

Answering Children's Questions about Sexuality

...for all stages!

WHY?

- * Children are curious about sexuality.
- * Children see things around them all the time that are confusing.
- * By welcoming questions, a child learns that they can come to you when something is confusing instead of turning to sources that may not give accurate or caring answers.
- * This is a way of building a healthy caregiver-child relationship.
- * This is an opportunity to share values with children (e.g., honesty, self-esteem).
- * Answering questions in a positive way reinforces that sexuality is a wonderful and valuable part of who they are.

WHEN?

- * Whenever they ask!
- * Even if you do not know the answer, you can respond by saying "Good question. I will try to find the answer and let you know."
- * Anytime can be a 'teachable moment' (e.g., watching a TV program, seeing a pregnant person, when a pet has babies).
- * Ask questions even if they don't – "What do you think?", "What do you already know about that?" – without forcing them to talk. Just asking says that you can be someone to talk to when they are ready.

HOW?

- * Answer in a way that boosts the child's self-esteem – "What a great question!"
- * Ask the child what they know, think, feel...
- * Find a book on the topic of the child's questions and read the book with the child.
- * Take time to think about the answer. This could be a few minutes or a few days, as long as you help the child to get an answer. You may want to talk with another adult about how you might answer a difficult question.
- * Acknowledge when you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed, if you are.
- * Acknowledge when you don't know an answer, and will find out.

WHAT TO SAY?

- * Keep it accurate, honest, short, and simple.
- * Use words and ideas that the child can understand at their developmental level.
- * Be positive - let the child know that you are glad they came to you with their questions.
- * Avoid lectures and angry talk.
- * Respond to questions about your personal sexual activities by teaching about privacy – "You asked if I'd ever had sex. There are some things that are private; you will have private things too that you will not share with everyone."

PH1603SS718A