HOW CREATING CONVERSATION GUIDES ON HUMAN SEXUAL HEALTH TOPICS CAN HELP PARENTS COMMUNICATE MORE EFFECTIVELY

by

Emily Russo

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Capstone Project Facilitator: Laura Halldin
Content Advisor: Anita Gibson
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**Project Overview**

This capstone project was created to increase student knowledge of sexual health topics through engaging parents and children in conversation. Through my research I discovered the greatest obstacle keeping children from learning about sexual health was a lack of communication with their parents. While most parents wanted to be the primary source of information on sexual health for their student, they did not engage in effective communication about sexual health topics. This lead me to the following research question: *How can creating conversation guides on human sexual topics can help parents communicate more effectively?*

This project was created to empower parents and adults to fulfill their need to personally educate their children about sexual health topics.

The audience for this project includes two types of participants, children and a parent or other emotionally significant adult in that child’s life. While most students will have their parent be their adult, it is important to note that any significant adult to a student able to complete the process with them. Thus, the use of the word parent can mean a biological parent or another adult taking on the parenting responsibilities. The resources created were two fold, a set of parent presentations as well as a set of conversation guides. The first two sessions of the parent presentation series can be used to educate parents of children of any age (0-18 years) but the final parent presentation and the conversation guides are focused on the topic of puberty which are appropriate for children between 9 and 13 years of age. While the project is aimed at parents and children they are also appropriate for educators, social workers and administration who can benefit from both the parent presentations and reviewing the communication guides.

In order teach parents how to communicate about sexual health topics I created a three-part parent presentation series and a four-part conversation guide series. This project also
includes pre-and-post feedback forms for both students and parents to provide feedback so I can continually improve to the project based on participant feedback. The parent presentation series is taught as a precursor to the use of the conversation guides. Because sexual health education is a controversial and poorly understood topic for many people, the parent education series precursor is vital to the later success of the implantation of the conversation guides.

The three-part presentation series is an introduction to the myriad of topics that make up sexual health education, the developmental stages of life long human sexual development as well as the effective communication strategies for beginning and maintaining conversations between parents and students. Within the series parents are taught the importance of life-long sexual health education for their children and given the opportunity to practice the same communication strategies they will use with their student through the conversation guides. By giving parents the time and space to reflect and practice new communication skills they are able build their confidence as communicators.

After completing the parent presentation series parents are given the conversation guides to work through with their student. Before beginning the conversation guides the students and parents are asked to fill out the pre-conversation survey to collect baseline data. The conversation guides focus on the topic of puberty. They include the physical changes that occur during puberty as well as the social/emotional aspects of puberty that are generally neglected by parents. Upon completing the four communication guides parents and students fill out the post conversation guide survey. The goal is that after completing the four communication guides the participates will have built a basic rapport and understanding of how to effectively communication together about sexual health. They can then use those basic communication building blocks to continue their conversations in the future.
The four-part communication guides relay on the same communication strategies that the parents practiced in their presentation series. The communication guides are set up in with repetitive outline which are the following: introduction, purpose (goals), activity, practice and reflection. Each conversation guide begins with the introduce phase which establishes/reviews the communication rules and has the participants do an emotional check in. The purpose phase lays out a clearly stated information goal for that conversation guide. The activity phase is a presentation of the information presented through co-discovery by the parent and child. The practice phase asks both parents and children to apply the information to their own lives and share common experiences they have with the specific information. The final phase is the reflection phase in which participants are asked to do a final emotional check in and share their current feelings and state of mind.

The goal of this capstone project is to help parents begin, develop and maintain effective communication on sexual health their child so their child is able to develop and maintain safe and healthy sexual relationships in the future. The project helps parents build a solid foundation for communicating about sexual health by showing them importance of sexual health education and by having them practice concrete and effective communication strategies. The data collecting in the pre-and-post communication guides will then be used to analyze the successes and areas of improvement in the project. It is my goal to continually assess and improve the entire project in accordance with the participants stated needs as measured by the surveys. This project aims to help change the entire paradigm of sexual health education by reframing it as a lifelong topic, instead of a single conversation. I want to show parents and children that sexual health education best taught through developing a positive relationship and not just learning the basic facts of sexual development.
Pre-and-Post Student Survey

Before you start here is some background information that will help you answer the following questions. **Trusted adults** are people that are **18 or older**. Trusted adults can include parents or legal guardians. Other types of trusted adults include teachers, family friends or religious leaders. When answering the following questions remember that **peers and friends under 18** are not part of the trusted adult category.

**Health and Safety** topics include:
- Identifying and managing emotions
- Healthy friendships
- Personal safety
- Peer pressure/ Bullying
- Private Parts
- Puberty
- Human reproduction (Where babies come from)

1. Have you ever talked to a trusted adult about health and safety before?
   - Yes
   - No

2. Which trusted adults have you talked to about your health and safety with in your life? (mark all the apply)
   - Parent or guardian
   - Other adult family member
   - Teacher
   - School Counselor
   - Adult at school
   - Religious leader (Pastor/ Priest/ Imam/ Rabbi)
   - Other: __________

3. Which of these health topics have you discussed with a trusted adult in the past year? (mark all the apply)
   - Identifying and managing emotions
   - Healthy friendships
   - Personal safety
   - Peer pressure/ Bullying
   - Private Parts
   - Puberty
· Human reproduction (Where babies come from)
  · Other: ________________

4. How many times have you discussed any of the above health topics with a trusted adult in the past year?
   · Never
   · Once
   · Between 2-5 times
   · More than 5 times

