

Lantern program Workshops for parents

Everyday
sex education



Lantern program - Workshops for parents

Everyday sex education



About

This document was designed to help you conduct workshops with the parents who come to your location. This will help you support their abilities in order to create a community that protects young children against sexual violence.

The Lantern program offers a number of workshops you can lead with parents:

- Workshops on everyday sex education
- Workshops on promoting egalitarian relationships to young children

In this document, we present workshops on everyday sex education.

The Lantern program's tools were created thanks to Avenir d'enfants and the City of Montréal's Policy on Children.



Workshops on everyday sex education

Here are two structured workshops on the topic of sex education that address:

1. All the spheres of sex education and how they're included in everyday life.
2. How to answer young children's questions about sex.

Workshop 1: *The multiple dimensions of sex education*

Workshop 2: *How to answer young children's questions about sex*

Structure



Structured workshops



The multiple dimensions of sex education

SECRET topics addressed in this workshop:

- S**peaking about sexuality while telling children about...
- E**galitarian relationships between girls and boys
- C**lues about sexual violence and self-protection skills
- R**eal names for sexual parts and the concept of privacy
- E**motions, **T**houghts and self-esteem

Steps



Brainstorm about sex education

- Ask parents to name what, in their view, should be included in sex education for young children. Specify that there are no wrong answers.
- Note the parents' ideas on a board or large sheet of paper taped to the wall.



Classifying various terms

- Using sheet 1.1, ask parents to classify the various elements that were listed earlier into the various dimensions (biological, affective, cognitive, psychological, sociocultural and moral, spiritual or religious).
- Ask the parents: "Do you have the impression there's information missing from certain categories or, on the contrary, that some information is overrepresented?"
- Using the content provided, add any missing information to the appropriate dimensions and mention that all these aspects are part of sexuality.

Workshop structure

Length:

40 minutes

Objective:

This workshop teaches parents about the multiple dimensions of sex education and the various areas it touches on.

Material:

- Whiteboard or flipchart
- Marker
- Support sheets 1.1, 1.2A, 1.2B, 1.3 and sheet A

Note to the facilitator

The biological sphere is often the first one discussed when the question of sex education for young children comes up, and many parents forget to include the affective, psychological and social spheres.

Content

Biological and sensory: Children become aware of their genital organs, discover their body's erogenous zones and feel pleasure from their various senses. They are curious about how babies are made and the differences between boys and girls, which sometimes leads to a certain curiosity about nudity, particularly when being potty trained or learning about bodily hygiene.

Affective: Children feel emotions toward themselves and others when they enter into relationships. They learn to recognize and express their emotions, such as love and tenderness, but also shyness and fear.

Psychological: Children develop their identity, acquire self-esteem, create a body image for themselves and experience privacy, communication and sharing, which leads them to better define their limits and boundaries and those of the people they interact with.

Cognitive: Children possess various kinds of knowledge and develop their own ideas about sexuality. They also need to receive ACCURATE and appropriate information about sexuality.

Social or cultural: Using their family environment as a model, among others, children learn about gender roles and stereotypes. They learn to follow the gendered rules and norms that are present in their environment.

Moral or spiritual: Children gradually learn values, rules for behaviour and beliefs, and acquire critical thinking about sexuality. These learnings may differ based on the context in which the child grows up; more specifically, the era, culture or religion. Family values about sexuality are conveyed in day-to-day life through many everyday acts, in particular when discussing how to relate to people, romantic relationships and friendships, for example.

Everyday sex education

Structured workshops

Steps

3

Grids of everyday actions toward sex education

- Ask parents to fill out the grids on sheets 1.2A and 1.2B individually, by checking “yes” or “no” to whether they do certain things in everyday life with their child. You can decide to hand out only one of the grids, to vary the grids among the parents, to use both grids by splitting the group in two, or to lead the exercise out loud, depending on the group’s needs.
- Mention that they also need to write what dimension the action refers to, in their view, using the box provided.

