
COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- 1) **You are the primary sexuality educator of your children.** They want to talk to you about sexuality and to hear your values.
- 2) **Remember that it is okay to feel uncomfortable.** It is often hard to talk about sexual matters. Relax and tell your children that you are going to talk to them because you want to help them.
- 3) **Don't wait until your children ask questions.** Many never ask. You need to decide what is important for them to know and then tell them. Prepare them with information before they need it so that they are prepared.
- 4) **Be "ask-able."** Reward a question with, "I'm glad you came to me." It will teach your children to come to you when they have other questions.
- 5) **Become aware of the "question behind the question."** Some questions are really meaning, "am I normal?". Reassure your children as often as possible.
- 6) **Listen, listen, listen.** Ask them what they want to know and what they already know. That may help you prepare your answer.
- 7) **Remember that facts are not enough.** Share your feelings, values, and beliefs. Tell your children why you feel the way you do.
- 8) **Talk about the joys of sexuality.** Tell your children that loving relationships are the best part of life and that intimacy is a wonderful part of adult life.
- 9) **Remember that you are telling your children that you care about their happiness and well-being.** You are also sharing your values. This is one of the real joys of parenthood.

Sexuality is...

part of who we are as individuals – it exists throughout our lives. It can be expressed through feelings, emotions, or actions. The messages that young people receive through childhood lay the foundation to help them grow up to be sexually healthy adults.

You can **share your values** with your kids on many levels. Talking with your kids can help them to understand their bodies, express love, respect others, make decisions, develop and maintain meaningful relationships, take responsibility for their own behavior, and communicate with family, peers, and partners about sexuality issues.

Adapted from *Families are Talking*, Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States.