



Communication Tips and Examples For Talking With Your Child About Sexuality

- ❖ Be **HONEST** and **APPROACHABLE**
- ❖ Teach and Modeling **CONSENT**
- ❖ Discuss **VALUES**
- ❖ Teach **RULES** and **SAFETY PLANNING**
- ❖ Engage with **MEDIA**

SOME GUIDELINES FOR TALKING ABOUT SEX

- Look for unexpected opportunities that are relaxed and non-confrontational.
- Look for non-traditional places for impromptu conversations, such as while driving or while waiting at an appointment.
- Have lots of conversations. “The Talk” happens over and over again.
- Listen more than you speak, and don’t ask too many questions or you won’t get any response!
- Try to avoid lecturing.
- If you don’t know the answer, it’s ok to say so and look up the information together.
- If you’re uncomfortable, it’s ok to share that this is a difficult topic for you to talk about.
- Here are some great **open-ended** questions to try:
 - “Where did your ideas about that come from?”
 - “How did you feel when that happened?”
 - “How do you think they felt?”
 - “Have you thought a lot about that?”
 - “When do you remember first feeling that way?”
 - “What do you mean by that? I’d love to hear an example of what you’re talking about.”
 - “Do you think that’s a personal preference, or do you think that’s true for everyone?”
 - “How do you know when something feels right or wrong?”
- Listen for when they are done with the conversation and end with a supportive comment.

Find out what they already know!

“That’s a great question. Can you tell me what you already know about that?” *Buys time, helps you prepare, helps you know what the child really wants to know, and helps you correct misinformation.*

Sample Language

Situation/Opportunity	Supportive sample approaches and responses
Child asks any question about how a body part or function works.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate child's curiosity and their right to ask questions. "That's a really good question. I'm glad you asked. It's normal to be curious how bodies work."
Child/teen wants to know details about you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I'm wondering, why is that important for you to know?" • "I'm uncomfortable giving you details about my sexual experiences, but let's continue talking generally."
After awkwardly watching a sex scene on TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Wow, that was a pretty intense sex scene on TV just now! Do you have any questions about what we saw? I'm here now or later if something comes up." • "That couple didn't seem to know each other very well. I think it's important that two people have a relationship with each other before they have sex. What do you think?"
Youth wants to know why teenagers should wait to have sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "In my family, I was raised to think a certain way about sex, and this is what I value. What are your values, what do you believe?" • "I think that most teenagers aren't emotionally ready to have sex or be parents. I'd love to talk more about it with you and also find out what you think."
Responding to images of sexual violence in a movie or on the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It is never ok for someone to force another person to have sex. Consent is always required. I'd like to talk some more with you about consent." • "That was very sad that the little girl in that movie was hurt. Children can never consent to sexual activity with anyone. It's against the law." • "Watching that made me sad and kind of anxious. How did it make you feel?"
Someone tells child to give them a hug goodbye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Betsy, would you like to give a hand shake goodbye instead?"
Youth asks you for physical affection that does not feel appropriate or timely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Tommy, we just met and I'm glad you feel you can ask me for a hug. Since we just met, I'm more comfortable with a handshake or high five."
Discovery of a youth masturbating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I know it feels good to touch your private parts, but it needs to happen only in your bedroom or the bathroom, with the door closed and not where someone else can see and not with anyone else."

Discovery of children engaged in sexual play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I see you’re examining her the way the doctor does. But everyone has to keep their pants on when we play. If you have questions about what girls look like, let’s talk about it.” • “Can you tell me what kind of game you’re playing? When we play we have to keep our hands and private parts to ourselves.”
Discovery of a youth viewing sexually explicit content, or saved on device	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I see that you’ve been looking at some sexual material on your phone. It’s okay to be curious or enjoy looking at bodies, but we have a rule in our family about sexual material on screens.”
Concern about child’s use of media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I’ve been noticing you’re spending a lot more time on your X-Box. I’d love to see what games you’re playing. Maybe tonight we can sit down and you can show me how to play?”
When introducing new social media platform (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to older child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I expect you to be just as respectful online as you are at school and at home. If someone else is disrespectful or says something inappropriate online, I want you to let an adult know. When you post something online, it usually stays there forever. There are tough laws about what teens can post online. I also want you to keep track of your privacy settings and make sure that what you post only goes to people you want it to.”