

Notes from Parent Information Session presented by Madhavi Nawana Parker

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Talking to your child about healthy relationships, sexual development and emotional wellbeing

Healthy relationships

- Healthy relationships begin at home with parents – this is the most important relationship for a child
- Children thrive best with supportive relationships
- Parents can help their child build their understanding of themselves and those around them by talking about friendships and asking questions such as “How do you feel about this friendship?” “What do you look for in a friend?” “What is a friendship deal-breaker for you?”
- Parents can help ensure their child has opportunities to be kind and help others – remember: *the kindest of hearts are the happiest of hearts*
- Children need at least five different groups of social connections and an extensive network of people they can trust for times when things are difficult

Values system

- Consider your family’s values – write down key points with your children
- Some parenting today is missing character education and values education
- When discussing sex education with your children, do so with reference to your family’s values

Sex education

- Research shows that the earlier parents talk about sex, the more likely children will hold off sexual activity
- When you teach your child new information about growth, development and sex, always follow it up with a value statement about your family’s position
- Help your child to develop an awareness of sensuality and touch and to recognise what constitutes good and bad touch
- Encourage your child to consider how people make them feel and to trust their instincts – what does your body tell you when you’re not comfortable?
- It’s important to talk about your feelings and teach your child to be able to talk about theirs
- Teach your child that their body is theirs
- Let your child know you believe they will make the right decision
- Ensure your child knows that they are liked and loved unconditionally and that they can talk to you about any emotional or physical issues

Communication

- Talk with your child about this topic early on – *talk soon, talk often*
- Answer your child’s questions as soon as they start asking
- Answer questions openly and factually and treat the topic as a normal part of conversation
- Don’t feel the need to go into full detail from an early age - simple, factual answers are best
- If you feel unprepared to answer a question at the time your child asks, let them know they have asked a good question and that you would like to take the time to answer it properly, so you will talk to them about it soon
- Trust your own judgement in knowing what to share – you know what’s best for your child

- Ask your child what they already know about a topic – this is a great way to start the conversation if you feel your child has some, probably incomplete, knowledge from other sources. It's never too late to have that conversation!

Puberty

- Average age of puberty for girls is now between 8 – 10 years old
- Some literature in this field suggests children should be made aware of the changes that will come with puberty two years before it begins

Diversity

- Sexual orientation is not a choice and is a small part of who you are
- 1 in 10 people are attracted to the same sex