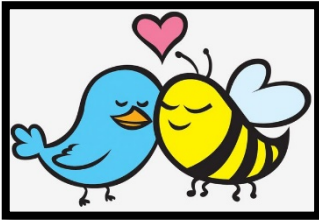


# SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR PARENTS TO TALK WITH THEIR CHILDREN ABOUT SEXUALITY?

\*talking about sexuality with your child may be uncomfortable and scary but ignoring the subject sends a strong message to your child that this subject is taboo.



\*The best thing you can do is to ensure that sexuality is an acceptable topic that is open for discussion at your house. Your child needs to know that even though you may not have all the answers, you will provide a loving and safe place to wonder and ask questions.

\*Embrace your right as a parent to be your child's primary sexuality educator. Sexuality education is not just one "big talk". It is an ongoing and evolving discussion that changes as your child grows.

## TOP COMMUNICATION TIPS:

\*Start early and continue the talk about sexuality as a healthy and normal part of development because it is!!! Having a penis or vagina is as normal as having elbows and knees. Children who learn that sexuality is a normal part of being human are more likely to ask questions as they mature. Avoiding questions or teaching children about everything except their sexual parts, gives them a powerful message that this subject is off limits.

\*Be prepared and have good resources on hand. Reading books together is a wonderful way to learn about sexuality. If your teenager gets embarrassed whenever you bring up the subject of sex, then leave good resources around the house where they can be easily noticed and read or viewed when you are not home. (see our website for a list of resources)



\*Give accurate information and use concrete examples that are age-appropriate. Giving a vague reference to "planting seeds" will not satisfy questions from a nine year old. Using proper language will give your child the language they need to ask questions and to make sense of what they are learning.

**\*Give them more than just facts. Sexual facts are a small part of educating your child. Every question and conversation is an opportunity to talk about values, life skills, and relationships. Knowing how to use a condom is useless if a person is too uncomfortable to ask their partner to use one.**

**\*Give children good information**



**\*Validate their feelings**

**\*Use teachable moments. You don't have to wait until your child asks questions before you talk about sex. For example, visiting a zoo in spring time will give you plenty of opportunities to talk about pregnancy and birth. Or watching a movie with your teen can lead to you talking about sexual messages it is promoting.**

**\*Don't pry and respect your child's privacy. Teach your child early that privacy is a right. By modeling healthy boundaries, you are teaching your child crucial lessons about setting sexual limits and boundaries, and respect.**

**\*Try not to jump to conclusions just because your child has asked a question. If your child has asked a question about oral sex, for example, it doesn't mean they are having oral sex!**

**\*Stay calm and have a sense of humor. If you can laugh at yourself, you will teach your child that sexuality is fun and joyful. However, never use humor to belittle or make fun of your child's questions. Keeping a sense of humor about sexuality will enliven the conversation and ease the discomfort or tension that often goes along with having "sex talks".**

