

Conversation Guide

for Parents and Caregivers

This resource offers some suggestions about how you can guide conversations about sexuality with your children. Even if your child doesn't bring up the topic themselves, these tips might be helpful. The 'Do' column suggests some things you can try. When discussing sexuality, try to avoid the 'Don't' column.

DO	DON'T
Acknowledge that all humans are sexual beings.	Ignore the topic if your child brings it up. This can send a message that sexuality is a topic that should not be talked about.
Use proper names for body parts (e.g. penis, vagina) for children of all ages, so they can understand their bodies and have words to talk about sexuality.	Use 'code' words for body parts (i.e., wee wee, coochie) or ignore talking about private body parts.
Answer questions as they come up so that your child feels heard and supported.	Use shame, blame, or scare tactics to avoid talking about sexuality.
Ask if your child has questions about their sexuality (e.g. their body, feelings, worries).	Put off talking about sexuality because you feel your child is too young, not ready, or the topic is not appropriate.
Ask about your child's friends so that you can talk about developing healthy relationships.	Ignore an unhealthy relationship in your child's life, even if they only have a few friends.
Talk positively about people of all genders and sexual identities. Show representations of LGBTQ2S+ and gender diverse people through media, discussions, etc.	Talk only about heterosexual relationships.
Ask if your child wants to talk about their gender identity or sexual orientation. Although, your child may not want to use a label at all.	Assume your child's gender identity or sexual orientation or force them to choose a category/label to fit into.
Ask how they like to express their own gender.	Expect your child to wear clothing that they may not feel comfortable in.
Talk about teen dating and acknowledge the dating experiences of family members and/or friends.	Ignore teen dating and treat it as funny or not important, nor assume your child is not dating because they haven't asked your permission or told you about it.
Teach skills using practical examples (e.g., teach hygiene by using hands on learning; visit a sexual health clinic together).	Assume your child does not need the skills.