5. How many times have you discussed puberty specifically?
   · Never
   · Once
   · Between 2-5 times
   · More than 5 times

6. If you have discussed puberty, which topics did you talk about specifically? (mark all that apply)
   · Body changes that happen during puberty
   · Emotional changes that happen during puberty
   · Social changes that happen during puberty
   · Other: _________________________

7. How comfortable do you currently feel discussing puberty with a trusted adult?
   Scale 0-10
   0- **Not at all** comfortable
   5- Somewhat comfortable
   10- **Extremely** comfortable

   1- 2- 3- 4- 5- 6- 7- 8- 9- 10

8. Which trusted adult would be your first choice to discuss puberty with?
   · Parent/guardian
   · Other adult family member
   · Teacher
   · School Counselor
   · Adult at school
   · Religious leader (Pastor/ priest/ Imam/ rabbi)
   · Other: ____________

9. Why do you prefer this trusted adult more than the others?
10. When you have questions about health topics, how do you most often find answers to your questions?
   · Ask a parent/guardian
   · Ask a trusted adult that is not a parent or guardian
   · search online
   · search in books/ at the library
   · ask friends
   · other: __________________________
Pre-and-Post Parent Survey

Before you start:
Before you start, here is some background information that will help you answer the following questions. Your student is the child with whom you are completing the conversation guides. When answering questions, please only respond with information to this specific child. Do not include information regarding any other children, including the child’s siblings. Each question is about the specific child you are participating with in this study.

Health and Safety topics include
- Identifying and managing emotions
- Healthy friendships
- Personal safety
- Peer pressure/Bullying
- Private Parts
- Puberty
- Human reproduction (Where babies come from)

1. What is your relationship to the student with whom you are completing the conversation guides?
   - Parent/guardian
   - Other adult family member
   - Teacher
   - School Counselor
   - Adult at school
   - Religious leader (Pastor/priest/Imam/rabbi)
   - Other: __________

2. How long have you known the student?
   - Since birth
   - 6-8 years
   - 3-5 years
   - Less than 2 years

3. Have you ever talked to your student about Health and Safety topics before?
   - Yes
   - No

4. Have you talked to your student about health and safety topics in the past year?
   - Yes
5. Which health and safety topics have you discussed in the past year?
   - Identifying and managing emotions
   - Healthy friendships
   - Personal safety
   - Peer pressure/ Bullying
   - Private Parts
   - Puberty
   - Human reproduction (Where babies come from)

6. How many times have you discussed any of the above health topics with your student in the past year?
   - Never
   - Once
   - Between 2-5 times
   - More than 5 times

7. How many times have you discussed puberty specifically with your student in the past year?
   - Never
   - Once
   - Between 2-5 times
   - More than 5 times

8. If you have discussed puberty with your student, which topics did you talk about specifically?
   - Body changes that happen during puberty
   - Emotional changes that happen during puberty
   - Social changes that happen during puberty
   - Other: ____________________________________________________________

9. How comfortable do you currently feel discussing puberty with a trusted adult?
   Scale 0-10
   0- Not at all comfortable
   5- Somewhat comfortable
   10- Extremely comfortable

   1-  2-  3-  4-  5-  6-  7-  8-  9-  10
10. Did you use any resources to look up how to discuss puberty with children?
   · Yes
   · No

11. If you did use any resources, which type of resources did you use?
   · Medical Website
   · Parenting Website
   · Parenting books
   · Asked family members for advice
   · Asked friends for advice
   · Asked religious leader (Pastor, Priest, Imam, Rabbi) for advice
   · Religious websites
   · Religious books
Conversation Guide #1
How to Talk and Listen: Creating Rules for Positive and Productive Conversations

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the challenging and rewarding practice of talking to children about their sexual growth and development. This conversation guide will help you set up some rules for communicating about human sexual growth and development with your student.

There are unspoken rules for how we talk and listen to people in different situations. We follow different rules in different situations: for example, how we communicate at work versus how we communicate in our own homes. This conversation guide will walk you through deciding which rules are most important to follow so that your conversations will be productive and positive.

You will use the rules that you create together to talk about topics such as how bodies and feelings change during puberty and how to identify adults who can talk to students and answer any questions they may have about puberty.

Purpose

Adult/student read together: Today we are going to take a few minutes to decide on some rules together about how we want to talk about human sexual growth and development topics. Sometimes adults and children find it difficult to talk about topics such as puberty, so today we are going to set some rules to make it easier to talk to one another about puberty and human sexual development.

Take a minute, both adult and student, and think of one word to describe how you feel right now. Write your words below.

Adult:

Student:
Activity

You are going to read a list of words, and then you’ll both circle two words that you think will make the conversations positive and productive and cross out two words that will make the conversations negative and unproductive.

*Put the list between the adult and student so that it is easily visible by both. Then, spend at least thirty seconds thinking about the words before circling or crossing out anything.

Student, you will go first. Circle two positive words. After, the adult will circle two different positive words.

After both student and adult have circled their positive words, **discuss the following questions:**

1. Student, why did you pick the words you did? Adult, why did you pick the words you did?

2. How do these words make each of you feel?

3. Is there a different positive word either of you would add to the list?

4. What do the student’s words and the adult’s words have in common?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>open</th>
<th>patient</th>
<th>teasing</th>
<th>embarrassed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>serious</td>
<td>calm</td>
<td>judging</td>
<td>scared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one-sided</td>
<td>listening</td>
<td>yelling</td>
<td>speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friendly</td>
<td>attack</td>
<td>shame</td>
<td>respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dishonest</td>
<td>unclear</td>
<td>gentle</td>
<td>safe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Student, why do you think the adult circled the words he or she did? Adult, why do you think the student circled the words he or she did?