4

Full group

- Reconvene the full group and ask for the parents’ impressions, then invite them to share their observations and comments.
- Fill out the answers using the answers on Sheet 1.3 and hand out this sheet to parents as a reminder list.
- Conclude this step by mentioning that sex education can be done at any moment and they’re already doing it without knowing it.

5

Key message

- *Learning about sexuality is like any other kind of learning. The various spheres of sexuality show us the breadth of what sex education means, and the multiple kinds of learning it involves. You’re certainly doing it already without knowing it! Now, you just need to add or enhance some dimensions in order to provide a complete sex education that’s appropriate for your child.*

6

Guide parents toward resources

- Present the suggested readings listed below, as well as Sheet A, which sets out the topics that should be addressed in order to provide sex education and prevent sexual violence against young children.
- To guide parents within the content they should address, you may also wish to give them access to the various Lantern program tools or the Marvin, I’ll Take Over! Sheets, whose topics have already been addressed with their child.

Structured workshops

2

How to answer young children's questions about sex

SECRET topics addressed in this workshop:

- S**peaking about sexuality while telling children about...
- E**galitarian relationships between girls and boys
- C**lues about sexual violence and self-protection skills
- R**eal names for sexual parts and the concept of privacy
- E**motions, **T**houghts and self-esteem

Steps

1

Presentation on the attitudes to adopt for answering young children's questions

- Explain to the parents the guidelines on attitudes to adopt when a young child asks a question about sexuality. Ideally, project the content on a board (see the content below).

Workshop structure

Length:

40 minutes

Objective:

This workshop helps parents better understand how to provide sex education in a way that's tailored to young children.

Material:

- Whiteboard or flipchart
- Markers
- Support sheets 2.1, 2.2A, 2.2B, 2.2C, 2.2D and 2.3
- Discussion handbook *Tell Me Everything, Marvin*
- Short video on the sex education needs of young children

*Link to watch the video :
<https://youtu.be/cWLH3bDrc-U>

Content

How should we answer

children's questions about sex?

Before we begin to address sex education with young children, we recommend that you learn about the attitudes to take when a child asks a question about sexuality.

Here's an overview.

Show openness. Reinforce that the child has come to you to get information, and respect their questions.

"I'm glad you came to see me to ask me your question."

Turn the question back to the child to find out what they know about the subject. Then, correct or add information as needed. Pay attention to the child's questions and answers because they'll tell you about the child's stage of psychosexual development.

"What about you? How do you think babies are made?"

Remember, you convey your values to the child through your answers and your silences.

Allow yourself to say to the child that you want to think about the question before answering.

"That's a good question! Let me think about it, I will get back to you."

If you promise to answer the child, make sure you follow through.

Tell the child they can trust you and come back to see you if they have other questions about sex.

Feel free to reframe or refuse to answer questions from the child if they are about your own private life.

Avoid prejudice about differences.

* **IMPORTANT!** *

Not answering, avoiding the question or saying "We don't talk about that" are attitudes that send a message to the child that they should not talk to you about sexuality. This can lead the child to find their answers from less reliable sources, such as their friends, or, later, online. It can also lead the child to keep from you if they are in a risky situation or are a victim of sexual violence.

Everyday sex education

Structured workshops

Steps

2

Scenario

- Read the parents the scenario from sheet 2.1 and ask them to be alert to the different attitudes that are not optimal and that need to be improved, based on the content seen just before.

3

Full group

- Ask parents to raise their hands and name some of the attitudes they noticed, and ask them to list the potential impacts of these attitudes or how they could have been improved.
- Complete the list using the options provided on sheet 2.1.

