



# SEXUAL EDUCATION IN THE FAMILY

Parents are the primary educators when it comes to sexuality and affection. Sexuality and love are inseparable. Parents are the primary educators of love, therefore also of sexuality. Educating about sexuality and affection goes beyond teaching about sex and the risks that it may bring, such as pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections; it has to do with teaching ways of expressing affection, to have respect for oneself and the other person's body, to learn how to make good decisions, and avoid making choices based on the pressure of others. In general terms, sex education is to learn the value of sexuality and affection that partakes in the healthy physical and psychological development of the whole person.

Sexual education with values should begin in the family, and it should not be expected for the school or any other alternative source to be the primary provider of this information. Parents are the main source of their child's education, therefore it is their responsibility to answer their child's questions, and initiate an open and respectful conversation about sexuality. For this, parents should educate themselves first, challenging their own myths, and clarifying



any misconceptions that they may have since childhood, preventing them from addressing the issue naturally.

When this educational process begins at home, children acquire accurate information, creating awareness about their sexual behavior. This helps children learn to love and respect their body, to prevent starting their sex life without being ready or prepared, to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, violence, among other consequences that can affect their development. When discussing with your child about sexuality, we recommend speaking about your own experiences. It's okay for parents to show fears, concerns, especially towards the choices they know that their child will make, guiding them towards making the best possible choice.

**WHEN SHOULD I START EDUCATING MY CHILD ABOUT SEXUALITY?**



In early childhood (0 to 3 years), you should focus on teaching your child to identify and name their genitals, and how to differentiate them from other parts of the body. It is important that your child see their genitals as a natural feature of their bodies. The 3 to 6 years old stage brings curiosity about what are the genitals used for, and how they should be protected. You should talk to your child and make the clarifications in a straightforward manner, without falling into crudeness, allowing them to ask the necessary questions until they feel their curiosity has been satisfied.

Between 7 to 15 years old, your child will want to know: What is it sex? How is it done? How are babies made? What does the mother feel during pregnancy? How long does it last? What is menstruation? What is an erection? Why are there different sexual preferences? What happens after sexual intercourse? And how you can be protected? During this stage children avoid being direct with their parents about this topic. However, if you have created a foundation of an open communication during earlier stages, your child will be more

likely to approach you and ask you about the topic. We recommended observing your child's activities and conversations, while respecting their privacy, to get a sense what they are interested about and where he or she is at; monitor them without invading. When your child approaches you with questions about sex or sexuality in general, the first thing you should do is ask: What do you think it is? What do you think it's for? Or what do you think about that? This way you can get a sense of the amount of information they have and from where they have been learning about it.

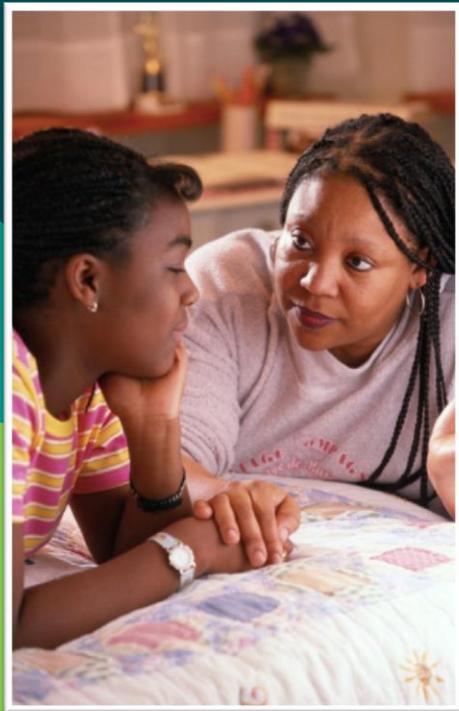
It is important that you take a minute to take a deep breath before responding. If you decide to answer immediately, remember to focus on what your child asked, without going any further, since giving too much information may confuse them. Always keep in mind to answer truthfully. Take advantage of the opportunity to talk about family values, and what you expect from them.

If when your child approaches you, you feel you are not able to answer, be honest and explain to them that you understand their need to know about the subject, but you need some time to think and will answer later. This will give you additional time to analyze your answer, call someone you trust, or discuss it with your partner, agreeing with how you will approach it.

Children receive false and irresponsible information about sexuality, so you must build a channel of honest and informative communication to handle your concerns. By doing this, you become your child's primary source of sexual education, a guide and a role model. When your child asks you how babies are born or any other sexual question, you should be very attentive. Avoid answering: "those things do not interest you" or "you're too young to know." Your answers should be clear and simple. When speaking about genitals remember using the correct terms, like penis and vagina in a natural way, keeping a respectful tone.

If your child is between 8 and 10 years old, by now you can handle the concept more directly. For example you can say something like: "When a man and a woman who love each other and as adults want to express the affection they both feel for each other, they have a special encounter called sex. They both embrace each other and the man puts his penis into the woman's vagina to introduce the sperm that will join the woman's egg cell, and as a result they form a baby".

Other tools you can use to better explain sex is using the concept of fertilization by teaching a graphic or an educational video of how the sperm enters the egg, explaining that this is one of the objectives of the sexual act.



We recommend using a language they can understand, by explaining it as a race that the sperm makes and that the fastest that reaches the egg wins. It is important to consider that when talking to your child about sexuality you do not depend solely on what you say. The attitude and behavior you manifest is also decisive when your child is trying to understand your explanations about sex, or any other topic related to sexuality. After your initial approach and explanations, your child will have more questions which you should try to answer calmly and patiently.

Source:  
10 Consejos para hablar de sexualidad en la familia, Rexpuestas.com  
cuestionessociales.wordpress.com