Look at the list of words again. This time, the student will cross out two negative words. After, the adult will cross out different negative words.

After both student and adult have crossed out their negative words, discuss the following questions:

1. Do you agree with each other’s negative words?
   a. Why or why not?

2. Is there a word that got crossed out that doesn’t feel negative to one of you?
   a. Why does it not feel negative to you?

3. Is there a negative word that is missing from the list that either of you want to add?

**Practice**

**Adult/student read together:** Now that we have four positive words that describe what we want our conversation to sound like, we are going to make some positive conversation rules. These rules should be written in a way that tells the other person how we do want to talk and listen to each other, not what we don’t want to do. For example, instead of writing rules like “don’t judge me,” use positive language, such as “use kind words.” By making the rules positive, we can focus on how to put these words into action.

Each rule should have an action (verb) and a describing word (adjective). Example: Use a calm voice, even if you disagree.

Write down the four positive words you circled above.

1.
Now, take turns creating rules using positive actions based on your positive words.

(Remember, each rule has an action word and a describing word.)

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

Discuss the following questions:

1. Do all these rules seem fair? If not, why not?

2. If a rule is unfair, how can it be changed to make it fair?

3. Of the rules, which might be the hardest to follow?
   a. Why?

4. If either person stops following the rules, will it always be on purpose?
   a. Why or why not?

5. If either person stops following the rules, what is a kind way to remind him or her of the rules?

Write at least one phrase you can use to kindly remind each other of the rules you created together.
Reflect

Setting up positive rules for talking about puberty and sexual development is a great first step toward positive and productive communication. It is not always easy to follow the rules all the time, so having a kind way to remind each other will be important. Now, take thirty seconds in silence to think about how you are feeling right now. Come up with one word each, and then write those words here.

Adult:

Student:

At the beginning of this conversation guide, you both wrote down one word about you were feeling. Compare how you were feeling at the beginning of this conversation and now.

Discuss the following questions:

1. Student, have your feelings changed? Adult, have your feelings changed?

   a. If they have changed, are they more positive or more negative now?

   b. If they have not changed, why do you think you feel the same?
Conversation Guide #2

How Bodies Change During Puberty

Introduction

During your last conversation, you focused on finding words and creating positive rules to help both adult and student talk about human sexual growth. The rules that you created together are going to be the foundation for your conversation today. Before digging into the conversation, take thirty seconds in silence to think about you are feeling right now. Then, in the space provided, each write 1–3 words about how you are feeling.

Adult:

Student:

Now, take out your list of rules from the previous session and read them out loud together.

Discuss the following questions:

1. Do you both still agree to the rules?

2. Is there anything that you feel needs to be added to the list?
   a. If so, does it have an action and a description word?
   b. Do you both agree to adding it to the list?

After reading the list and discussing it, look back at how you decided to kindly remind each other of the rules.

Discuss the following questions:

1. What words will you use to kindly remind each other of the rules?

2. How will the other person feel if he or she gets reminded kindly?

3. How will you feel if you need to kindly remind the other person of the rules?

4. Do either of you think there might be a point where you should stop and try the conversation again if too many reminders are given?
   a. Why or why not?
Purpose

The purpose of today’s conversation is to discuss the physical changes that occur during puberty. Humans change and grow every year they are alive. Some of the changes are easy to see, such as growing taller, but some changes are harder to see, such as bones fusing together. In puberty, there are both noticeable and non-noticeable physical changes that take place. Today you are going to discuss the physical changes the student and his or her peers are looking forward to.

Before talking about physical changes that occur during puberty, together think of and list four changes (we can see and those we cannot) that happen to the human body between birth and puberty.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

Activity

Take turns reading aloud the following changes that bodies go through during puberty, and decide if they are visible or nonvisible changes. Put a checkmark in the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes</th>
<th>Changes we can see</th>
<th>Changes we cannot see</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth of hair on face/chest/underarms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of acne or pimples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sperm production begins and ejaculation is possible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing taller</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovulation and menstruation beings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hips or shoulders grow wider</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing pubic hair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More hormones released in the body, causing mood changes

Increased hormone levels, causing changing feelings

Breasts develop

Sweat production increases

Erections happen for no reason

Now that you have read through and decided which changes in puberty we can see and those we cannot see, discuss the following questions:

1. Are all the changes visible to all people?
   a. Why or why not?

2. Is it possible some for some of the changes of puberty to occur without people noticing?
   a. Which changes can occur that adults may not notice?
   b. Which changes can occur that a student many not notice?

**Practice**

For this portion of the conversation, you are going to work together to decide which of these changes the student will experience. Adults will also share some of their experiences with changes that occur during puberty. On the list above, highlight all the puberty-related changes the student will experience.

Discuss the following questions:

1. Has the student started experiencing any of these changes?
   a. If so, what are they?
b. If not, has the student noticed any of his or her peers experiencing puberty-related changes?

2. Student, how do you feel about your body changing?
   a. Which changes scare you?
   b. Which changes excite you?

3. Adult, which of these changes do you remember?
   a. What was the most difficult change to deal with?
   b. At what age did you begin experiencing the changes of puberty?
   c. Was that before, during, or after your friends experienced the changes of puberty?

Reflect

After considering the physical changes of puberty, you were able to decide which ones are visible and which are nonvisible. The physical changes of puberty happen over a period of years, and everyone experiences them differently. Puberty is a unique experience for everyone, but no one has to go through the changes alone.

