

# Relationship and Sex Education

## Tips and advice on how to talk your child



Children will have many questions when they begin talking about relationships, sex and puberty at school (either through PSHE lessons or science) and some children will be quite happy to ask the adults at home or school. However, others will feel like they can't discuss or don't want to. Talking about topics such as puberty some find embarrassing, so there are websites, documents and books, which can help you have these tricky conversations at an age-appropriate level.

Here are some tips and advice we found on how to open the lines of communication with your child and talk to them about relationships, sex and puberty:

- Keep lines of communication open: having an open and honest relationship with your child can really help make conversations easier, so make sure that you are always willing to talk when your child needs you; if you can't, explain why and find another time when it is more mutually convenient.
- Remember that children are curious and want to know and understand. We tend to place our adult perspective on children's questions and comments, allowing our brains to fill up with all the possible horrors that an innocent question could be about, when actually a child just wants (and needs) a very simple, matter-of-fact answer. This answer needs to be at a child's level, with opportunity given for the child to be able to ask further questions if needed. Give yourself time to respond by asking something like, "What do you think that means?" or "Why do you ask?"
- Have a phrase for awkward moments, such as: 'That's a good question, and let's talk about it once we get home' (then make sure you do!).
- Talk when you're not across from each other - in the car, out walking, washing up or doing something together. It can be easier without eye contact.
- Rehearse in advance with a partner or friend. You may want to practise saying awkward words out loud, so it starts feeling more natural.
- Using the correct terminology whenever you can, especially for body parts stops children from becoming confused. This is hugely important for safeguarding too.
- If it feels too personal use news stories, other people's experiences and ads, films, TV shows etc. to kick-start conversation.
- It's OK to admit to feeling uncomfortable, be honest and say: "I'm not used to talking about this, but I want to try. If you don't know the answer to a question, be honest and say so. Tell your child that you will need to find out and that you will get back to them with the answer soon or you could look it up together.
- Always respond: if you don't, she or he may think it is wrong to talk to you about relationships, puberty or human reproduction and as a result you may find your child clams up when you raise the subject.
- Listen rather than judge. Try asking them what they think. Enjoy it. Laugh with each other.
- Signpost your child to the right resources. We have a selection of books you can borrow and a list of resources that you might find useful on our school website RSE page.