

TIPS FOR PARENTS

TALKING TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT SEX

1. Think about what you would like to teach your child about sexuality.
 - Reflect on your own upbringing (e.g. what did you like/dislike about your sex education)
 - Stories you can share (e.g. your first period)
 - What is private to you (e.g. your sexual behaviour)
2. Educate yourself.
 - learn from books, the Internet, other parents and sexuality educators
 - Practice (e.g. say the word vulva/penis/vagina/testicle/sex over and over in a mirror until you are comfortable)
3. Remember your child wants to talk to you. They want to ask questions.
 - Don't wait for your child to ask questions, be pro-active and ask them, this often breaks the ice and lets them know you are willing to talk about sexuality
 - Reward your child for asking questions, never laugh at them or shame them
4. Lead by example – actions speak louder than words.
 - Children learn from watching you and your relationships and interactions
5. Share your values.
 - Explain your values, why you feel they are important and your expectations
 - Values may differ between parents and between parent and child – this is ok
6. Share age appropriate information.
 - Start simple
 - Pay attention to child's reactions
 - Ask for clarification if you don't understand their question
7. Use the proper terms for all body parts.
 - Vulva, Vagina
 - Penis, Testicles
 - Breasts etc.

8. Find out what your child already knows (from school, friends, television, the Internet).
 - Correct misconceptions – they may be receiving inaccurate information
 - Talk to your child’s teachers and principals if you have questions or concerns about sex education at school
9. It is ok to make mistakes. This is how we learn.
10. It is ok if you don’t know the answer.
 - Tell your child you will find the answer together
 - Ask for help from your community, family, friends, Public Health, SHORE Centre
11. It is ok to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed or awkward.
12. Listen to your child.
 - Try to stay calm
 - Think before you speak
13. Be aware of, and take advantage of teachable moments.
 - e.g. you see a person breast feeding, you hear a song while driving in the car with lyrics about sex, you are watching a movie where a couple is disagreeing about marriage
 - Have multiple conversations
 - Have frequent conversations
14. Normalize sexuality!!
 - We are all sexual beings and sexual health is part of our overall health and well-being
 - Be positive
15. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.
16. Educate all your children.
 - Both parents (if possible) should be involved
 - Involve other family members, friends if appropriate
17. Talk about more than the facts
 - Emotions, feelings, relationships are all important no matter who you are
18. Be askable.
 - Let them know you are there for them and can ask you anything at any time

19. Give your child accurate and up-to-date resources.
 - Leave books and pamphlets around the house for them to read
 - Let them know of websites they can look at (e.g. sexualityandu.ca)
 - Be sure to familiarize yourself with the material before referring it to your child

19. Be honest.
 - If you don't know, say you don't know
 - If you are uncomfortable, say you are uncomfortable
 - If you have never thought about it, say you need some time to think about it

20. Help your child feel good about themselves and their sexuality.
 - Your child may know all the facts but without self-esteem they will not be able to implement the behaviour they desire or learn how to confront peer pressure

21. Stay informed with the music, television and social media your child listens to, watches and uses.
 - Talk to your child about the what they are reading and seeing on the Internet, as well as what they are posting
 - If they have a cell phone, talk to your child about sexting, sending pictures and what they are accessing online
 - Technology evolves quickly and often children, especially teens, are more knowledgeable than the parent – try to stay informed with the latest technology and talk to your child about it

22. Try to relax.

23. Have fun.

24. Have a sense of humour.

25. Laugh together.