Discuss the following questions:

1. What might an adult do for a student to help make the physical changes of puberty easier?
2. What can a student do to help the adults in his or her life understand the changes he or she is going through?
3. If the student has questions about how his or her body is changing, when is the best time to ask an adult?

After completing this conversation guide, take thirty seconds to think about how you feel right now. Then, in the space provided, each write 1–3 words about how you are feeling right now.

**Adult:**

**Student:**
Conversation Guide #3

How Puberty Changes Our Brains and Our Emotions

Introduction
During the last conversation, you talked about the physical changes of puberty. You identified which physical changes were visible and which were nonvisible. Finally, you talked about the changes the student will go through and determined whether any of those changes had already started. In this conversation guide, you are going to talk about the emotional and social changes that happen during puberty. As many adults know, puberty an emotional time because of the increase in hormones the body is producing. While students may have heard about these emotional and social changes, they may have not fully experienced them.

Before digging into the conversation, take thirty seconds in silence to think about how you are feeling right now. Then, in the space provided, each write 1–3 words about how you are feeling.

Adult: 

Student: 

Purpose
There are two main purposes of this conversation. The first is to help students understand the social and emotional changes they will face throughout puberty. The second purpose is to remind adults of the very real and difficult challenges students face when their bodies are growing and changing. When puberty starts, and throughout the entire process, the brain is flooded with hormones that the body uses to help it grow and develop. This rush of hormones can change how a student thinks and acts. Many adults are frustrated by their students’ changing priorities and actions. Therefore, puberty can be difficult not just for students, but also for adults. It is easy to forget about the intense changes that occur during puberty, and dismissing or ignoring a student’s emotions can lead to hurt feelings and permanent changes in a family’s relationships.

Activity
Take turns reading the following emotional and social changes that occur during puberty. Student, circle any changes that have already started to occur.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wanting to try more and riskier things</th>
<th>Being more interested in spending time with friends</th>
<th>Having more conflicts with parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becoming interested in others as more than friends—finding boyfriends or girlfriends</td>
<td>Feeling increased peer pressure</td>
<td>Experiencing mood swings—feeling great one minute and then really sad or angry the next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling anxiety and stress</td>
<td>Having a hard time making up your mind/feel unsure a lot</td>
<td>Feeling “paranoid”—feeling like everyone’s looking at or talking about you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling self-conscious about how your body looks</td>
<td>Having intense feelings</td>
<td>Thinking “Who am I?” and trying to define yourself as a person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After circling the changes that have started to occur, discuss the following questions.

**Questions for the student:**

1. How long ago did you start experiencing these changes?
2. Which emotional/social change do you feel is the hardest to deal with right now?
3. Are your classmates experiencing any of these emotional/social changes?
4. Are there any emotional/social changes on this list you are nervous about?
   a. If so, why are you nervous about them?

**Questions for the adult:**

1. Have you noticed these social/emotional changes as well?
2. How do these changes make your student different from how he or she was in the past?
3. How does watching your student change make you feel?

Practice

Now that we have discussed some of the social/emotional changes of puberty, let’s practice understanding how a student’s changing priorities and actions make both the student and the adult feel. Consider the following situations.

1. The student wakes up in a bad mood and the adult doesn’t know why. When the adult asks how the student is doing, he or she ignores the adult and doesn’t respond. When the adult asks again, the student feels angry and merely shrugs his or her shoulders.

   a. Why does the student ignore the adult?
   
   b. How does the adult feel?
   
   c. Is there another way the student could tell the adult he or she is feeling upset?

2. The student’s clothes don’t fit anymore, so the adult suggests they go shopping together. Even after two hours, the student and the adult cannot agree on a single outfit. The student wants more mature and fashionable clothing, but the adult thinks all the clothes the student has selected are inappropriate.

   a. Why does the student want to wear more mature clothing?
   
   b. How are the new clothes the student wants different from his or her current clothes?
   
   c. How does the student feel when the adult says that he or she is not old enough or mature enough for a certain style of clothing?
   
   d. Why might an adult say that something is inappropriate?
   
   i. Does the adult have a reason or is he or she just being mean?
   
   e. In the adult’s opinion, what exactly makes some clothing inappropriate?
   
   i. Why does the adult think those types of clothing are inappropriate?
   
   f. How does the adult feel when the student refuses to listen as the adult tries to explain why some clothing is inappropriate?
   
   g. Adult, was there ever a time in your life when an adult refused to let you wear something?
• If so, how did you feel?
• What did you do?
• Now that you are older, do you agree with the adult’s decision? Why or why not?

3. The adult notices that the student hasn’t been saying much about his or her friends lately. When the adult asks who the student’s friends are, the student says, “Nobody.”

a. How does the student feel when the adult asks about his or her friends?

b. Why doesn’t the student want to tell the adult as much as he or she used to?

c. For the student, why might not telling an adult about friends be easier?

d. Why is the adult even interested in who the student’s friends are?

e. How does the adult feel when the student refuses to talk?

f. For the adult, was there ever a time in your life when you didn’t want to share information about your friendships with adults?

i. If so, why did you not want to tell an adult?

**Reflection**

Going through puberty entails not only physical changes, but social and emotional changes as well. Students may feel misunderstood by adults, and adults may feel frustrated and confused by students. Talking through how the changes make you both feel can help you understand each other. If you can better understand what the other is feeling and thinking, you can maintain positive and productive communication throughout puberty.

