

Four Points to Remember When Talking With Your Child About Sex and Sexuality

Rights and Responsibilities

- Embrace your right and responsibility to be your child's primary sexuality educator.
- Otherwise, the surrounding culture will become your child's primary sexuality educator. It will provide information and lots of misinformation about sex and sexuality with little concern for your family's values.
- When parents are proactive, they have the opportunity to have a positive impact on their child's sexuality and sexual experiences.
- The child has a right to receive information from their parent and has a responsibility to understand that every decision about sexuality carries with it choices and consequences.

Values

- Take time to think and gain clarification about your attitudes, beliefs, and values, and be willing to share them with your child.
- Ask yourself: Where do my attitudes, beliefs, and values come from? Are they universal? (E.g., we all agree that children have a right to be safe.) Are they personal? (E.g., we may differ in our beliefs about when people should begin sexual activity.) Which of your values do you most want your child to share?
- Honest communication between parent and child is important.
- Even disagreeing about values is beneficial to both parent and child. It allows the child to hear what the parent thinks, and it allows the parent to hear what the child thinks.
- Challenging and examining values can be a powerful influence on a child's developing sexuality.

Feelings and Self-Esteem

- Explore your feelings about issues related to sexuality.
- Share your feelings with your child.
- Allow and encourage your child to share her or his feelings.
- Practice listening carefully without judgment or criticism in order to foster an environment in which your child can feel comfortable about approaching you.
- Affirm and validate your child. This helps children feel good about themselves and promotes self-esteem and healthy decision making.

Facts and Knowledge

- Gather information and resources so that you can help to assure that your child gets accurate and healthy information about sexuality.
- Admit if you don't know the answer to a question, and make sure to get back to your child with the answer (or investigate the answer together!).

- Stay connected by discussing information in an ongoing, open dialogue.

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