4

Team exercise

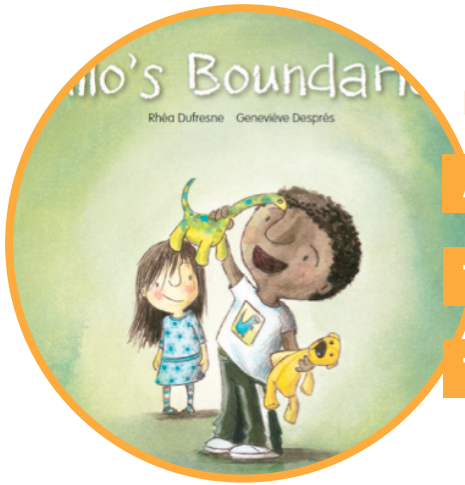
- Ask parents to form small groups (maximum four per team). Hand out sheets 2.2A and 2.2B, distributed equally according to the number of teams.
- Ask parents to answer the questions on the sheets, in writing or in discussion form, while remembering the attitudes to assume when answering young children's questions.
- When you come back to the full group, ask the parents to share some of what they talked about in their smaller groups. As needed, reframe or add elements using the content provided in the discussion handbook *Tell Me Everything, Marvin* (section on specific situations, p. 71 to 76). Then distribute this content to the parents, meaning sheets 2.2C and 2.2D as well as sheet 2.3 as a reminder list they can take home.

Conclusion or video

- Show parents the short video on young children's needs with regard to sex education.
- Close the workshop by saying that answering children's questions is a way of equipping and protecting them. In fact:
 - *Establishing parent-child dialogue on sexuality helps the child to:*
 - *Feel they are allowed to ask you questions about sexuality.*
 - *Recognize that you are a trusted adult.*
 - *Obtain accurate and appropriate information rather than information from less reliable sources.*
 - *Come and talk to you if they're being sexually victimized.*

Everyday sex education

Reading suggestions

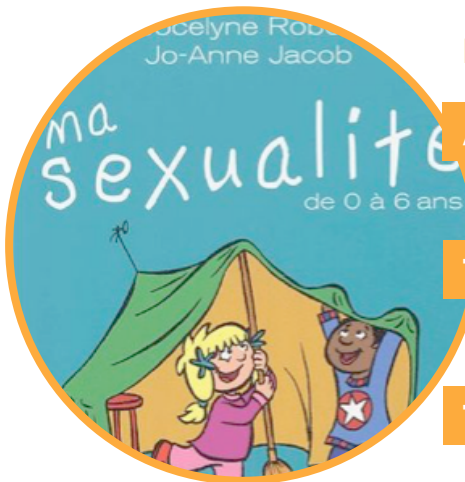


Milo's Boundaries

Authors: Rhéa Dufresne and Geneviève Després, 2018

Topics: Respect for personal space (the bubble), self-affirmation, talking to a trusted adult.

Teaching strategy: Illustrated story and discussion topics.



Ma sexualité

Authors: Jocelyne Robert and Jo-Anne Jacob, 2015

Topics: Anatomy, sexual discovery and games, conception, fertilization and birth, adult sexual communication, sexual violence, good and bad touch, gender roles and gender stereotypes, emotional needs.

Teaching strategy: Cartoons, drawings, games for kids, information for adults.



Que savoir sur la sexualité de mon enfant?

Authors: Frédérique Saint-Pierre and Marie-France Viau, 2008

Topics: Juvenile and adult sexuality, psychosexual development, privacy, homosexuality, health and physical development, sexual behaviours, communication.

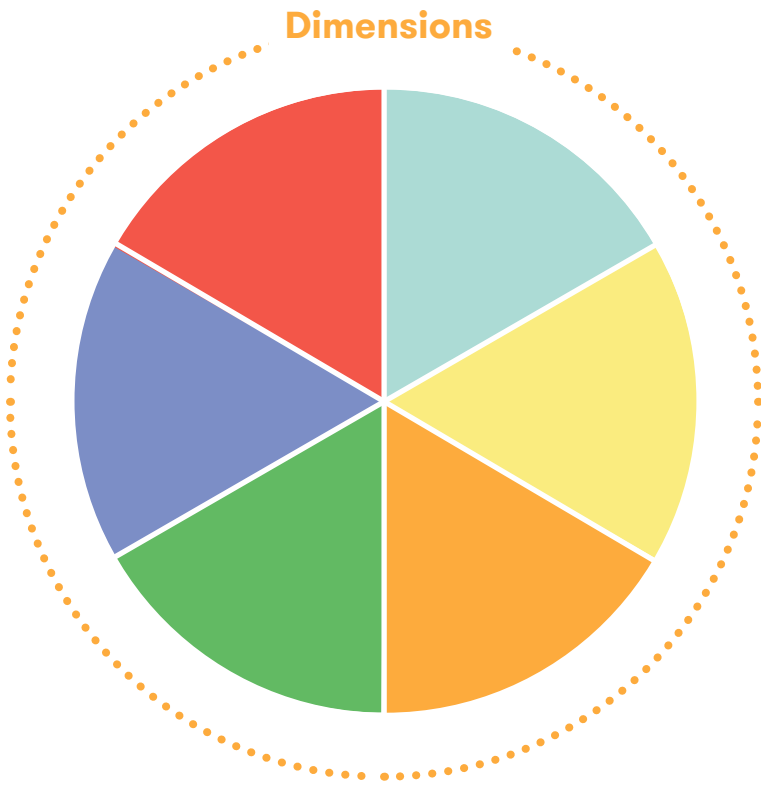
Teaching strategy: Answers to questions that parents may have, answers to use when answering children's questions.

