

Parents Teach Sex Best Unit Introduction and Ideas

This resource contains a variety of resources for you to choose from or consider for your use

OPTION 1: Tips on discussing sex with your children

Parents are the best teachers of their children. This is especially true when it comes to teaching their children about sex. Research shows that parents who discuss sex with their children openly and honestly and frequently have set up their children for a healthy sexuality in the children's adult lives.

Parents, in this unit and in future, look for real life opportunities to have a discussion with your children about sex. The best way to discuss sex is by looking for connections to what is going on in your children's lives.

Parents should be the first to educate their children about sex because parents know their children best. Research shows that "parents who begin teaching their children early and often to understand their bodies and talk about these issues can help their children learn to come to them with questions or concerns rather than to hide and repress feelings," (Padilla-Walker, 2018).

During this unit keep on the lookout for everyday opportunities to teach about sex to your children, as you teach your children keep some things in mind:

Work on your ability to be able to answer all questions so that you are not uncomfortable. Research shows that if children think they make their parents uncomfortable by asking about sex, they will do everything to avoid asking their parents about sex in future, (Padilla-Walker, 2018).

- Use the correct names for body parts, even for little children.
- Keep your answers short and simple.
- Only answer the questions your children have.
- Be positive and show you are always willing to answer your children's questions.
- Tell your children if they have more questions they can always come and ask you.
- Look for everyday opportunities to talk with your children about sex.

When parents take the time to make discussions about sex a normal part of life, it helps children more than metaphors and object lessons. Parents can use real life opportunities to discuss sex, but sometimes it's hard to bring it up or see opportunities. If you need some ideas, we have your back!

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OPTION 2: A Guide to Everyday Discussions on Sex and Sexuality with Your Kids

An easy way to approach conversations about sex and sexuality is by using the things you see around you, like advertisements, commercials, magazine covers, billboards, internet sites, movies, books, and more. The goal is to turn these shared experiences into teaching moments for your children to learn the values associated with sexual behavior.

Let's use an example: You are watching a movie together with your family. During the movie there is a moment where the characters kiss on camera. Instead of just fast forwarding through the scene, when the movie is done choose to make a comment about what you saw. You can use questions like these to start the conversation:

- Do you remember the scene where the man and the woman kissed?
- How did you feel when the two characters kissed?
- Why do you think the characters showed affection for one another by kissing?

There are many different ways to start the conversation, but you want to focus on using this shared experience to teach the physical and emotional aspects of sexuality. In doing so you will be able to establish yourself as the authority on sex and sexuality for your children.

Some other things to keep in mind are that your children may like to do an activity, such as yard work or throwing a football, while discussing these topics. It helps the conversation be less uncomfortable and avoids required eye contact. Finding natural opportunities will help in learning the best way to address these topics with your kids!

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OPTION 3: A Parent's Guide for Age-Appropriate Discussions on Sex

From Birth to 3 Years Old

- Name body parts correctly, you will be more comfortable if you start early
- Discuss how amazing our bodies are, they can heal, grow, and move
- Discuss how their body is growing, changing, and getting stronger. This helps to lay the foundation for discussing puberty

3 - 7 Years Old

- Answer questions simply, but be happy to answer all questions
- Teach them their body is theirs and healthy boundaries
- Explain that you don't talk casually about sex or genitals
- Discuss your children's emotions, and that they matter to you, this helps children know they can come to you about how they feel in future and aid in emotion regulation in future
- Help children to develop positive feelings about their bodies and the function of their bodies

7 - 9 Years Old

- Discuss sex. Be accurate and give complete information. This protects them from incorrect information
- Discuss sex in the context of marriage to give an understanding of healthy sexuality
- Discuss problem solving skills for children to work through their emotions and continue talking about emotions. This helps children be able to understand their feelings and establish a bond with your children for them to discuss arousal or other emotions later on
- Discuss puberty and body changes
- Review anatomy using correct names and consider reviewing diagrams of male and female bodies
- Normalize that they will see pornography and what to do about it
- If kids come to you about pornography praise them for their courage and be calm as they tell you what happened

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OPTION 3: A Parent's Guide for Age-Appropriate Discussions on Sex

9 - 12 Years Old

- Discuss with your children that you are the best source of information on this topic and continue discussing sex with them, and answering their questions
- Discuss how men and women are similar and different
- Create opportunities for discussions, not lectures
- Discuss how your child might start feeling attracted to others during this time and it is an important part of their development
- Keep discussing puberty and watch out for signs of negative body image
- If kids come to you about pornography, praise them for their courage and be calm as they tell you what happened
- Talk to your kids about sexting

Teenagers

- Encourage them to maintain sexual standards through consistent discussions about their feelings and emotions
- Possible discussion question: If you feel aroused, do you need to act on it?
- Discuss with your child that intimacy is the goal of their future sexual relationship.
- Discuss with your child that their body is still growing and becoming mature, but they are still not emotionally ready to make sexual commitments to others
- If kids come to you about pornography, praise them for their courage and be calm as they tell you what happened
- Talk to your kids about sexting

For more information to help you talk with your children see *A Better Way to Teach Kids About Sex* by Laura M Padiila-Walker, Ph.D., Dean M Busby, Ph.D., Chelom E. Leavitt, Ph.D., and Jason S. Carroll, Ph.D.

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OPTION 4: Parent Discussion Questions:

Here are some questions to help prompt family discussions about sex:

- In what ways are men and women different?
- Why are men and women different?
- How does this help individuals and families?
- How do you think men and women's bodies are different?
- What do you think is the biggest difference between men and women?

OPTION 5: Sexual Safety:

Discuss sexual safety with your children.

Younger children should be able to identify safe touches versus bad touches. Consider discussing what's acceptable from family, friends, teachers, religious leaders and strangers.

Also, discuss what they should do if they were touched by someone in a way you have discussed is inappropriate. (Remember, if they ever come to you, control your emotions so as not to scare them away from future discussions.)



Remember:

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