

Junior Secondary Guidance Officer – Anna Willis

6 Guidelines for Talking to your Child about Sexuality



Mommy, where do babies come from? Do you think I am fat? Why are Auntie's breasts bigger than mine? Do these sentences sound familiar? They do too many, because having children means receiving questions that you are not always prepared to answer. However, being able to openly discuss our children's inquiries about sexuality will lead to a better relationship and understanding of their own bodies for the remainder of their lives.

There is evidence that shows that good sexuality awareness is vital for the overall well-being of young people, and can increase their ability to make positive and health-enhancing decisions. These decisions can help them to feel positive about their bodies, feel good about being male or female, appreciate and accept individual differences, understand appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, as well as physical and emotional changes. Talking to teen's about sexuality, the differences between boys and girls, how babies are made and personal boundaries is made possible when we, as adults, do so calmly and authentically, showing that it is the most natural part of life.

How to have these important conversations:

- 1) Reflect on your own situation at first. How do you feel about your own body? Does it feel natural to talk about boundaries, love and sexuality? Does it feel embarrassing? Comfortable? Scary? You can write your negative and positive perspectives down and share it with your spouse. For instance, "I feel it's embarrassing to talk about genitals." Share this concern with your partner and agree on how you, in your family, can talk about uncomfortable subjects like this in the future. Remember that if you find it difficult to talk about this part of being human, you will predispose your child to feel the same way.
- 2) Consider the hopes you have for your children. How do you think they should feel about themselves, their bodies and sexuality? Write this down – it will help you to commit to change. Reflect on "why" you feel it is important that they develop a better relationship with these topics than you may have had (if that's the case).
- 3) Something has peaked your teen's interest and lead them to ask you questions. Always follow up on that and be happy they feel comfortable enough to ask you. Meet your child's curiosity with attentiveness and honesty, and answer their particular question. We often have a tendency to overanalyse and respond to far more than really necessary.
- 4) Make it natural from the beginning. Read stories to your children from a very early age about the differences about girls and boys, their development and so on. This is such a wonderful way to come around these topics without directly confronting them.
- 5) Call things by their names! Don't make up nicknames. It's better to just talk about the genitals using words that are normally used. Penis, vagina, bum, breasts, etc. Doing this will avoid leading our children into some kind of fairy-tale life. It's better to reflect on life as it is.



- 6) Protect your children's privacy and teach them to respect their own boundaries and those of others. Don't frighten or [shame](#) them. We are all different and have different attitudes towards our bodies and sexualities. Teach your child about the underwear rule. All parts of the body, which are covered by underwear, nobody must touch without consent or conversations with your teens about bodily changes such as menstruation, sexual consent, contraception and protecting themselves against sexually transmitted infections.

Talking openly to your teen about sexuality leads to them learning about the beauty of their own bodies, and to love every part of themselves.

Read more: [7 Guidelines for Talking to your Child About Sexuality - Iben Sandahl](#)