growth and change. In the early stages of life—from babyhood to childhood, childhood to adolescence, and adolescence to adulthood—enormous changes take place. Throughout the process, each person develops attitudes and values that guide choices, relationships, and understanding.

Sexuality is also a lifelong process. Infants, children, teens, and adults are sexual beings. Just as it is important to enhance a child's physical, emotional, and cognitive growth, so it is important to lay foundations for a child's sexual growth. Adults have a responsibility to help children understand and accept their evolving sexuality.

Each stage of development encompasses specific markers. The following developmental guidelines apply to most children in this age group. However, each child is an individual and may reach these stages of development earlier or later than other children the same age. When concerns arise about a specific child's development, parents or other caregivers should consult a doctor or other child development professional.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Most teens ages 13 to 17 will:

- Complete puberty and the physical transition from childhood to adulthood
- Reach nearly their adult height, especially females (Males continue to grow taller into their early twenties.)

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Most teens ages 13 to 17 will:

- Attain cognitive maturity—the ability to make decisions based on knowledge of options and their consequences
- Continue to be influenced by peers (The power of peer pressure lessens after early adolescence.)

- Build skills to become self-sufficient
- Respond to media messages but develop increasing ability to analyze those messages
- Develop increasingly mature relationships with friends and family
- Seek increased power over their own lives
- Learn to drive, increasing their independence

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Most teens ages 13 to 17 will:

- Have the capacity to develop long-lasting, mutual, and healthy relationships, if they have the foundations for this development—trust, positive past experiences, and an understanding of love
- Understand their own feelings and have the ability to analyze why they feel a certain way
- Begin to place less value on appearance and more on personality

SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

Most teens ages 13 to 17 will:

- Understand that they are sexual and understand the options and consequences of sexual expression
- Choose to express their sexuality in ways that may or may not include sexual intercourse
- Recognize the components of healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Have a clear understanding of pregnancy and of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and the possible consequences of sexual intercourse and have the ability to make reasoned choices about sex based on knowledge
- Recognize the role media play in propagating views about sex

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EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Most young people aged nine to 12 will:

- Want to blend in and not stand out from their peers in any way, particularly as to gender roles and sexuality
- Feel concern about outward appearance (They want to look like “everyone else.”)
- Become self-conscious and self-centered
- Have ambivalent, conflicting feelings about puberty and about sexual desire and want to be independent **and** to conform
- Care greatly about relationships with peers, friendships, dating, and crushes and give peers more importance than family
- Relate to both same-gender and opposite-gender peers and may develop sexual feelings for others as a new dimension within relationships
- Develop the capacity to understand the components of a caring, loving relationship
- Experience feelings of insecurity and begin to doubt self-concept and previous self-confidence (Girls, especially, often experience a significant drop in self-esteem.)
- Struggle with family relationships and desire privacy and separation from family (They test limits and push for independence.)
- Experience mood swings, especially evident in family relationships
- Develop infatuations or “crushes” and may begin dating

SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

Most young people aged nine to 12 will:

- Have an emerging sense of self as a young adult
- Feel conscious of their sexuality and how they choose to express it
- Understand jokes with sexual content
- Feel concerns about being normal, such as whether it is normal to masturbate, have wet dreams, etc.
- Feel anxious about puberty, when it will happen, how it will occur, how to be prepared, etc.
- Feel shy about asking questions of caregivers, especially regarding sexuality, and may act like they already know all the answers
- Value privacy highly

WHAT FAMILIES NEED TO DO TO RAISE SEXUALLY HEALTHY CHILDREN

To help nine- to 12-year-old youth develop a healthy sexuality, families should:

- Help young people understand puberty and the changes they are going through and that these changes, including menstruation and nocturnal emissions (ejaculation), are normal.
- Respect young people’s privacy while encouraging open communication .
- Convey that growth and maturation rates differ from person to person.
- Help young people understand that, while they are maturing physically, they still have lots of emotional and cognitive growth ahead and that sexual intercourse is not healthy, appropriate, or wise at this time in their lives.
- Acknowledge that abstinence is normal and healthy, that sexual development is healthy and natural, and that, as they grow older, there will be many ways to express sexuality that do not include sexual intercourse.
- Discuss the important relationship between sexual and emotional feelings.
- Be open to conversations about contraception and condoms and respond honestly and accurately when young people ask about them.