Facilitation supports for workshops

Support sheet



1.1 — The dimensions of sexuality



● ● **Biological and sensory**

● ● **Affective**

● ● **Psychological**

● ● **Cognitive**

● ● **Socio-cultural**

● ● **Moral-spiritual**

Everyday sex education

Facilitation supports for workshops

Support sheet

1.2A – Grid of everyday actions

Check all the actions you take in your everyday time with children	YES	NO	N/A	Associated dimension(s)
A. If my children ask me questions about sexuality, I answer their questions without judging them or I find out how to answer them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
B. I help my children recognize their emotions and manage their conflicts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
C. I teach my children about privacy, particularly when they're getting changed or going to the bathroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
D. I value my children's particularities and individual skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
E. I take the time to listen to my children when they talk to me about difficult situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
F. I talk about friendship and love with my children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

Everyday sex education

Facilitation supports for workshops

Support sheet

1.2B – Grid of everyday actions

Check all the actions you take in your everyday time with children	YES	NO	N/A	Associated dimension(s)
1. I encourage my children to try new activities, regardless of their biological sex.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
2. I don't force my children to give or receive kisses or hugs, even from people they love.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
3. I teach my children about the various parts of the body using the real words to name sexual parts (penis, vulva and buttocks).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
4. I show affection to my children in various ways when they ask or when they need it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
5. I encourage my children to stand up for themselves in their everyday lives.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
6. I have a respectful and egalitarian relationship with my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

Facilitation supports for workshops

Support sheet

1.3 – Answers to the grid of everyday actions

Everyday actions	Associated dimension(s)
A. If my children ask me questions about sexuality, I answer their questions without judging them or I find out how to answer them.	<i>Cognitive, psychological</i>
B. I help my children recognize their emotions and manage their conflicts.	<i>Affective, social</i>
C. I teach my children about privacy, particularly when they're getting changed or going to the bathroom.	<i>Social, cultural</i>
D. I value my children's particularities and individual skills.	<i>Psychological</i>
E. I take the time to listen to my children when they talk to me about difficult situations.	<i>Affective, psychological</i>
F. I talk about friendship and love with my children.	<i>Social, cultural, cognitive, affective</i>
1. I encourage my children to try new activities, regardless of their biological sex.	<i>Social, cultural, psychological</i>
2. I don't force my children to give or receive kisses or hugs, even from people they love.	<i>Social, cultural, moral</i>
3. I teach my children about the various parts of the body using the real words to name sexual parts (penis, vulva and buttocks).	<i>Biological, cognitive</i>
4. I show affection to my children in various ways when they ask or when they need it.	<i>Affective, social, psychological</i>
5. I encourage my children to stand up for themselves in their everyday lives.	<i>Psychological</i>
6. I have a respectful and egalitarian relationship with my partner.	<i>Social, cultural, moral</i>

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Support sheet

2.1 – Scenario

Sunday morning, Loic, age 5, sees a pregnant woman on a television show and asks his dad: “Daddy, where do babies come from? And how do they come out of the mommy’s tummy?” Daddy **opens his eyes very wide and sighs**. After a long silence, he answers: “**Mommies are supposed to answer questions like that, so don’t ask me, go ask your mother!**”

Loic goes to his mother and asks her the same questions. She answers in a **surprised tone**: “**Wow, why are you asking me that? We don’t talk about things like that at your age!** At your age, **you just need to think about playing, like with your toy cars or superheroes!** We’ll talk about it when you’re older.”

