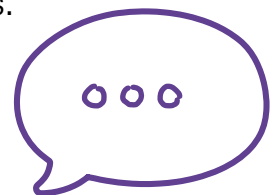


Talking to parents, guardians and carers about sexual health



In this factsheet, 'parents' includes guardians, carers, and any adults who support young people.

Research shows that parents want their kids to have healthy relationships. As a professional working with young people, you can support parents to build the confidence needed to talk about relationships, safety and sexual health with their kids. The end game? To give young people the knowledge and support they need to have safe and healthy relationships.



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Why do parents matter when it comes to sex education?

Parents and carers are the first and continuing educators of their young people. They have a shared responsibility to determine what is considered appropriate, which includes sharing information as well as sharing personal and cultural values with their young people.

Parents shape young people's views on relationships and sexuality. Open communication creates a safe space. It empowers young people to make informed choices and seek health information, advice and support when needed.

How professionals working with young people can support parents

- **Consult regularly:** Talk to parents and engage with them regular about conversations you are having with their young person as well as the goals and content of any sexual health programs.
- **Encourage questions:** Provide a space for parents to discuss concerns and give feedback.
- **Support parents to lead and continue conversations at home:** Encourage parents to get familiar with resources like [Talk Soon, Talk Often](#) for guidance and support on a range of sexual health topics they can speak with their young person about.
- **Balance values and rights:** Maintain a respectful balance between parental and community values and the rights and needs of the young people to receive accurate developmentally appropriate sexual health support and education.

Tips for effective communication with parents

- **Start with empathy:** Recognise that parents may feel uncomfortable. Emphasise the importance of supporting their child's wellbeing and ensuring that they have safe and healthy relationships.
- **Encourage positive language:** Words set the tone for respect and consent. It builds the foundation for healthy relationships. When engaging with both parents and young people, use positive and neutral language and remember not to make any assumptions.
- **Prepare for common questions from parents:** The next section will help.



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Common parental questions & concerns (and how to address them)

Informed parents can reinforce positive messages about relationships, respect, and safety. As [Talk Soon, Talk Often](#) highlights, frequent, casual conversations are best. Instead of a single 'talk', parents are encouraged to use everyday moments for discussions. A TV show, an advert, or a question about a friend can support them to reinforce healthy messages.

Below are some of the most common questions parents have and how you can guide them.



Common parental questions & concerns

HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

How can I bring up sexual health topics without it feeling awkward?

Encourage parents to use 'teachable moments' in everyday situations, like TV scenes. Emphasise casual, informal approaches to make these conversations feel natural.

Ask young people what they know about a topic and build on their knowledge.

What if I say the wrong thing, or my child feels embarrassed?

Reassure parents that openness and honesty matter more than perfect words. A non-judgemental tone and willingness to listen help create a comfortable space for young people.

Parents are not expected to know the answer to every question or be an expert in sexual health. Parents and young people can find out answers together by looking at the Play Safe website or reading through a range of resources.

How do I talk about relationships and consent?

Stress that respect and consent are foundational for any relationship. Reinforce 'no means no' and the importance of respecting boundaries. Again, everyday scenarios can help illustrate these values.

Check out the ['Consent, age and the law'](#) factsheet for more information on this topic.

How do I discuss contraception and safe practices without seeming to encourage sex?

Research from around the world shows that providing young people with evidence-based sexual health information does not encourage them to have sex. Instead, research shows that sexual health education increases young people's knowledge and skills to have and maintain safe and healthy relationships. Clear, factual information empowers informed choices.

How do I address online safety and exposure to explicit content?

Advise open talks about internet safety. Encourage young people to seek help if they find troubling content. A supportive approach is more effective than strict monitoring.

This factsheet is a quick reference for youth professionals. It will help parents have open, informed discussions about relationships and sexual health. Parents can be directed to [Talk Soon, Talk Often](#) for further guidance.

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STAY UP TO DATE



Clinical information evolves. Many reliable sources, like the [Play Safe](#) and [Play Safe Pro](#) websites, offer current guidance for youth workers and young people. Subscribe to the [Play Safe Pro newsletter](#) to stay up to date with our free resources, factsheets, tools, and interactive activities.

If you can't answer a question, or need more support, advise the young people you work with to contact [Nurse Nettie](#) or the [NSW Sexual Health Infolink](#).