Compiled by Barbara Huberman, RN, MEd, Director of Education and Outreach

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Growth and Development, Ages Nine to Twelve

What Parents Need to Know

Human development is a lifelong process of physical, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional growth and change. In the early stages of life—from babyhood to childhood, childhood to adolescence, and adolescence to adulthood—enormous changes take place. Throughout the process, each person develops attitudes and values that guide choices, relationships, and understanding.

Sexuality is also a lifelong process. Infants, children, teens, and adults are sexual beings. Just as it is important to enhance a child's physical, emotional, and cognitive growth, so it is important to lay foundations for a child's sexual growth. Adults have a responsibility to help young people understand and accept their evolving sexuality.

Each stage of development encompasses specific markers. The following developmental guidelines apply to most children in this age group. However, each child is an individual and may reach these stages of development earlier or later than other children the same age. When concerns arise about a specific child's development, parents or other caregivers should consult a doctor or other child development professional.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Most young people aged nine to 12 will:

- Experience a growth spurt with significant weight gain, muscle growth, and genital maturation (Growth spurt begins earlier for girls; lasts longer for boys, who end up taller).
- Enter puberty, a time when hormones produced in the pituitary gland trigger production of testosterone in males, estrogen/progesterone in females [This usually begins earlier in girls (nine to 12) than in boys (11 to 14).] During puberty—
 - Skin becomes more oily and may develop pimples.
 - Sweating increases and youth may have body odor.

- Hair grows under arms and on pubis and, in males, on face and chest.
- Body proportions change [hips widen in females, shoulders broaden in males].
- Joints may ache due to rapid growth.
- In males, genitals mature, scrotum darkens, voice deepens, sperm is produced, and erections, ejaculation, and wet dreams are more frequent.
- In females, genitals mature, breasts develop, vaginal lubrication increases, and ovulation and menstrual cycle begin.
- Masturbate (both males and females) and may have fantasies about others and about sexual intimacy.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Most young people aged nine to 12 will:

- Move toward independence as they progress to middle/junior high school
- Continue developing skills in making decisions as they become more independent
- Begin to consider future careers and occupations
- Shift their school focus from play-centered activities to academics
- Begin to look to peers and media for information and advice (Friends greatly influence them.)
- Develop increasing capability for social conscience and for abstract thought, including understanding complex issues such as poverty and war
- Take on increased responsibility, such as family jobs and babysitting

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- Understand more complex emotions, such as confusion and excitement
- Want more emotional freedom and space from parents
- Become better at controlling and concealing feelings
- Begin to form a broader self-concept and recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, especially with regard to social, academic, and athletic skills
- Have friends and sustained peer group interactions

SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

Most children aged six to eight will:

- Prefer to socialize with their own gender almost exclusively and maintain a fairly rigid separation between males and females (They will tease someone who acts in a way that does not adhere to pre-defined gender roles.)
- Recognize the social stigmas and taboos surrounding sexuality, especially if parents are nervous about the subject, and will be less open about asking questions
- Understand more complex ideas with regard to sexuality and begin to understand intercourse apart from making a baby
- Look to peers, media, and other sources for information about sex
- Understand gender role stereotypes, if presented as such
- May engage in same-gender sexual exploration
- Have a stronger self-concept in terms of gender and body image

WHAT FAMILIES NEED TO DO TO RAISE SEXUALLY HEALTHY CHILDREN

To help six- to eight-year-old children develop a healthy sexuality, families should:

- Continue to provide information about sexuality, even if a child does not ask for it. At these ages, children may ask fewer questions, but still have lots of curiosity and need information about sexuality.
- Explain that there are many different types of families and all types have equal value and deserve respect.
- Provide basic information about important sexuality issues, such as HIV/AIDS, abortion, marriage, and sexual abuse.
- Inform children about the changes that will take place when they begin puberty. Though most six- to eight-year-old children do not experience these changes, the age at which some begin to show signs of puberty,

such as pubic hair, breast buds, and hair under the arms is gradually decreasing, so that children need this information sooner.

- Recognize that everyone does not have the same sexual orientation. Acknowledge to children that many people have romantic feelings for members of the other gender, and some have these feelings for members of the same gender.

Compiled by Barbara Huberman, RN, MEd, Director of Education and Outreach

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10 TIPS ON INITIATING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GROWTH:

Initiating conversations about growth, development, and sexuality may be difficult for some parents because they did not grow up in an environment where the subject was discussed. Some parents may be afraid they do not know the right answers or feel confused about the proper amount of information to offer.

