

# TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX

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## Preparing

- Look at your school's Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) policy and other communications so you know which topics will be taught and when they will cover it.
- Decide if you want to be the one to teach your children the content in advance, or if you want school to deliver it and you have a follow up conversation. Of course, you can also do both.
- Access many of the great resources out there for parents to help you along the way (see below for some of these).
- Establish your and your family's own values around relationships and sex and convey these to your child: 'different people may think differently about some of these things, but in our family we believe ...'
- Decide who in the family will share what with the child and how open you want to be about different things.
- Make yourself available to your child, give space and time for questions and conversations and leave topics open for revisiting in the future, at their own pace.

## Top Tips

- Start as soon as your child is ready.
- Remember that it is never too late to start these conversations with your child: any conversation is better than none.
- Foster a culture of openness in your home.
- Open discussions to involve the whole family.
- Do not lie to children; give them an age-appropriate response to their question.
- Use the correct scientific terminology for body parts, so your child can accurately report medical or safeguarding issues.
- Do not give up if your first conversation does not go to plan.
- Do not overshare your own experiences with your child.
- Seek support for yourself if having these conversations affects you in anyway.
- Use the Sexual Behaviour Traffic Light Tool to know what is normal for your child's age – see link.
- Speak to your child's school if you need further help at any point.

## Conversation Starters

» I thought now might be a good time to answer the question you had about ...

» I have just found this interesting book - shall we have a look together?

» You are growing very quickly at the moment; would you like to understand what is happening to your body?

» What would you do/say if something made you feel uncomfortable?

» My friend ... is pregnant: do you know what that means?

» Shall we practise naming some body parts and talk about what they do?

» How do you respect your body?



# Common questions about RSE answered

## What has changed with Relationship and Sex Education?

The Government published their Relationship and Sex Education Guidance in 2020; this was the first update in 20 years. The world has changed dramatically over the past 20 years and so it is vital that Relationship and Sex Education, in schools, is fit for purpose in the modern world. Less than half of children and teenagers have ever talked about sex with their parents at home. It is not designed to sexualise children, but to ensure they are protected from abuse, understand consent, and are prepared for the things they may encounter online.

## Does my child have to be taught this?

Relationship Education is compulsory, but Sex Education is not: you have the right to withdraw them until two terms before their 16th birthday, when they can choose to opt in. However, it is important to remember, that if you withdraw them, you are taking responsibility for their sex education. Just because they are not present in the lesson does not mean they will not find out about these topics; they are likely to hear the information, second-hand, from their peers, without the opportunity to ask the teachers questions and clarify their understanding.

## How do I know when my child is ready?

When your child starts to ask you questions, which cannot be answered in simple terms, or they are seeking an extension to your answers.

## What comes next...

Secondary schools should provide a full PSHEE programme, which should include Health Education and Relationship and Sex Education. This should be done through a timetabled lesson, and you can check their policies on the school website. Year 7 RSE is likely to include puberty, reproduction, body image, relationships and sexuality. The programme will progress in an age-appropriate way as your child moves through secondary school.

## Help is out there!

### Books to read with your child

*Let's Talk About Body, Boundaries, Consent and Respect* by Jayne Saunders

*What's Happening to Me? Boys Edition* by Alex Frith and Nancy Leschikoff, *Girls Edition* by Susan Meredith and Nancy Leschikoff

*It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie Harris

*What's the Big Secret?* By Laurie Brown

### Books to read yourself

*Body Safety Education: A Parents' Guide to Protecting Kids from Sexual Abuse* by Jayne Saunders

*Help Your Kids with Growing Up* by Robert Winston

FPA [www.fpa.org.uk/relationships-and-sex-education/for-parents/](http://www.fpa.org.uk/relationships-and-sex-education/for-parents/) a wide selection of books to read with children of different ages and books to support parents.

### Websites to help you

*Big Talk* [www.bigtalkeducation.co.uk/parents/](http://www.bigtalkeducation.co.uk/parents/) A parent's guide to sex education, including information for supporting a child with SEND understanding relationships and sex.

*Amaze* [www.amaze.org/parents/](http://www.amaze.org/parents/) Podcasts to help prepare parents to talk about sex and relationships and resources to help you become an 'askable parent'.

*Outspoken Education* [www.outspokeneducation.com/](http://www.outspokeneducation.com/) Topics arranged by age and topic for discussion with children.

*Brook Sexual Behaviour's Traffic Light Tool* [www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/](http://www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/) Helps you too identify, understand and respond to a child's sexual behaviours based on their age.

*The Naked Truth Project* [www.thenakedtruthproject.com/parents-various](http://www.thenakedtruthproject.com/parents-various) Parent pack and PG workshop looking at the dangers of the internet, sexting and pornography.

*Think U Know* [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/) Focus on internet education and safety for your child.

*NSPCC Pants Rule* [www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/) Resource to help you talk about covering up of body parts and consent.

