

HOW DO YOU TALK WITH CHILDREN / YOUNGSTERS ABOUT SEXUALITY¹?

BASIC ATTITUDE WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT SEXUALITY:

1. Provide structure and clarity (predictability).
2. Talk about sexuality in a neutral and open way.
3. Safety is central.
4. Never promise secrecy.
5. Give the child the opportunity to admit possible mistakes.
6. Do not judge.
7. Be patient.
8. Connect to the needs of the child.
9. The limits of the child are very important.
10. Be aware of your nonverbal attitude.

10 TIPS TO TALK ABOUT SEXUALITY:

1. **You are the example.** The way adults interact amongst themselves and with others, the way they behave, the way they have a row and the way they solve problems is an example for children on how people 'should' behave.
2. **You do not need to know everything.** Of course it is not bad if you do not have an answer to something. Tell the child you will look for an answer and that you will come back to this. This can involve using the internet or in educational books.
3. **Use opportunities such as newspaper reports or a television programmes** as an opportunity for a talk. "I just now read that... What do you think about this?"
4. **Create a situation in which it is not necessary to look at each other:** for children it can be easier to talk about a sensitive subject when they do not need to look at you directly. For instance you can start a conversation during doing the dishes, cleaning the car or while driving.
5. **Use books, brochures and pictures.** Books and pictures may serve as support for your story.

¹ This text is a permitted translation of a text written by Qpido (<https://www.qpido.nl/>)

6. **Encourage your children to have their own opinion.** When children ask for your opinion, then tell it to them, but also explain that other people may have a different opinion.
7. **Respect** the fact that children have a need for some independence and privacy. For instance, if a child thinks you should knock before you enter his/her room then this should be respected.
8. **Use humour.** When talking about relations and sexuality, you can use humour appropriately. It may diminish possible tensions.
9. **Keep up to date** with what your child is watching when on TV or internet. You can ask about it or you can watch along. Ask your child what he/she sees and don't disapprove things immediately.
10. **Show that you care about the child.** Regularly say or show that you love the child.

TIPS ON HOW TO MAKE SEXUAL ABUSE A SUBJECT WHICH CAN BE DISCUSSED:

1. Believe in what a child tells you.
2. Ask as many open questions as possible.
3. Ask questions about both current and older issues.
4. Keep on asking questions about the situations in which the abuse has taken place and with whom.
5. TAKE CARE: no suggestive questions!
6. Use words that fit the age of the child.
7. Name only the emotions that you are sure the child experiences.
8. Do not let the person involved down.
9. Ask concrete questions.
10. Don't promise anything that you cannot fulfil.
11. Make sure the child is safe and is reassured.
12. Indicate that a certain moment (this weekend, tomorrow, next week...) you will come back to this or make an appointment (i.e. Monday evening after diner)
13. Do not solve this alone, share the responsibility.

DO NOT

- Ask Why-questions.
- Do not interrogate as if you are the police.
- React emotionally.

HOW DO YOU TALK WITH
CHILDREN AND
YOUNGSTERS

