

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD THROUGH SHARE

STATEGIES FOR ADULT FAMILY MEMBERS

- **Educate yourself!** Review the anatomical names for body parts and their function, as well as information on contraception & sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Take time to think about how you plan to answer any questions about sex, relationships, and boundaries.
- **Let your child lead the conversation.** It's OK if your child isn't interested in talking right now; it's more important that they know you are open to talking with them if and when they have questions. Make sure to remind them more than once that you're open to questions and conversation.
- **Answer questions openly and honestly.** If you don't know the answer, say so, and offer to look it up together in a book or online. Avoid lying if you are uncomfortable. The goal is to keep the conversation going and avoid shame. As their caregiver, you want to be their first resource for information!
- **Provide additional resources** for your child to get more information, such as books and reliable websites (see below).
- **Use medically accurate terms** for body parts at home, especially with younger children. At the same time, **make an effort to learn slang** your child is using or hearing in movies, song lyrics, and with friends.
- **Listen to your child's concerns.** Often, what children want most is to know that their adult family members care about them. Changes of puberty and new relationships can be scary, even for older teens. Listen to what your child is really saying, and offer to be a non-judgmental sounding board.
- **Encourage your child to talk with their healthcare provider.** While many doctors begin asking adults to leave the exam room as their child gets older, make sure to reinforce this message by telling your child that if they need contraception or STI testing, they should talk with their doctor (or you) about it. You can say something like: "It's most important to me that you stay safe and healthy, so if you need birth control or STI testing, I want you to get it."
- **Include consent, communication, and relationships** as a part of talking about sex with your child. While healthcare is important, so are your child's feelings. Talking about how to set boundaries and respect others' boundaries is a critical part of developing sexual/romantic responsibility.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Silverberg, Cory, and Fiona Smyth. *Sex Is a Funny Word*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2015.
- Simon, Rachel E. *The Every Body Book*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers: 2020.
- Corinna, Heather. *S.E.X.: The All-You-Need-to-Know Sexuality Guide to Get You Through Your Teens and Twenties*. Boston: Da Capo Press, 2016.

FOR PARENTS:

- www.sexpositivefamilies.com (has an AMAZING book list resource)
- www.advocatesforyouth.org/parents
- www.plannedparenthood.org/parents
- www.luriechildrens.org/en/specialties-conditions/sexuality-education-program/never-fear-talks/

FOR YOUTH:

- Planned Parenthood (for sexual health info): www.plannedparenthood.org
- AMAZE (videos on a variety of topics): www.amaze.org
- Scarleteen (for older teens): www.scarleteen.com

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QUESTIONS?

We are always happy to hear from parents and caregivers! Please reach out to Lizzy Appleby, LCSW, Pride/Share Director, at Lizzy.Appleby@ysgn.org or 847.724.2620 x121