

# Tips for **Caring** Adults when Talking to Children about **Consent, Boundaries, Relationships** & Sexual Health

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1. Think about the values and beliefs you hold about consent, relationships, and sexual health.

- Explain your values and beliefs, including why they are important to you
- If other caring adults interact with the child talk to them about their values and beliefs to see if they are similar
- Reflect on your upbringing and sexual health education – what was missing, what was beneficial, what was harmful or confusing
- Are their stories you would like to share?
- What would you like to keep private?



2. Educate and inform yourself.

- Learn from websites, workshops, books, films, other caring adults etc.
- Reach out to children's other caregivers and teachers to see what they know and what they are doing (e.g., are they using the correct words for body parts, are they modelling consent)

3. Increase your comfort.

- Practice saying words in the mirror such as vulva, penis, vagina, and testicles to ensure you can clearly say them out loud without embarrassment
- It is however OK to feel shy, uncomfortable, or awkward – you will become more comfortable and confident over time and with practice (I promise)

4. Use the proper names for all body parts (e.g., vulva, penis, vagina, testicles, breasts, nipples, scrotum, clitoris, labia, anus).

- It is OK if children know slang terms as well – it would be almost impossible for them not to hear them – but make sure they also know the correct terms

5. Lead by example, model healthy and consensual behaviour.

- Actions speak louder than words - children learn from observing adult behaviour such as how you interact in your relationships and how you use consent



6. Don't wait for children to ask questions

- Some children will ask lots of questions, some will ask none – be pro-active – by beginning these conversations and normalizing them children learn they can come to you with questions and they can trust you
- Reward children for asking questions – do not shame them or laugh at them



7. It is OK if you do not know the answer
  - Let the child know they asked a good question, but you do not know the answer
  - Find the answer and get back to them or look for the answer together
  - If you say you will get back to them, make sure you do!
  
8. It is OK to make mistakes. This is how we learn. Let the child know you made a mistake as this will model the behaviour of admitting when you have made a mistake.
  - Sometimes we share myths with children because we think they are fact; we have learned those myths – if you realize you shared wrong information correct the information for the child and let them know this happens sometimes
  
9. Take advantage of teachable moments.
  - The world is full of teachable moments (e.g., watching movies, listening to music, eating in a restaurant, walking in the mall)
  - Stay informed about what the child is watching and listening to
  
10. Talk about more than facts
  - It is important to discuss emotions and feelings
  - It is important to talk about interactions and relationships
  
11. Be honest.
  - If something makes you uncomfortable say so – the child often understands more than you think
  - If you have never thought about it let them know you need time to think about it and get back to them
  
12. Provide accurate, evidence-informed, up-to-date resources and information.
  - Read books together, leave books out for them to read alone
  - Provide videos and/or websites that are appropriate
  
13. Try to have fun with these discussions – they can be a positive experience for everyone!
  
14. Have a sense of humor – laugh and learn together – it really can be funny sometimes :)