**Discuss the following questions:**

1. What emotional changes are you both most nervous for?

2. How do you both expect your relationship to change emotionally in the next four years?

3. How do you both expect your relationship to change socially in the next four years?
After completing this conversation guide, take thirty seconds to think about how you feel right now. Then, in the space provided, each write 1–3 words about how you are feeling.

**Adult:**

**Student:**
**Conversation Guide #4**

**Identifying a Support System**

**Introduction**

In the last conversation, you talked about the social and emotional changes that occur during puberty. Social and emotional changes can be hard for both students and adults to understand. As students grow, their relationships with adults change, which can be difficult for the adults in their life. As students go through puberty, they may find that there are some questions and problems they have that they don’t feel comfortable sharing with a specific adult. It’s important for them to know that there are many people in their lives that support them and can help them. Today you will make a list of people and resources students can look to when they need help.

Before digging into the conversation, take thirty seconds in silence to think about how you are feeling right now. Then, in the space provided, each write 1–3 words about how you are feeling.

**Adult:**

**Student:**

**Purpose**

Making a list of all the supportive people in your life is a good exercise for all people, students and adults alike. Creating a list makes it easier to know who to turn to when you are in a time of need. When you have a question, or are in need of help, it can be difficult to focus and decide on the best person to talk to. Students often consult their friends instead of an adult because it seems easier. While friends are important for providing support and listening, they may not be the best people to answer questions about puberty or relationships. Many students also look to the internet for answers, but this can be dangerous because of misinformation and safety. Today you are going to think of some trustworthy adults to turn to for help, and you’ll also check out some websites that are accurate and helpful for students to use when seeking out information about puberty.

**Activity**

Making a list of trustworthy adults is important because one adult may not be able to answer all the student’s questions or be there every minute of every day. Remember, this is a list of trustworthy adults: it can include family members, teachers/school staff, family friends, coaches, or activity leaders.
Work together to create the following lists. Both the student and the adult should contribute at least one person to each list. If you get stuck, keep going and come back.

Who can the student talk to about the physical changes that occur during puberty?

1. 
2. 
3. 

Who can the student talk to about the emotional/social changes that occur during puberty?

1. 
2. 
3. 

Discuss the following questions:

1. Why might some people be better suited to answer questions about physical changes?
2. Why might some people be better suited to answer questions about emotional/social changes?
3. When are friends the best people to ask for help or to answer questions?
4. When are friends not the best people to ask for help?
   a. Why might they not be the best people to ask?

Practice

Now that you have a list of people, you are going to practice identifying which individuals from the list are the best to talk to in the following situations.

Girls

1. All your friends have started wearing bras. Who is the best person to talk to about wearing a bra?
2. You find blood in your underwear and don’t know what to do. Who is the best person to talk to for help?
3. You are menstruating and don’t know how to deal with it while at school. Who is the best person to talk to for help?

4. You are menstruating at school and do not have a pad or a tampon. Who is the best person to talk to for help?

**Boys**

1. In the mornings, you start finding semen in your pajamas from nocturnal emissions. You need your pajamas washed more often. Who is the best person to talk to for help?

2. You are in school or in public and get an erection for no reason. Who is the best person to talk to for help?

**Girls and Boys**

1. You begin to develop romantic feelings for classmates and are not sure how to deal with these new feelings. Who is the best person to talk to for help?

2. Another student starts telling stories about puberty, and you cannot tell if what the student is saying is true or not. Who is the best person to talk to for help?

3. Your friends make fun of you for not knowing what some slang words for body parts mean. Who is the best person to talk to for help?

4. Your friends or other students are being mean or bullying you. Who is the best person to talk to for help?

5. Your friend is pressuring you to say or do something you are not comfortable with. Who is the best person to talk to for help?

While trusted adults are great for answering questions or offering help, sometimes students are not comfortable asking adults questions. Students turn to the internet for information, only to find websites that inaccurate, confusing, or too detailed. Adults want students to find information when they need it, but the internet can be dangerous for students if they do not know which sites are safe for them to use. As students grow, the information that is appropriate for them grows as well. Students may wonder, “Why are some websites okay for me to use to find answers about puberty, while others are not?” It’s just like how a smartphone app that a student was not allowed to use in kindergarten is now okay to use in third grade. Maybe the app was too difficult, or the student was too young to really understand it. Similarly,
websites with information about puberty are written for different age groups; that way, everyone can get accurate information safely and appropriately.

Visit the following websites and decide if these sites are appropriate and safe for the student.


Reflection

While puberty will raise lots of questions for students, there are many trustworthy adults who want to help. Save the list of websites above so that the student can find them easily when a question comes up.

Student, take the list of trusted adults you just made and store it someplace safe so that when you need it, you can read it again. You can take a picture of the list and save it to your phone or computer, and you can even post the list on your fridge or on a mirror at home. The most important thing to remember is that you have many people in your life who can support you!

After completing this conversation guide, take thirty seconds to think about how you feel right now. Then, in the space provided, each write 1–3 words about how you are feeling.

   Adult:

   Student:
**Begin Here**

Begin the conversation on sexual health

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**Hi, I'm Emily**

- Emily Russo
- Master of Arts in Teaching
- Elementary Education License
  - Spanish Kindergarten

---

**What are our goals?**

- **Long term goal:** Begin, Develop, Maintain
- **Short term goal:** Gain confidence
- **Short term goal:** Understand importance of sexual health

---

**Guidelines for communicating together**

- Why do we need guidelines?
- Creating positive the guidelines together
  - Looking towards our goals
  - In the positive

---

**Emotional Inventory**

- Choose two words we want to describe our conversations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>open</th>
<th>patient</th>
<th>teasing</th>
<th>embarrassed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>serious</td>
<td>calm</td>
<td>judging</td>
<td>scared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one-sided</td>
<td>listening</td>
<td>yelling</td>
<td>speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friendly</td>
<td>attack</td>
<td>shame</td>
<td>respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dishonest</td>
<td>unclear</td>
<td>gentle</td>
<td>safe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Creating our Guidelines**

- Create rules using positive actions based on your positive words
  - Use an action word and a positive emotion
    - Examples:
      - We will talk calmly
      - We will listen respectfully
  - Your Turn: Work with a partner or alone and create a positive rule for each of your positive words
Group guidelines

Take a break
Please come up and sign our rules for communication during the break!