To help, here are 10 tips to:

1. First, encourage communication by reassuring your children that they can talk to you about anything.
2. Take advantage of teachable moments. A friend's pregnancy, news article, or a TV show can help start a conversation.
3. Listen more than you talk. Think about what you're being asked. Confirm with your child that what you heard is in fact what he or she meant to ask.
4. Don't jump to conclusions. The fact that a teen asks about sex does not mean they are having or thinking about having sex.
5. Answer questions simply and directly. Give factual, honest, short, and simple answers.
6. Respect your child's views. Share your thoughts and values and help your child express theirs.
7. Reassure young people that they are normal—as are their questions and thoughts.
8. Teach your children ways to make good decisions about sex and coach them on how to get out of risky situations.
9. Admit when you don't know the answer to a question. Suggest the two of you find the answer together on the Internet or in the library.
10. Discuss that at times your teen may feel more comfortable talking with someone other than you. Together, think of other trusted adults with whom they can talk.

Growth and Development, Ages Six to Eight

What Parents Need to Know

Human development is a lifelong process of physical, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional growth and change. In the early stages of life—from babyhood to childhood, childhood to adolescence, and adolescence to adulthood—enormous changes take place. Throughout the process, each person develops attitudes and values that guide choices, relationships, and understanding.

Sexuality is also a lifelong process. Infants, children, teens, and adults are sexual beings. Just as it is important to enhance a child's physical, emotional, and cognitive growth, so it is important to lay foundations for a child's sexual growth. Adults have a responsibility to help children understand and accept their evolving sexuality.

Each stage of development encompasses specific markers. The following developmental guidelines apply to most children in this age group. However, each child is an individual and may reach these stages of development earlier or later than other children the same age. When concerns arise about a specific child's development, parents or other caregivers should consult a doctor or other child development professional.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Most children aged six to eight will:

- Experience slower growth of about 2 ½ inches and eight pounds per year
- Grow longer legs relative to their total height and begin resembling adults in the proportion of legs to body
- Develop less fat and grow more muscle than in earlier years
- Increase in strength
- Lose their baby teeth and begin to grow adult teeth which may appear too big for their face
- Use small and large motor skills in sports and other activities

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Most children aged six to eight will:

- Develop the skills to process more abstract concepts and complex ideas (e.g., pregnancy, addition/subtraction, etc.)
- Begin elementary school
- Spend more time with the peer group and turn to peers for information (They need information sources outside of family, and other adults become important in their lives.)
- Be able to focus on the past and future as well as the present
- Develop an increased attention span
- Improve in self-control, being able to conform to adult ideas of what is “proper” behavior and to recognize appropriateness in behavior
- Understand the concepts of normality/abnormality, feel concern with being normal and curiosity about differences
- Begin to develop as an individual
- Think for themselves and develop individual opinions, especially as they begin to read and to acquire information through the media

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Most children aged six to eight will:

- Become more modest and want privacy
- Develop relationships with and love people outside the family as their emotional needs are met by peers as well as family
- Develop less physically demonstrative relationships and express love through sharing and talking (They may be embarrassed by physical affection.)
- Need love and support, but feel less willing to ask for it

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QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY CHILDREN OF ALL AGES

Overview

Parents are often concerned about how they will answer their children's questions related to sex, sexuality and relationships. This activity offers an overview of the kinds of questions children ask at different ages and provides an opportunity for parents to think about the messages and information they would like to share.

Objectives

During this activity participants will:

1. Think about what messages they want to give to their children.
2. Gain a better sense of the kinds of questions children ask at different ages and stages.
3. Practice responding to commonly asked questions.

Time

30-45 minutes

Materials

3x5 index cards

Handouts:

- *Questions Commonly Asked by Children of All Ages*
- *Sexual Growth and Development*

Preparation

Prepare stacks of index cards with one question each from the handout *Questions Commonly Asked by Children of All Ages*. Use the questions from the age groups of children represented by the parents in the group. You will need one stack of cards for every 3-4 parents in your group.

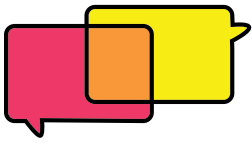
Create two pieces of newsprint:

1. What to think about before answering my child's question:
 - What is the child really asking? How do I feel about it?
 - What message(s) do I want to give?
 - What does my child already know and what information do I need to know to answer their question?

- How can I be sure to communicate what I want to convey?
2. How to respond to questions asked by my child:
 - Give a clear message.
 - Provide correct information.
 - Speak/act in a way that encourages further communication.
 - Offer resource if you don't know answer.