Now quite determined to get answers, he goes to find his big brother and asks the same questions once again, because he’s so curious. His brother **laughs a bit** and **hurries** to **show him an explicit video on his tablet**.

Loic goes off with this information, confused and worried about what he saw and heard.

- ● **Feelings and non-verbal messages that come through in your answer**
- ● **Reinforces gender stereotypes**
- ● **Refusal to answer (and therefore does not position themselves as a trusted adult)**
- ● **Hurry to answer instead of turning the question back to the child**
- ● **Information not tailored to the child’s developmental stage**

Facilitation supports for workshops

Support sheet

2.2A – Children's questions

Where do babies come from?

- Are you comfortable answering this question? Explain.
- What would be your first reflex if your child asked you this question?
- What elements would you like to convey to your child in your answer?
- What would be the potential impacts of not answering this question?

Facilitation supports for workshops

Support sheet

2.2B — Children's questions

Why doesn't my friend have a mommy?

Why doesn't my friend have a daddy?

- Are you comfortable answering this question? Explain.
- What would be your first reflex if your child asked you this question?
- What elements would you like to convey to your child in your answer?
- What would be the potential impacts of not answering this question?

Facilitation supports for workshops

Support sheet



2.2C — Where do babies come from?: the answer

Preamble

Children under the age of 5 are often curious about everything to do with pregnancy and the arrival of a new baby in the family. It is important to remember that young children, even if they don't understand everything that's happening around them, are very sensitive to changes in their routine and in their immediate environment. They are fine observers and it is naïve to think they don't notice the physical, emotional and familial changes surrounding pregnancy and the arrival of a new child in the family.

Some children will react to this change through their behaviours, while others won't hesitate to ask the well-known questions: "Where do babies come from?," "How did the baby get into Mommy's tummy?" and so forth. These questions may sometimes make adults uncomfortable, because they think they need to explain adult concepts about sex to the young child. But a preschool-aged child who asks these questions is only relating their observation of the facts: "Mommy is changing; she is different than usual."

The child's thinking process is not at all going in the same direction as the adult's. For example, it may be an expression of rational thinking: "Mommy is changing, and I don't understand why. She told me there was a baby in her tummy, but the babies I know are in the daycare nursery. How is it that one is inside Mommy's tummy? I don't understand." This thinking is in reality an attempt to give meaning to a new event that may be making them feel anxious about change. The young child needs to be reassured or their curiosity satisfied about an unusual situation. As adults, it is our responsibility to provide answers.

With this in mind, this sheet provides a framework for how to answer questions from young children age 3 to 5 about conception and birth. Various levels of response are suggested. Regardless of which one you decide to use, all the following information is appropriate for young children.

Remember that it is more damaging for the child if you don't answer or if you invent an answer to their question, rather than replying frankly with a short response.

Reminder

Different levels of content are provided, from 1 to 3. These numbers do not refer to precise ages, but to the degree of complexity of an answer about sexuality. While all the levels are appropriate for preschool-aged children, their use depends on, among other things, the adult's comfort level, cultural or personal values, and, above all, the psychosexual development stage of the children to whom the content is being presented. As such, it may be appropriate to provide Level-1 content to 5-year-old children, or Level-2 content to a 4-year-old. The choice is up to the adult.

Facilitation supports for workshops

Support sheet



2.2C — Where do babies come from?: the answer (continued)

Conceiving a baby

Level 1.

Babies are made with a seed from the daddy and an egg from the mommy. They meet and form a baby in the mommy's tummy. The baby is very small at first, like a grain of rice! Then it grows, and grows for a couple of seasons in the mommy's tummy. We call this "pregnancy." The mommy's tummy also grows, to make space for the baby and give it room to move. When the baby is ready, it's born. The day you are born is your birthday.

