



CPRI

SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR TEAM

Promoting Safety and Sexual Health

Talking with your Teen about Sexuality

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

Plan Ahead – Talk with your partner about the kinds of messages you want to give your children, and clarify any issues before involving your teen in the discussion.

Use Opportunities – When the opportunity arises to provide your teen with information, use it! For example; while watching television you have a great opportunity to talk about how the media uses sexuality.

Pick a Good Time – You want to be able to talk comfortably with your teen, so choosing a good time and location for this is important. Involve your teen in deciding when the conversation can occur, and make it a priority.

Keep Boundaries – Your teen will benefit in all areas if you keep your role as parent clear and not try to be their 'best friend'. You don't need to answer overly personal questions. Gently explain that the information they are asking about is private, and you'd prefer not to answer that question as it pertains to you. You can give a general response to their questions.

Give Accurate Information – If you are unsure of an answer to a question, don't just make it up, do some research! The internet and the library can be very valuable resources. Just simply state, "That's a great question, but I'm not sure of the answer. Let's find out."

Be Respectful of Feelings – Teens are likely to feel awkward and embarrassed talking to parents about topics such as sexuality, just as you might feel awkward talking to your teen! Remember that no question is stupid, and that by being supportive of your teen, you are fostering a healthier, more open relationship.

Keep It Casual – By being relaxed and casual in your discussion, you will encourage your teen to feel the same. If used in the right context, a sense of humour can go a long way!

Use Materials – Getting your teen a recommended book about puberty or sexuality can be helpful. Even if your teen is too uncomfortable to talk to you, they will likely look through information you give them. This will provide them with accurate information that they can look over in private. Taking some time to read through it before passing it on will ensure you have the same information, and can help open conversation, i.e. “What did you think about...?”

Talk About More Than Just Sex – Talk with your teen about healthy relationships, feelings, peer pressure, body image and responsibility in relationships. This will help your teen to identify with the emotional aspects of sexuality and relationships, and to make informed decisions.

Be Ready to Have Your Jaw Drop – It is possible that your teen will ask or say something that takes you by surprise. For example, children and teens often receive misinformation from their peers, and may ask you to clarify. While you may react with surprise, try to compose yourself and respond calmly.

Keep It Positive – By demonstrating an open, positive view of human sexuality, you are teaching your teen to have the same.

Find Out What They Already Know – Likely, your teen already has some information regarding healthy sexuality. Find out what they know and then build on that existing knowledge base.

Remember That You Are a Role Model – Although your teen may turn to their peers for advice and information, you are still your teenager’s primary role model. How you act will be noticed by your child and will likely be copied. Talk about your values and morals and live the principles you want to see in your youth.

Remember That Your Teen is an Individual – Create an environment to ask questions and discuss issues as they arise. Encourage your teen to make decisions that are right for them and encourage the importance of safety.