Instructions

1. Introduce activity.
2. Go over newsprint to offer guidelines for how to respond to questions.
3. Break into small groups of 3-4 parents.
4. Give each group a stack of question cards.
5. Instruct parents to take turns reading questions and practice answering them in their small groups.
6. Come back together as a larger group and ask for volunteers to practice answering in front of the group.
7. For each response, be sure to:
 - Clarify message they are trying to give.
 - Correct misinformation.
 - Give feedback on whether or not the tone encouraged further communication.
 - Ask whether this was hard/easy to do and how it would be different talking with their child.
 - Offer additional resources. (e.g., books, articles, websites, etc.)
8. Give Handouts: *Questions Commonly Asked by Children of All Ages* and *Sexual Growth and Development*.



it's that easy!

A GUIDE TO RAISING SEXUALLY HEALTHY CHILDREN

QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY CHILDREN OF ALL AGES

Below is a list of common questions asked at different ages and stages in a child's development. Individual children may ask these questions earlier or later than the ages listed below, or not at all. Some questions are very specific and demand concrete, straightforward answers while others are broader and challenge you to think about the values and messages you want to share. But whenever and whatever they ask, take a deep breath, tell them you are glad they've asked, and think about the following questions as you respond.

- What is the child really asking? (You need to approach the question from the child's point of view.)
- How do I feel about it?
- What message(s) do I want to give?
- What does my child already know and what information do I need to know to answer their question?
- How can I be sure to communicate what I want to convey?

Thinking about these questions and how you want to respond before they're asked will give you a better chance of giving the responses you hope to give. Understanding where your child is developmentally and the type of information they need/want to know can help guide your thinking and preparation. But, know that even the most prepared parent doesn't get it right all the time - you won't always know the answer or say what you wished you had said. It is always okay to say, "I don't know" and follow-up later. It is also always okay to go back to your child with a different response once you have had the time to think about what messages and information you would like to share.

preschool aged children

The questions pre-school aged children ask are most often science-based - they ask questions to help them better understand the world around them.

What's that, Daddy? What's that Mommy? (Pointing to parts of the body)

Why does Mommy have breasts?

How does milk get in Mommy's breasts?

Why do I have a bellybutton?

(To Grandma, friend or stranger) Do you have a penis? a vagina?

Where did I come from? Where was I before I was born?

How was I born? How did I get out of there? Do babies come out your bellybutton?

How did I get in there?

How do you make a baby?

My friend said a stork brings you...

QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY CHILDREN OF ALL AGES (CONT.)

Can I have a baby when I get big? When can I have a baby? (Boys ask these questions too.)

My penis is hard! Why does it do that?

Why do I have to keep my clothes on?

What is this (tampon, pad) for?

Why does it feel good when I touch this (pointing to penis/vulva)?

elementary aged children

The questions children ask in elementary school reflect a greater interest in relationships – both within and outside of the family. By this age, children may be more hesitant to ask questions related to sex and sexuality. Typically, they have picked up on the fact that many adults (including their parents) are uncomfortable with this topic. However, the following questions reflect the kinds of issues that concern them.

What is sex?

What does sex feel like?

Do boys get periods? Why do girls get periods?

How come my friend has two moms/ dads?

What does gay mean?

What is HIV/AIDS? How do you catch it?

What is masturbation?

How do you know when you're in love?

What if I don't want to get married?

How are twins made?

How can someone have a baby if they're not married?

How old does someone have to be to have sex?

How does the sperm get out of the penis?

Do married people have to have sex?

Why do some adults think it's OK to touch kids' private parts?

Can I marry my best friend?

What ways can a person have a baby without having sex?

QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY CHILDREN OF ALL AGES (CONT.)**middle and high school aged children**

The questions young people ask in middle and high school often have the unspoken theme of “Am I normal?” Teenagers need to be assured that they are changing and developing in the way that is right for them. Also, teens need a chance to express their own feelings and opinions about values-based questions, as well as hear what adults think.

What are wet dreams?

I like _____ but he/she doesn't know... How can I tell him/her?

What is a virgin?

What are condoms?

Do girls really care about penis size?

How do I know when I'm ready to have sex?

What is oral sex?

What is anal sex?

How do I know if I'm gay?

Is it O.K. to masturbate?

What is rape?

How do I tell my boyfriend/girlfriend I don't want to have sex?

Can you get pregnant having sex standing up, in the hot tub/pool, the first time you have sex?