Level 2.

When a daddy and a mommy love each other, they may want to be very close, to kiss and snuggle with all the parts of their bodies. At that moment, sometimes a seed from the daddy, called a "sperm," meets up with an egg from the mommy. When the sperm and the egg meet, they form a baby in a bag called the "uterus," which is inside the mommy's tummy. At first, the baby is smaller than a grain of rice. It's called an "embryo." Then, it grows and grows for several months, and the mommy's tummy grows too. This is called "pregnancy." The baby is born when it finally comes out of the mommy's tummy and can be held in its parents' arms.

Level 3.

When a daddy and mommy love each other very much, they may want to be very close, to kiss and snuggle with all the parts of their bodies. Sometimes, their private parts also snuggle. This is called "making love." The daddy and mommy feel a lot of pleasure. Sometimes, little seeds called "sperm" come out of the daddy's penis and go find a little egg in the mommy's tummy. If a sperm succeeds in finding an egg, a baby is made! At first, the baby is smaller than a grain of rice, and it's called an "embryo." Then, it grows and grows for several months, and the mommy's tummy grows too. This is called "pregnancy." When the baby is ready, it has to come out of the mommy's tummy through her private parts, called the "vagina" and the "vulva." The mommy pushes very hard with the muscles of her tummy, and her vagina opens up to let the baby pass through. The baby is born when it finally comes out of the mommy's tummy and can be held in its parents' arms.

Facilitation supports for workshops

Support sheet



2.2C — Where do babies come from?: the answer (continued)

Other possibilities for conceiving a baby

Twins

Sometimes, two of the daddy's seeds meet two of the mommy's eggs at the same time! That creates two babies in the mommy's tummy! They are called "twins." Twins can also be made when the mommy's egg meets the daddy's seed and makes two babies instead of one. Just like that, it happens, and we don't really know why. In all cases, the parents welcome two babies when they are born. Sometimes the twin babies look the same, other times they look totally different.

Assisted reproduction

For lots of reasons, sometimes the daddy's seed and the mommy's egg can't meet up. The parents may need a doctor's help to get the sperm seed and the egg to meet. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't. But when it does work, the baby grows in the mommy's tummy and is born after a few seasons, just like other babies. The parents welcome the baby and they become a family just like any other.

Same-sex parents

The same thing can happen for two mommies who want to have a baby together. Because it always takes a seed from a man and an egg from a woman to make a baby, two mommies can ask a man to give them one of his seeds. Then, one of the mommies can ask the doctor to help the gift seed meet up with her egg to create a baby. This way, two mommies can have a family. If two daddies love each other and want to have a baby, they can adopt one.

Adoption

Sometimes, two parents want to have a baby and start a family, but they can't do it with their own seeds and eggs. It just happens, for lots of different reasons. These parents can then adopt a child. "Adopting" means taking care of and raising a child who was made from the seed and egg of two other people who can't give the baby all the love and care it needs. This is different for each child; everyone has their own story. Maybe you have a friend who was born in another country but grew up here in Québec, with two parents who adopted them. Sometimes, adopted children are born here in Québec, and grow up with their adoptive parents here. In all cases, parents who choose to adopt a child love them and take care of them just as if the child came from their own bodies. It doesn't change anything about the love parents feel toward their children.

Facilitation supports for workshops

Support sheet



2.2D — Why doesn't my friend have a mommy? Why doesn't my friend have a daddy?: the answer

Families with same-sex parents

Most of the time, families are made up of two parents who love each other and who want to have children. Lots of families have a daddy and a mommy. The friend that you're are talking about has two mommies (or two daddies). Their parents love each other, like yours, and they wanted to have children. Your friend gets all the love that they need, and their family is as beautiful as yours.

Separated families

Most of the time, families are made up of two parents who love each other and want to have children. Sometimes, two parents who loved each other once don't love each other the same way they did before, so they decide to separate. Often, children then have two houses. They live at one parent's house part of the time, and at the other parent's house part of the time. Even if a child's parents don't love each other as lovers do, they still love their child. Your friend gets all the love they need, and their family is as beautiful as yours.