Sexual from Birth
- All children are born sexual, and they will be sexual their whole lives.
- No, babies are not aware of their sexual nature but we are teaching them about it.
- "Parents begin influencing their children’s sexual development through sexual socialization before they begin proactively discussing sexual topics with them, by verbally and nonverbally conveying their standards regarding respect for others, affections, attitudes towards nudity and so forth." [Jerman & Constantine 2010]

Sexual from Birth
- Year task: What are some ways we unconsciously teach children about sexual topics when they are between their birth and five years of age?
  - Consider the following topics
    - Body parts
    - Gender roles
    - Personal space
    - Emotions

What topics are age appropriate?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth: 8 years</th>
<th>8-12 years</th>
<th>12+ 16 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate touch</td>
<td>Puberty</td>
<td>Puberty and menstruation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding body parts, proper anatomical names, stages in body growth process</td>
<td>Infection prevention</td>
<td>Infection prevention and medication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting of their uniqueness and a positive regard for themselves and others</td>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>Communication and negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal hygiene</td>
<td>Media influences</td>
<td>Media influences and positive self-image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional development</td>
<td>Personal hygiene</td>
<td>Personal hygiene and self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of different types of relationships (i.e., friendships, family, romantic)</td>
<td>Sexual expression</td>
<td>Sexual expression and relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of diverse family structures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Sharing Values**

- Consider our ultimate goal
  - Begin, Develop, Maintain
- To teach your child about healthy relationships, first discuss what types of relationships you believe are healthy.
- Values are taught through the discussing the facts.

**Sharing Values**

- Since every person has individual values regarding sexuality and sexual health, we need to reflect on what we truly value.
  - Our values change throughout life so consider what your current values are, not your past values.
- Your Turn: How do you feel about the following topics?
  - Gender Expression
  - Gender roles
  - Romantic Relationships
  - Role of religion in sexuality
  - Sexual orientation
  - Sexual Expression
  - Sexual intercourse and marriage
  - Contraception

**Review of our goals**

- **Long term goal:** Begin, Develop, Maintain
- **Short term goal:** Gain confidence
- **Short term goal:** Understand importance of sexual health

**Conclusion**

- Emotional check in
- Your Turn
  - Today's Goal
    - When do parents start model sexual health facts and values to their children?
    - Are all sexual health topics appropriate for all children?
  - Why?
  - Short Term Goal
    - What skills have you practiced today to make it possible to talk to your child about sexual health?
  - Long Term Goal
    - What do your topic and values have in common?
Presenter Notes Presentation 1

Slide 3

- Long term goal: Help children develop the skills to create and begin and maintain safe and fulfilling relationships by becoming confident talking about sexual health topics.
- Short term goal: Feel comfortable to begin talking to your child about sexual health topics at end of training
- Today’s Goal: Understand the importance of sexual health education throughout a child’s entire life

Slide 4

Why guidelines:

- Many people do not know how to talk about sexual health
- Take the mystery out of our expectations
- Make our work safe and productive

There are unspoken rules for how we talk and listen to people in different situations. We follow different rules in different situations: for example, how we communicate at work versus how we communicate in our own homes.

Positive Guidelines: These rules should be written in a way that tells the other person how we do want to talk and listen to each other, not what we don’t want to do.

Slide 7

- I will ask participants to provide their positive guidelines and write these down.
- After we will go through and consolidate the guidelines down to a manageable list.
- Ask if all participants agree with every guideline- use fist to 5 to show of hands
Tell students we will take a quick break and during the break everyone should sign the guidelines.

**Slide 9**

- All children are born sexual, and they will be sexual their whole lives.
  - Born with sexual organs
  - Assigned gender at birth
  - Taught gender roles

**Slide 10**

Sexuality and Sexual Health topics are varied and contain many more topics than just reproductive sex. Our sexual identity is made up to many factors including gender identity, biological sex, how we create and maintain relationships, and our own self-image.

Questions:

- What category on The Sexuality Wheel surprised you?
- Looking at all these topics, which do we start learning about from birth?


**Slide 11**

- We teach our children about sexual health and sexuality without knowing it. Consider how to talk we model gender roles by what clothes we dress them in or who it is ok to
kiss. These modeled behaviors can be invisible to adults but are the first ways we instruct children about sexuality and sexual health.

- Parents worry that providing sexual information that is not age appropriate will psychologically harm their children or cause them to engage in premature sexual behaviors.

Slide 12

- As children develop they move from being concrete thinkers to abstract.
- This means they at first they can only understand what they can see, and gradually are able to use their imagination or understand ideas they cannot touch or see.
- This means that topics that are appropriate for children birth to 8 years old are concrete ideas, such as naming body parts and knowing what personal space means.
- As they get older they can understand ideas like gender expression, to non-visible body changes during puberty and how the media influences their thinking.
- Question: What topics are appropriate for your child? Are those topics concrete or abstract?