If I don't have a regular period, can I still get pregnant?

What's an STD/STI?

Why do people have sex if they can get STIs/HIV/pregnant?

How does birth control work?

Can I use birth control?

How do you talk to a boyfriend/girlfriend about STIs/ birth control?

How do girls have orgasms?

Can you get pregnant without having sex?

Is there something wrong with being “friends with benefits?”

Though posed as questions above, many of the issues raised will not be verbalized in that way. Other comments and questions may offer clues as to the real concerns and questions your child has. Refer to the sexual growth and development chart to get a better sense of where your child is and the kinds of concerns they may have at different ages.



SECTION 7

resources

resources for families

WEBSITES

Advocates for Youth | advocatesforyouth.org

The Parents' Sex Ed Center provides information and resources on the role of parents as sex educators.

Answer | answer.rutgers.edu

Answer provides links to books, organizations, websites, and workshops that can support parents in their critical role as sexuality educators of their children.

American Academy of Pediatrics | HealthyChildren.org

The HealthyChildren.org site provides general information related to child health including specific guidance on child and adolescent development.

Center on Media and Child Health | cmch.tv

The Center on Media and Child Health (CMCH) at Boston Children's Hospital (BCH) mission is to educate and empower children and those who care for them to create and consume media in ways that optimize children's health and development.

Common Sense Media | commonsensemedia.org

Common Sense Media offers age-based and educational ratings and reviews for movies, games, apps, TV shows, websites, books, and music. The Parent Concerns and Parent Blog help families understand and navigate the problems and possibilities of raising children in the digital age.

KidsHealth | kidshealth.org

KidsHealth is a comprehensive health website for parents, kids and teens on health and development.

Planned Parenthood | plannedparenthood.org

Planned Parenthood's Tools for Parents provides resources and information for talking with children and teens about sex, sexuality and relationships.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy | thenationalcampaign.org

Research and data on the power of parents in preventing teen pregnancy.

SafetyNet: American Academy of Pediatrics | safetynet.aap.org

SafetyNet provides links to information from the AAP and other organizations that specialize in keeping children and adolescents safer online.

Scarleteen | scarleteen.com

Scarleteen provides comprehensive, inclusive, thoughtful and progressive sex, sexual health and relationships education.

BOOKS FOR PARENTS AND OTHER CAREGIVERS

Beyond the Big Talk: Every Parent's Guide to Raising Sexually Healthy Teens

Debra W. Haffner, Newmarket Press, 2008.

A guide for adults about adolescent sexual development, values, influences, parent involvement, and what to say and do.

From Diapers to Dating: A Parent's Guide to Raising Sexually Healthy Youth (2nd. Edition)

Debra W. Haffner, Newmarket Press, 2008.

This book is filled with practical advice and guidelines to help parents feel more comfortable talking to children and early adolescents about sexuality issues. Incorporating values exercise, it encourages parents to examine their own sexual values so that they can share these messages.

Gender Born, Gender Made – Raising Healthy Gender-nonconforming Children

Diane Enrensaft, The Experiment, 2011.

This book offers parents and educators guidance on the philosophical dilemmas and the practical, daily concerns they have about children who don't fit a "typical" gender mold. Ms Enrensaft offers a new framework for helping each child become his or her own unique, most gender-authentic person.

Its Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens

Danah Boyd, Yale University Press, 2014.

Available in bookstores or free online <http://www.danah.org/books/ItsComplicated.pdf>

This book uncovers some of the myths regarding teens' use of social media. Offering insights learned from talking with teenagers across the United States, Danah Boyd explores issues of identity, privacy, safety, danger and bullying.

The Real Truth About Teens and Sex

Sabrina Weill, Perigee Trade, 2005.

This book presents a realistic picture of what today's teens are thinking, feeling, talking about and doing regarding dating and sex. The book contains exclusive results from a nationwide survey conducted by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

A Survival Guide to Parenting Teens: Talking to Your Kids About Sexting, Drinking, Drugs, and Other Things That Freak You Out

Joani Geltman, AMACOM, 2014.

Covering a broad range of issues from the terrifying (sex, drinking, drugs, depression) to the frustrating (defiance, laziness, conformity, entitlement), parenting expert Joani Geltman approaches a wide variety of topics with honesty and a dash of humor. This no-nonsense guide will help you get your teen talking, listening, and back on track.

Talk To Me First: Everything You Need to Know to Become Your Kids' "Go-To" Person About Sex

Deborah Roffman, Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2012.