Family diversity

There are lots of different kinds of families. Some families are made up of two parents who love each other and want to have children. Some families are made up of two mommies or two daddies. Some families have children who live with their grandparents, or who live only with their mommy or only with their daddy. There are also families where the parents have separated and where one or both parents meet another person who also has children. This family then becomes a stepfamily or a blended family. There are also families where a child has been adopted. That means the people who brought the child into the world decided to give them to a family that would be able to love them the way they need to be loved.

General reflections

All families are unique. Some families have one child, some have two children, some have three children and some have even more! Some families go to bed late, some do not eat the same things that you do, some speak a different language at home.... In some families, one parent works, and the other stays at home. In other families, older children will take care of younger children. Every family organizes itself as it can in a different way and every family gives children all the love they need. All families are beautiful even if they are different from yours.

Facilitation supports for workshops

Support sheet

2.3 — How to answer children's questions about sex

Before we begin to address sex education with young children, we recommend that you learn about the attitudes to take when a child asks a question about sexuality.

Here's an overview.

Show openness. Reinforce that the child has come to you to get information, and respect their questions.

"I'm glad you came to see me to ask me your question."

Turn the question back to the child to find out what they know about the subject. Then, correct or add information as needed. Pay attention to the child's questions and answers because they'll tell you about the child's stage of psychosexual development.

"What about you? How do you think babies are made?"

Remember, you convey your values to the child through your answers and your silences.

Allow yourself to say to the child that you want to think about the question before answering.

"That's a good question! Let me think about it, I will get back to you."

If you promise to answer the child, make sure you follow through.

Tell the child they can trust you and come back to see you if they have other questions about sex.

Feel free to reframe or refuse to answer questions from the child if they are about your own private life.

Avoid prejudice about differences.

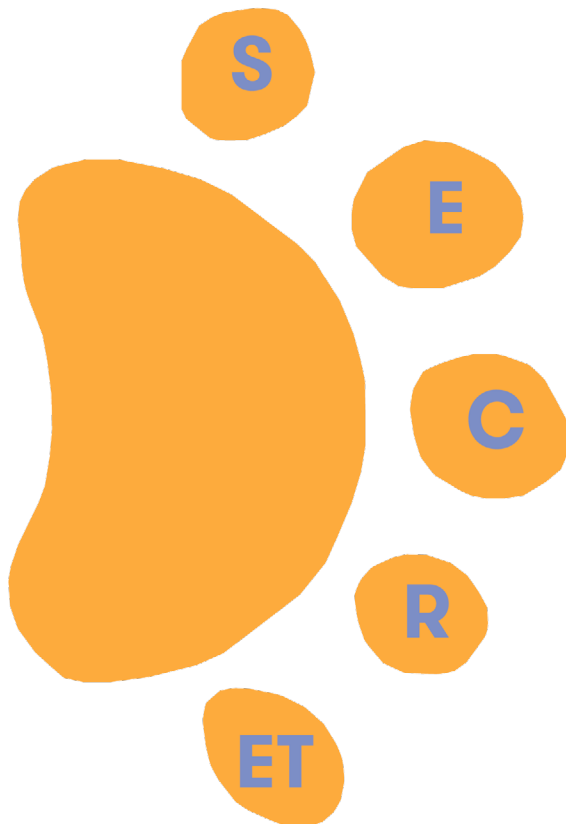
* **IMPORTANT!** *

Not answering, avoiding the question or saying "We don't talk about that" are attitudes that send a message to the child that they should not talk to you about sexuality. This can lead the child to find their answers from less reliable sources, such as their friends, or, later, online. It can also lead the child to keep from you if they are in a risky situation or are a victim of sexual violence.

Facilitation supports for workshops

Support sheet

A — The five key elements of sexual violence prevention



.....

SECRET: Speaking about sexuality while telling children about...

SECRET: Egalitarian relationships

SECRET: Clues about sexual violence and self protection skills

SECRET: Real names for sexual parts and the concept of privacy

SECRET: Emotions and Thoughts, including self-esteem

.....

