

Tips for Caring Adults when Talking to Children about Consent, 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 to the child, 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 you are on the same page
 - Reflect on your upbringing and sexual health education – what if anything was missing, what if anything was beneficial, what if anything was harmful or confusing
 - Are there stories you would like to share (e.g., when you first learned the word vulva)
 - What would you like to keep private (e.g., your sexual experiences)
 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, testicles, nipples 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
 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 behaviour.
 - Actions speak louder than words
 - Children learn from observing adult behaviour such as how you interact in your relationships, how you use consent, the phrases and words you use etc.
 6. Try to have fun with these discussions – they can be a positive experience for everyone!

7. 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
8. 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
 - If you say you will get back to them, make sure you do!
9. 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
10. Take advantage of teachable moments.
 - The world is full of teachable moments if you take the time to notice them (e.g., while watching shows or movies, song lyrics, people interacting at a restaurant)
 - Stay informed about what the child is watching and listening to
11. Talk about more than facts
 - It is important to discuss emotions and feelings
 - It is important to talk about interactions and relationships
 - Do this frequently
12. 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
13. 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
14. Have a sense of humor.
15. Laugh and learn together. 