Moving beyond the “big talk”

Strategies for engaging children of all ages in discussions about sexual health

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It can’t be one conversation

Cause I just wanna look good for you, good for you, uh-huh
I just wanna look good for you, good for you, uh-huh
Let me show you how proud I am to be yours
Leave this dress a mess on the floor
Still look good for you, good for you, uh-huh uh-huh, uh
Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh
INFANTS AND TODDLERS
Psychosocial
- Needs to develop trust
- Struggles to gain autonomy

Cognitive
- Egocentric

Moral/Spiritual
- Good is whatever is agreeable

Help take care of my body
Only my feelings matter. Why are you so upset?
I’ll keep doing it until you catch me.

Development

Only my feelings matter. Why are you so upset?
“That is your penis”

“This is a private part of your body so no one touches it except you, ....”

“We use soft touches when we are with our friends”

“Can I give you a hug?”

Since I am your mommy, my job is to help you keep your body safe and clean”
PRESCHOOLERS
### Development

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Psychosocial</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Moral/Spiritual</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Needs to gain some control over environment, choices</td>
<td>• Rules over-generalized • Fits in existing schema</td>
<td>• Conformity • Faith is place to belong</td>
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- I don’t want that!
- Girls do this. Boys do that.
- If it’s wrong, it’s always wrong.
Sexual development

Their behaviors
- masturbation
- Playing house
- Questions
- Curiosity
- Little inhibition

Your behavior
- Provide information
- Answer what is asked
- Encourage privacy
- Good/bad touch
- Boundaries

“That part of your body is private. Only you, mommy, daddy or the doctor touches your penis.”

“Sometimes girls wear dresses and sometimes boys do. You can choose what you want.”

“That part of your body is private. It’s okay to touch it and it might feel good or a little funny. Only you can touch yourself like that.”
Middle Childhood
I want to be pretty, smart, fast, a friend....

If its not okay to have sex and not be married, how come his mom is not married?

I will be "good" so I belong

Development

Psychosocial
- Needs to find something they like, are good at
- Personality more stable

Cognitive
- Concrete, logical reasoning

Moral/Spiritual
- Conformity
- Faith is place to belong
Sexual development

Their behaviors
- Gender roles
- Masturbation
- Use of slang, bad humor
- Curious about seeing bodies
- Develop interest in “relationships”

Your behavior
- Explain reproduction, puberty
- Explain masturbation
- Explain gender, sexual orientation
- Encourage critical thinking
- Encourage healthy friendships

“Sex can happen in many different ways, it usually means people are touching or kissing”

“A baby begins to grow when a man and woman have sex, so when a man puts his penis in a woman’s vagina”
Adolescents
I think I am gay.

If I get pregnant, I would ....

I’m not sure if I believe that

Psychosocial
- Trying out different identities

Cognitive
- Hypothetical reasoning

Moral/Spiritual
- Right, wrong more complex
- May critically look at faith
Sexual development

Their behaviors
- Relationships
- Risk behaviors
- Puberty

Your behavior
- Your behavior
  - Talk about relationships, trust, expectations, future
  - Explain active consent
  - LISTEN
  - Use gender neutral language
  - Reserve judgement

“When do you think is the right time to have sex?”

“What do you value most in a partner?”

“When is the best time to have a child?” “safe and clean”
Children should be educated that you will always have value and nothing can change that.

– Elizabeth Smart

Messages we want kids to hear at every age
Teachable moments

Any unplanned event that adults can use as a learning opportunity, a starting point for a discussion.
UNIVERSALISM: Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature

BENEVOLENCE: Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact

TRADITION: Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide
A.N.S.W.E.R.

A Affirm the asker
N Note if the question is values based
S State the facts
W What is the range of values/beliefs?
E Encourage communication
R Remain Available

Teachable moments technique
That is a good question!

People sometimes have different opinions about that and sometimes adults are really uncomfortable talking about this.

Masturbation is when a person touches their genitals because it feels good. It will not hurt you and it is a normal behavior.

Some people think it’s never okay to masturbate and other people think it is okay to do in private.

I always want to know what you think about important things like this. Do you know what your family thinks? Who could you talk to and find out?

Remember the other day when we talked about if it was OK to masturbate? Did you talk to anyone in your family? Do you have other questions about that?
T.A.L.K.

T  Take the initiative
A  Ask the child what they think
L  Let child know about the range of values/beliefs
K  Keep the conversation going
You know that part of that song really gets on my nerves. She’s talking about PMS which is when someone has a period and lots of people think women are crazy when they get their periods.

Have you heard people say that before? What do you think?

I really don’t like the word bitch or saying that women are bitches when they get their periods.

I wonder if there is a way for her to change those lyrics.....
S.O.Y.

Deal with facts first, then
S Some people believe
O Others believe
Y You get to decide what you believe
Tampons are okay to use even if you have never had sex. They do not make you not a virgin.

S Some girls just don’t like tampons.
O Other girls are fine with them.
Y You get to decide what you want because it is your body.