Slide 13

- Sexual Health Values
“Values help people decide how to behave and interact with others. Children learn values from their parents and other family members, community, religious teachings, teachers and their peers. Parents want their children (sic) to develop values similar to their values. People who behave according to their values feel good about themselves. Values influence decisions of an individual about sexual relationships, friends, money and work.” (Prabhu 1997)

Sexual health cannot be removed from the context of society. Just by talking or not talking about sexual health we are teaching our children our own values. The attitude in which we approach the topic is one the greatest way we communicate how we want our children to understand sexuality.

Slide 15

- Long term goal: Help children develop the skills to create and begin and maintain safe and fulfilling relationships by becoming confident talking about sexual health topics.
- Short term goal: Feel comfortable to begin talking to your child about sexual health topics at end of training

Today’s Goal: Understand the importance of sexual health education throughout a child’s entire life
Parent Presentation 2

Start to Talk
Begin the conversation on sexual health

Review of Session 1
- Establishing Guidelines
- Sexual from Birth
- Sharing Values

Multiple Conversations
- ‘The Talk’
  - Single lecture
  - Not a conversation
  - Talking and listening
- Changing the paradigm
  - Multiple conversations
  - Growing with our kids
  - Information changes

Review of Group Guidelines
- Review group guidelines
  - INSERT guidelines from previous session

Your Turn
- What do the emotion words have in common?
- Which is the most important reason?
- Is there anything you would add?

What is our goal?
- Long term goal: Begin, Develop, Maintain
- Short term goal: Gain confidence
- Today’s Goal: Be able to explain why continued conversations are necessary

Multiple Conversations
- ‘The Talk’
  - The sex talk given between 4th and 12th grade
  - Parents tell child what sex is
  - Tell them not to do it

Your Turn: Recalling our past experiences
How did you feel when you got the talk?
- Did you talk to your parents again?
- What facts and information do you remember?
- Did you know that information already?
- If so, where did you learn it?
- If you never had ‘the talk’ where did you learn about sex?
- Who taught you about sex?
- Why did you never have ‘the talk?’
Take a break
Please come up and sign our rules for communication during the break!

Changing Our Message
- How does your experience match up with our goals?
  - Long term goal: Begin, Develop, Maintain
  - Short term goal: Gain confidence
  - Today's Goal: Be able to explain why continued conversations are necessary

Your Turn
- What outcomes do you want to change?
- What actions can you take to change the outcome?

Establishing Relationships
- Creating the relationship to talk
  - Conversation versus lecture
  - Judging vs. Listening
  - Passive vs. Active
    - How does listening open up future conversations?
    - Did you always have the same values?
- Communication style is the constant
  - Information changes
  - Communication style stays constant
    - Message changes due to age
    - More important being open to communication

Review of Goals
- What are our goals?
  - Long term goal: Begin, Develop, Maintain
  - Short term goal: Gain confidence
  - Today's Goal: Be able to explain why continued conversations are necessary

Conclusion
- Emotional check in
Presenter Notes Presentation 2

Slide 2

- Establishing Guidelines
  - Using emotion based rules
  - Stating rules in the positive
- Sexual from Birth
  - Born into a sexualized society
  - We socialize children without knowing
- Sharing Values
  - Take time to think about what you value
  - How do your values match up with our goal?

Slide 3

- When considering the format and context for parent conversations, it is vital to focus on the plural nature of the word conversations.
- Parental communication on sexual health in the past was reserved for a single conversation, or more frequently, a single lecture.
- To truly develop a deep understanding of the many facets of human sexuality, parents need to have multiple conversations with their child. Having more than one conversation on sexual health allows for parents to address more topics, but also make sure that the information they are providing changes with the development of children.

Slide 4

- I will ask participants to provide their positive guidelines and write these down.
- After we will go through and consolidate the guidelines down to a manageable list.
• Ask if all participants agree with every guideline- use fist to 5 to show of hands
  
  o Tell students we will take a quick break and during the break everyone should sign the guidelines

Slide 5

• Long term goal: Help children develop the skills to create and begin and maintain safe and fulfilling relationships by becoming confident talking about sexual health topics.

• Short term goal: Feel comfortable to begin talking to your child about sexual health topics at end of training

  Today’s Goal: Understand the importance of sexual health education throughout a child’s entire life

Slide 6

• When considering the format and context for parent conversations, it is vital to focus on the plural nature of the word conversations. Parental communication on sexual health in the past was reserved for a single conversation, or more frequently, a single lecture.

• To truly develop a deep understanding of the many facets of human sexuality, parents need to have multiple conversations with their child. Having more than one conversation on sexual health allows for parents to address more topics, but also make sure that the information they are providing changes with the development of children.

• To truly develop a deep understanding of the many facets of human sexuality, parents need to have multiple conversations with their child

Slide 9

• Consistently seen in studies, kids don't talk to parents that are authoritarian because they are afraid to be judged or to be lectured. They want to have discussions with their parents,
instead of being told to passively accept ideas (Fitzharris & Werner-Wilson, 2004, p. 279).

- The conversational style which asks children to make personal connections can be achieved by using open-ended questions to understand child's preexisting knowledge and belief systems (Lekowitz, Stoppa, 2006, p. 48).
- By giving children the chance to think critically about sexuality, children are then more likely to make responsible decisions later on (Dyson & Smith, 2012, p. 227).
- To truly develop a deep understanding of the many facets of human sexuality, parents need to have multiple conversations with their child. Having more than one conversation on sexual health allows for parents to address more topics, but also make sure that the information they are providing changes with the development of children.
- Open-ended questions allow parents to introduce their own values, but also allow space for their children to make their own conclusions.

