

Sexuality Education: Some Thoughts and Tips for Parents

General Thoughts

1. Remember that all humans are sexual beings and that relationships are an important part of this picture.
2. Don't let your own fears about sexuality and relationships for your child stand in the way of promoting their self esteem and future happiness.
3. Don't be afraid to seek help with dealing with issues around sexuality and relationships. Your child's physician can help. There are also many books and websites with useful information. (Some are listed at the end of this chapter.) Other parents can help too.
4. Teaching your child about their body and sexuality not only promotes their development and adjustment in the transition to adulthood, but also works much better to prevent exploitation and abuse than trying to isolate the child or avoiding the topic all together.

Specific Tips

1. Talk with your child about different levels of closeness for people in their world. There is a whole range of appropriate behavior toward other people, ranging from parents on one end to strangers on the other. For example, it is okay to hug your mother or sibling, but you don't hug the grocery clerk. (Take a look at the Circles Intimacy and Relationships diagram at <http://www.stanfield.com/sex-ed.html>)
2. Teach children the names for body parts as early as possible and make it clear that it is normal to talk with you, their parents, about their body. This gives your child a tool to report their experience if someone touches them inappropriately.
3. Talk to your child about who can touch them and where, and the difference between public and private activities and body parts. Teach them they can say 'no' and honor that when they say it at home.
4. Remember that masturbation is a normal part of child development which generally appears in toddlers. Teaching the child that this is a private rather than public activity may be the key.
5. Don't forget to teach about personal care and hygiene, medical exams, social skills, sexual expression and the responsibilities and risks of sexual behavior.
6. Step back and ask yourself, what else can I do to make sure my child has all the tools they need to be as happy and independent as possible when I am no longer around?