

Summer AND a Pandemic: 5 Tips to Support Parents Who Are Spending More Time at Home with Their Young or Grown Kids

There are a myriad of new life situations we're all getting used to in this uncertain time. Parents working from home, day or support programs closed or online, everyone under the same roof. More time together often equals more questions. Less outside support means more on parents to deal with everyday. It can be overwhelming especially when the topic of sexuality or sexual behavior comes up.

Whether in person or in your online interactions, helping parents talk with their young or grown children about sexuality can be a difficult task. Parents and guardians often worry that talking about sexuality gives permission and wonder whether their children can actually have safe, satisfying relationships.

Many parents would be appreciative of your willingness to address this topic with them so they can build skills and confidence when talking with their children.

Here are some tips for working with parents:

1. Many parents think of their child as still a child even though they may be in high school. They often will say, "He doesn't need this information because he has a cognitive age of 5 years old". What you can say is that their body is changing just like everyone else's and they will need the same information that other students without disabilities in high school need. The topics to cover are based on the biological age of the child, not the cognitive age. The only difference is how you teach the topic, not what topics you teach.

2. Some parents worry that if you talk about sexuality, it will cause them to become interested and possibly become sexually active. You can tell parents that studies show that young people who receive comprehensive, medically accurate sexuality education are more likely to wait to have sexual intercourse and, if they do decide to have intercourse, are more likely to use protection. Talking about sexuality doesn't make them become sexual, it informs them and protects them.
3. Another issues that can arise is the idea that you will be teaching my child how to have sex. You can tell the parent that you can cover many topics including public and private places, behaviors, and conversations. You can cover relationships issues like what is a healthy or unhealthy relationship, how to become friends, and what to do if you are in an unhealthy relationship. You can also discuss general skills like communication and decision-making.
4. One issue that parents bring up is that "you will be teaching my child values and what if they aren't the same values as my values". You can tell parents that you don't teach values about when it is okay to have sex. You will teach general values about respect, responsibility, and consent. You will give them information and have them reflect on their values.
5. Provide additional resources for parents to learn more about this topic and how to discuss sexuality with their own children. Here are some possible resources to give to parents:

GULP! Talking to Your Kids About Sexuality: Special Edition for parents of young and grown children with developmental disabilities.

Elevatus Training Self Study Course: Talking with Your Kids: Developmental Disability and Sexuality

SkillFlix™ is a video training platform that hones the skills of parents, educators, and healthcare workers. The site features sequences of short videos that model multiple facets of skills (Microskills™) searchable by topics, skills, or keywords.

Every big and little thing you do to support parents is meaningful, especially now with so much uncertainty about so many things. Please let us know how we can support you to support them.

Find these resources and more: <https://www.elevatustraining.com/resources-2/>

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