



Talking To Your Child ABOUT SEX

Most caregivers, at some point in their child's development, worry about how to talk to their child about sex. We're here to help - here are some things to consider as you think about bringing up this subject with your child.



Not just one conversation

Take some of the pressure off - this actually shouldn't be just *one* conversation you have with your child. Talking about people's physical bodies, how they work, romantic and sexual relationships, and gender and sexual identity can be an ongoing conversation with your child that you revisit every so often. Here are some areas to focus on with kids at different ages:

0-2 YEARS

GOAL: your child builds love & trust with you and learns names of body parts

Use natural opportunities when your child is bathing, changing clothes, or potty training to use correct terms of private body parts (penis, vagina, etc.) Teaching your child correct terms helps protect them against sexual abuse from others and helps them not to feel shame when talking about their body.

3-5 YEARS

GOAL: your child learns about appropriate touch and their own gender

Teach your child that it's okay to say no when they don't want someone to touch them, and make sure they listen to other people's boundaries around physical touch too. Talk to them about gender differences and anatomy differences between people, and let them know it's safe to ask you questions about these things.

6-8 YEARS

GOAL: your child starts to learn about puberty and the basics of reproduction

Teach your child what to expect when puberty happens and how their body will change. Be ready to answer questions about sex and where babies come from if your child asks, and start having conversations about safe internet use (e.g. "it's not safe or appropriate to look at pictures or videos of other people without clothes on").

9-12 YEARS

GOAL: your child navigates puberty and learns family values about relationships

Have more detailed conversations about sex as your child is ready for them. Talk to your child about your family's expectations and values related to dating and sexual relationships, and make sure your child has a safe adult they can talk to if they have questions (this could be you or another family member, mentor, or community leader)

13-18 YEARS

GOAL: your child develops healthy relationships and safe sexual behaviors

Talk to your child about safe sex and safe relationships. Explain options for pregnancy prevention and talk about ways to prevent sexually transmitted infections and diseases. Talk about the benefits and risks of having sex in relationships, and make sure your child is able to make an informed decision about when they are ready for this.

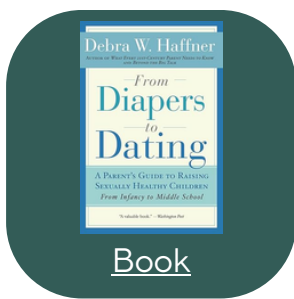
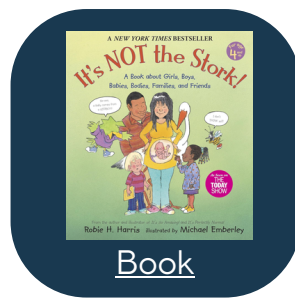


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Resources to use

Here are some resources we love & recommend for families like yours!



General guidelines

BE FACTUAL.

Do your best to give your child the clear facts of sex. If you feel uncomfortable talking about it, your child probably will too - so practice what you want to say ahead of time if you need to!

Many kids (and adults) feel awkward talking about sex - sometimes it helps to have conversations while driving, walking, or doing something else. It can be easier for kids to talk about this when they're not looking right at you!

TALK WHILE DOING SOMETHING ELSE.

DON'T ASSUME.

Don't assume your child knows what something means. Ask them what they already know before you start talking, and make sure you explain new terms or anything that's unclear.

If your child has been touched inappropriately or sexually abused in some way, make sure they know this is *not* their fault. You can talk to their therapist, doctor, or call the National Sexual Assault Hotline for support.

ASSAULT & ABUSE ARE NOT THEIR FAULT

National Sexual Assault Hotline <https://rainn.org/help-and-healing/hotline/>