We live in a time when kids of all ages are bombarded with age-sensitive material wherever they turn, where "sexting" and bullying are on the rise at increasingly younger ages. Deborah Roffman offers strategies to help parents become and remain the most credible and influential resource about sexuality in their children's lives.

The Transgender Child- A Handbook for Families and Professionals

Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper, Cleis Press, 2008

This comprehensive guidebook explores gender variance from birth through college. It addresses questions parents commonly face as they strive to raise gender variant or transgender children and teens with love and compassion.

What Every 21st-Century Parent Needs to Know: Facing Today's Challenges with Wisdom and Heart

Debra W. Haffner, Newmarket, 2008.

This book presents parents with facts and statistics about the toughest issues teens face in today's world, including drugs, sex, and drinking, but Haffner interprets them in an optimistic way and focuses on helping parents make realistic and positive parenting choices that will bring out the best in their child.

Why Do They Act That Way? A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen, 2nd Edition

David Walsh, Free Press, 2014

Although this book is not primarily about sexuality, it covers hormones, impulsivity, sex drive, abuse, sexual activity and education in helpful ways other books omit. This updated edition includes the most current research on the adolescent brain, and offers guidance for parents and teens on navigating the new challenges of the 24/7 online world.

BOOKS FOR PRETEENS AND TEENS

American Medical Association Girl's Guide to Becoming a Teen

Kate Gruenwald, Jossey-Bass, 2006.

With information from the American Medical Association, this book teaches girls 9-12 about both the physical (nutrition, exercise, and menstruation) and emotional (feelings and relationships) changes and issues that need to be addressed with the arrival of puberty.

American Medical Association Boy's Guide to Becoming a Teen

Kate Gruenwald Pfeifer, Jossey-Bass, 2006.

With information from the American Medical Association, this book teaches boys 9-12 about both the physical (nutrition, exercise, and growing bodies) and emotional (feelings and relationships) changes and issues that need to be addressed with the arrival of puberty.

Being a Teen

Jane Fonda, Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2014.

This guide for teens offers straight talk about the male and female body as it changes and matures; what it takes to create meaningful connections with family, friends, and others; how to be authentic and thrive in today's world; and strategies for working through the toughest challenges, including bullying, sexual abuse, eating disorders and pregnancy.

The Care and Keeping of You: The Body Book for Younger Girls

Valorie Schaefer, American Girl, 2012.

This book for girls ages 8 and up features tips, how-tos, and facts from the experts. Girls will find answers to questions about their changing body, from hair care to healthy eating, bad breath to bras, periods to pimples, and everything in between.

The Care and Keeping of You 2: The Body Book for Older Girls

Cara Natterson, *American Girl*, 2013.

This advice book will guide girls 10 and up through the steps of growing up. With illustrations and expert contributors, this book covers questions about periods, growing bodies, peer pressure, personal care, and more.

Changing You!

Gail Saltz, *Puffin Books*, 2009.

This guide to puberty for elementary school children, navigates the curiosity and confusion that young people feel as they start to notice the changes their bodies undergo. Dr. Saltz talks about reproduction and emerging sexuality with warmth and candor.

Cycle Savvy: The Smart Teen's Guide to the Mysteries of Her Body

Toni Weschler, *Harper Publishing*, 2006.

Written by a national best-selling women's health author, Cycle Savvy; enlighten girls on various phases of their menstrual cycles and gives them the tools to stay physically and emotionally healthy in this area of their lives.

Girl Stuff: A Survival Guide to Growing Up

Margaret Blackstone and Elissa Haden Guest, *Harcourt Paperbacks*, 2006.

This book gives girls going through puberty helpful tips and lots of straightforward information on everything from stress to menstruation. It also touches on peer pressure and sex and encourages girls to make smart, healthy decisions in all aspects of their lives.

iRules: What Every Tech-Healthy Family Needs to Know about Selfies, Sexting, Gaming and Growing Up

Janell Burley Hofmann, *Rodale Books*, 2014.

iRules educates parents about the online culture tweens and teens enter the minute they go online, exploring issues like cyber bullying and sexting, as well as helps parents figure out when to unplug and how to stay in sync with the changing world of technology, while teaching their children self-respect, integrity, and responsibility.

It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Sex and Sexual Health

Robie H. Harris and illustrated by Michael Emberly, *Candlewick Press*, 2014.