Slide 10

- Long term goal: Help children develop the skills to create and begin and maintain safe and fulfilling relationships by becoming confident talking about sexual health topics.
- Short term goal: Feel comfortable to begin talking to your child about sexual health topics at end of training

Today’s Goal: Understand the importance of sexual health education throughout a child’s entire life
Parent Presentation 3

**Using Conversation Guides**

**Begin the conversation on sexual health**

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### Review of Session 1 and 2

- Establishing Guidelines
- Sexual from Birth
- Sharing Values
- Multiple conversations
- Establishing Relationships

### Review of Group Guidelines

- Review group guidelines
  - INSERT guidelines from previous session

- Your Turn
  - What do the emotion words have in common?
  - Which is the most important view?
  - Is there anything you would add?

---

### What is our goal?

- **Long term goal:** Begin, Develop, Maintain
- **Short term goal:** Gain confidence
- **Today's Goal:** Identify the basic parts of the conversation guide and explain their importance.

### Starting the conversation

- **Creating Guidelines**
  - No more guessing
  - Creating positive the guidelines together
  - Include an action word and a positive emotion

- **Using our own experience**
  - How did creating guidelines help you in our presentations?
  - How did having guidelines make you feel?
  - What guideline do you want to use with your child we created with the group?
  - Why?
Starting the conversation
- Being open
- Your Turn
  - How do you feel when your child is open with you?
  - Why does being open make your child trust you more?
  - If you feel like you are closing up, how could you remind yourself to be open?

Take a break
Please come up and sign our rules for communication during the break!

Begin here
- There is no such thing as PERFECT
- Start where you are today

Looking at Conversation Guides
- Topics
  - How to Talk and Listen: Creating Rules for Positive and Productive Conversations
  - How Bodies Change During Puberty
  - How Puberty Changes our Brains and our Emotions
  - Identifying a Support System

Common Structure of Conversation Guides
- Topics
  - Introduction
  - Purpose (Goals)
  - Activity
  - Practice
  - Reflection

Common Structure of Conversation Guides
- Topics
  - Introduction
  - Purpose (Goals)
  - Activity
  - Practice
  - Reflection
- Your Turn
  - How is the communication guide structure similar to parent presentations?
  - Why is the structure always the same?
Reviewing Our Goals

- **Long term goal:** Begin, Develop, Maintain
- **Short term goal:** Gain confidence
- **Today’s Goal:** Identify the basic parts of the conversation guide and explain their importance.

Conclusion

- **Your Turn**
  - How has your view on sexual health education changed?
    - How to talk?
    - How often?
    - When to start?
  - What is your greatest takeaway from these presentations?
    - Attitude, Guidelines, Goals
    - Emotional Check in

Final Emotional Check in

First Check in word cloud

Last Check in word cloud
Presenter Notes Presentation 3

Slide 2

- Establishing Guidelines
  - Stating rules in the positive
- Sexual from Birth
  - We socialize children without knowing.
- Sharing Values
  - How do your values match up with our goal?
- Multiple conversations
  - Not a single talk, changing how we think about sexual health education.
- Establishing Relationships

Slide 3

- I will ask participants to provide their positive guidelines and write these down.
- After we will go through and consolidate the guidelines down to a manageable list.
- Ask if all participants agree with every guideline- use fist to 5 show of hands
  - Tell students we will take a quick break and during the break everyone should sign the guidelines

Slide 5

- Norming the conversation
  - explicitly stating expectations
  - Creating positive rules… what we will don't not what we wont
  - Focus on the positive
  - Includes a verb, action word and a positive emotion
Slide 6

- Being Open
  - I really want to talk to you about this
  - It is difficult for me because…
  - Be patient with me, and I will with you
  - I will get better

Slide 8

- There is no such thing as PERFECT
  - We all have strengths and weaknesses
  - This is a marathon, not a sprint
    - Short term goals so we can meet long term goals
  - Start where you are today
    - What are your communication strengths?
    - What are your communication weakness?
      - How can you use your strengths to make up for your weaknesses?

Slide 9

- Slide How to Talk and Listen: Creating Rules for Positive and Productive Conversations
  - Creating guidelines
    - Using action verbs and positive words
- How Bodies Change During Puberty
  - Nuts and bolts
  - The what of puberty
  - Be open about personal experience to establish trust and connection
• How Puberty Changes our Brains and our Emotions
  o Emotional changes as important as physical changes
  o Be open about personal experience to establish trust and connection
  o It's hard to go through puberty

• Identifying a Support System
  o Looking towards larger community
  o Who shares your values?
  o Being concrete and explicit in who your child should go to
  o Long term goal

Slide 10
1. Introduction: Establishing or reviewing guidelines
2. Purpose: today’s goal
3. Activity: learning information, discovering together
4. Practice: your turn, practicing together
5. Reflection: What did we learn? Did we meet our goal? Did we follow our guidelines?
   How do you feel?

Slide 11
1. Introduction: Establishing or reviewing guidelines
2. Purpose: today’s goal
3. Activity: learning information, discovering together
4. Practice: your turn, practicing together
5. Reflection: What did we learn? Did we meet our goal? Did we follow our guidelines?
   How do you feel?
Slide 12

- Long term goal: Help children develop the skills to create and begin and maintain safe and fulfilling relationships by becoming confident talking about sexual health topics.

- Short term goal: Feel comfortable to begin talking to your child about sexual health topics at end of training

Today’s Goal: Understand the importance of sexual health education throughout a child’s entire life
References