In this book, written for ages 10 and up, accurate information about sexuality is presented in a reader-friendly style that includes age-appropriate illustrations and humor. From conception and puberty to contraception and HIV/AIDS, it covers both the biological and psychological aspects of sexuality.

My Body, My Self for Boys: for Preteens and Teens

Lynda Madaras and Area Madaras, *Newmarket Press*, 2007.

This journal/activity book for boys eight to 15 years of age is a companion to *What's Happening to my Body? Book for Boys*. It includes exercises, quizzes, and personal stories to help boys learn about the changes that take place in their bodies during puberty.

Queer – The Ultimate LGBT Guide for Teens

Kathy Belge and Marke Bieshcke, *Zest Books*, 2011.

Queer- la guía LGBT para adolescents. Spanish edition, 2015.

Teen life is hard enough with all of the pressures kids face, but for teens who are LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender), it's even harder. Queer is a humorous and honest guide that helps LGBT teens come out to friends and family, navigate their new LGBT social life, figure out if a crush is also queer, and rise up against bigotry and homophobia.

Too Old for This, Too Young for That! Your Survival Guide for the Middle-School Years

Harriet S. Mosatche and Karen Unger, Free Spirit Publishing, 2005.

Geared toward preteens ages 9-12, this illustrated book uses humor and examples of situations that may arise to inform about physical and emotional changes, peer pressure, and family life. Survival tips and further resources are listed to give kids more information and confidence as they enter adolescence.

What's Happening to My Body? Book for Girls: A Growing Up Guide for Parents and Daughters

Lynda Madaras with Area Madaras, Newmarket Press, 2007.

Que pasa en mi cuerpo? Libro para muchachas. Spanish edition, 2011.

Filled with anecdotes, illustrations, diagrams, and honest, sensitive, nonjudgmental information for the young girl, this revised edition also addresses the new scientific facts about when a girl actually begins puberty, advice on “female athletic syndrome,” eating disorders, unwanted attention because of early development, and information on eating right, exercise, AIDS, STDs, birth control, and more.

The What's Happening to My Body? Book For Boys: A Growing Up Guide for Parents and Sons

Lynda Madaras with Area Madaras, Newmarket Press, 2007.

Que pasa en mi cuerpo? Libro para muchachos. Spanish edition, 2012.

This book discusses the changes that take place in a boy's body during puberty, including information on the body's changing size and shape, the growth spurt, reproductive organs, pubic hair, beards, pimples, voice changes, wet dreams, and puberty in girls.

What If Someone I Know Is Gay? Answers to Questions about Gay and Lesbian People

Eric Marcus, Penguin Putnam Incorporated, 2007.

This book for teens provides questions and answers about homosexuality and bisexuality. Topics include coming out, friends and family, religion, sexual behavior, school, activism, and discrimination. The book includes a resource section.

YOU: The Owner's Manual for Teens: A Guide to a Healthy Body and Happy Life

Michael F. Roizen and Mehmet Oz, Scribner, 2011.

This guide helps teens better understand their bodies and navigate the adolescent years. It addresses the biological changes happening in a young person's brain and body; how to get more energy, improve grades, salvage more sleep, get fit, eat well, maximize relationships, make decisions about sex, and so much more.

BOOKS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

The Adventures of Tulip, Birthday Wish Fairy

S. Bear Bergman, Flamingo Rampant, 2012.

Follow Tulip as he helps out with the birthday wishes of all the nine-year-olds in North America. Tulip receives a wish from a child known as David who wishes to live as Daniela. He doesn't understand how to help, so he seeks the wise counsel of the Wish Fairy Captain.

Amazing You! Getting Smart About Your Private Parts

Gail Saltz, M.D. and illustrated by Lynne Cravath, Dutton Publishing 2008.

This book is mostly pictures with anatomically correct illustrations and proper terms for body parts. It's meant for parents and their children, ages 3 to 7, to read together.

Bellybuttons Are Navels

Mark Schoen and illustrated by M.J. Quay, Prometheus Books, 2008.

This children's book is intended to create a relaxed environment for the discussion of sexuality. It will help parents initiate and guide matter-of-fact, accurate discussions with their young children about sexual anatomy.

Emma and Meesha My Boy: A Two Mom Story

Kaitlyn Considine, TWOMOMBOOKS.com, 2005.

This book focuses on the story of Emma learning proper pet care while simultaneously introducing the fact that she has two Moms. While not directly addressing same-sex parenting in-depth, this book allows children to see how different types of families share the same every-day activities.

The Family Book

Todd Parr, Little Brown Young Readers, 2010.

Written for children four to eight, this colorful picture book illustrates different types of families, including single, step, and same-sex parents, while highlighting the similarities all families share.

Whether they have two moms or two dads, a big family or a small family, a clean family or a messy one, Todd Parr assures readers that no matter what kind of family they have, every family is special in its own unique way.

I am Jazz

Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings, Dial Books, 2014.

From the time she was two years old, Jazz knew that she had a girl's brain in a boy's body. She loved pink and dressing up as a mermaid and didn't feel like herself in boys' clothing.

It's NOT the Stork! A Book About Girls, Boys, Babies, Bodies, Families, and Friends

Robie Harris and illustrated by Michael Emberley, Candlewick Press, 2006.

This book is for ages four and up to help answer those endless and perfectly normal questions that preschool, kindergarten and early elementary school children ask about how they began and what makes a girl a girl and a boy a boy.

It's So Amazing! A Book About Eggs, Sperm, Birth, Babies, and Families

Robie Harris and illustrated by Michael Emberley, Candlewick Press, 2014.

Also available in Spanish, *¡Es Alucinante!*

This book, written for ages 7 and up, provides a solid combination of appealing cartoon humor and intelligently presented, straightforward information about many topics kids wonder about: bodily changes, abuse, intercourse, birth control, pregnancy and birth, genetics, love, masturbation, homosexuality, HIV and AIDS.

My Body Belongs to Me: A Book About Body Safety

Jill Starishevsky, Safety Star Media, 2014.

The rhyming story and simple, friendly illustrations provide a way to sensitively share and discuss the topic of abuse, guiding young children to understand that their private parts belong to them alone. The overriding message of My Body Belongs to Me is that if someone touches your private parts, tell your mom, your dad, your teacher or another safe adult.

My Princess Boy

Cheryl Kilodavis, Aladdin, 2010.

Dyson loves pink, sparkly things. Sometimes he wears dresses. Sometimes he wears jeans. He likes to wear his princess tiara, even when climbing trees. He's a Princess Boy.

¿Que es esto?

Cecilia Blanco, Urano Pub Inc, 2014.

Como explicar la sexualidad humana a los niños pequeños? How do we explain human sexuality to young children? With warm language and illustrations, this book addresses key issues such as body care, sex, conception, sexual diversity, birth control methods, pregnancy, childbirth and HIV-AIDS.

Sex is a Funny Word: A book about bodies, feelings, and YOU

Cory Silverberg, Triangle Square, 2015.

This comic book-style book is an easy to read resource about bodies, gender and sexuality for children ages 8 to 10 and their parents and caregivers. It opens up conversations between young people and their caregivers in a way that allows adults to convey their values and beliefs while providing information about boundaries, safety and joy.

Some Secrets Should Never be Kept

Jayne Sanders, UpLoad Publishing Pty Ltd, 2010.

This children's picture book sensitively broaches the subject of keeping children safe from inappropriate touch. It is an invaluable tool for parents and caregivers to broach the subject of safe and unsafe touch in a non-threatening and age-appropriate way.

10,000 Dresses

Marcus Ewert, Triangle Square, 2008.

A modern fairy tale about becoming the person you feel you are inside. While Bailey dreams of beautiful dresses, no one wants to hear about it because he is a boy. Then an older girl comes along who is inspired by Bailey and they make beautiful dresses together.

Who Has What! All About Girls' Bodies and Boys' Bodies

Robie H. Harris, Candlewick Press, 2011.

This nonfiction picture book answers young children's delightful, thoughtful, and often non-stop questions about their own bodies and about how girls' and boys' bodies are the same and different—questions that are seemingly simple, but often not easy to answer.

What Makes a Baby?

Cory Silverberg, Triangle Square, 2013.

Comó se Hace un Bebé? Spanish Translation, 2014.

Geared to readers from preschool to age eight, this children's picture book talks about conception, gestation, and birth, in a way that is inclusive of all kinds of kids, adults, and families, regardless of how many people are involved, their orientation, gender and other identity, or family composition.

What's in There? All About Before You Were Born

Robie H. Harris, Candlewick Press, 2013.

This book about pregnancy and birth for young children can help young children feel and understand that bringing pregnant and giving birth to a new baby are perfectly normal and wonderful events.

Who's in my Family! All About Our Families

Robie H. Harris, Candlewick Press, 2012.

This book helps young children feel and understand that no matter what kind of family they have and no matter who is in their family, their families are perfectly normal and totally wonderful.