Tell Me Everything, Marvin
Talking about sexuality with young children: educating to protect!
Talking about sexuality with young children: educating to protect!
Discussion Handbook

Tell Me Everything, Marvin

Talking about sexuality with young children: educating to protect!
Acknowledgements

The Lantern program was developed by Marie-Vincent Foundation (marie-vincent.org).

We wish to express our appreciation to the Avenir d’enfants organization, thanks to which we were able to develop this program. We also thank the Ville de Montréal, which contributed financially through its Policy on Children.

And we offer our sincerest gratitude to the childcare workers and professionals who work with very young children every day, the parents we met with, and the many partners in the early childhood field, without whom this project would not have been possible.

Credits

Tell Me Everything, Marvin Discussion Handbook
Talking about sexuality with young children: educating to protect!

Text Marie-Vincent Foundation
Illustrations Geneviève Després
Colour Janou-Ève Le Guerrier
Graphic design Supersymétrie
Editing Sophie Sainte-Marie
English translation Daly-Dallaire,
Services de traduction

Distribution Regroupement des centres de la petite enfance de la Montérégie (RCPEM)

This document is also available in French.

ISBN
978-2-924930-18-2 version imprimée
978-2-924930-19-9 version numérique

© 2019 Marie-Vincent Foundation
marie-vincent.org

Any reproduction of this work, even partial, by any means, is forbidden.

All rights reserved.

Printed in Canada
Introduction

The Lantern program provides tools that promote egalitarian relationships.

Tell Me Everything, Marvin is a discussion tool designed to address everything children aged from birth to 5 should know about sexuality. The content of this handbook is tailored to a young child’s comprehension level, and aims to optimize their development as well as encourage them to acquire protective factors against sexual violence.

The discussion handbook is divided into four main parts:

• Sex education for young children: the basics
• Sex education for young children: special situations
• Sex education for young children: common questions from parents
• Resources and references
Sex education for young children: the basics

This part addresses all the sex education topics that are appropriate for preschool-aged children.

It is designed so that a picture associated with a topic (for example, anatomy) is shown to children while the related teaching content is written on the page facing the illustration, and an adult both reads it out loud and leads the discussion.

While this section’s content was designed for easy and practical use, we recommend that the adult reads it through before presenting it to children.

This part is divided into five main sections. You don’t need to follow the order of the sections. However, the order was designed to help with children’s comprehension and with their gradual integration of new knowledge.

Types of content

The content includes both open-ended questions for children, invitations to discussion along with ideas to think about and answers, learning content to read to children, and ideas for how to put some of the content and skills into practice.

Once again, we encourage adults to read through the content in the intended section before addressing it with children.

Content levels

We suggest three levels of content, from 1 to 3. These do not refer to specific ages, but to the level of complexity of an answer regarding sexuality. While all levels are appropriate for preschool-aged children, their use depends on, among other things, on the adult’s comfort level, their 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 to provide Level 2 content to 4-year-old children. The choice is the adult’s.
# Introduction

The characters in the *Tell Me Everything, Marvin* discussion handbook are the same ones that appear in the books *Milo’s Boundaries* and *Marvin Disappeared*, which are also part of the Lantern program. The consistency of the program's various tools, particularly in regard to the characters, encourages preschool-aged children to integrate their learning.

## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Subsections</th>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Me</strong></td>
<td>Anatomy</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hygiene</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Body development and body image</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-knowledge and self-esteem</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpersonal relationships</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>You and me</strong></td>
<td>Boundaries</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal space and privacy</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-affirmation</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>My heart, my head</strong></td>
<td>Basic emotions</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing emotions</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Normalizing emotions</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helpful and harmful thoughts</td>
<td>4-5 years old</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I take care of myself</strong></td>
<td>Listening to your head, your heart and your body</td>
<td>Starting at age 3½</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risky situations</td>
<td>Starting at age 3½</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning to protect yourself</td>
<td>Starting at age 3½</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adults you trust</td>
<td>Starting at age 3½</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Me and the world</strong></td>
<td>Girls and boys</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diversifying your activities</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Celebrating differences</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sex education for young children: special situations

This part of the handbook provides instructions to adults on various ways to work with children in certain special situations. These situations may involve the manifestation of sexual behaviours among young children in various contexts, or the presence of more sensitive questions about sexuality coming from one or more children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITUATIONS</th>
<th>SUBSECTIONS</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A child self-stimulates in my group.</td>
<td>Suggestions for individual intervention with a child age 3 to 5 who self-stimulates in front of others</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child self-stimulates in my group.</td>
<td>Suggestion for intervening with a child age 3 to 5 who self-stimulates at naptime</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child self-stimulates in my group.</td>
<td>Suggestion for intervening with a child age 2 or under</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in my group are engaging in sexual exploration games.</td>
<td>Suggestions for intervening with children age 3 to 5 engaging in normal sexual exploration games</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child asks me: “How do you make babies?”</td>
<td>Conceiving babies</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child asks me: “How do you make babies?”</td>
<td>Twins</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child asks me: “How do you make babies?”</td>
<td>Assisted reproduction</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child asks me: “How do you make babies?”</td>
<td>Same-sex parents</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child asks me: “How do you make babies?”</td>
<td>Adoption</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child asks me: “Why doesn’t my friend have a mom? Why doesn’t my friend have a dad?”</td>
<td>Families with same-sex parents</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child asks me: “Why doesn’t my friend have a mom? Why doesn’t my friend have a dad?”</td>
<td>Separated families</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child asks me: “Why doesn’t my friend have a mom? Why doesn’t my friend have a dad?”</td>
<td>Family diversity</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child asks me: “Why doesn’t my friend have a mom? Why doesn’t my friend have a dad?”</td>
<td>General reflections</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Sex education for young children: common questions from parents

This part of the handbook gives childcare workers some guidelines on what they can say to parents who are curious or concerned about their child’s sex education.

The answers provided here are from Marie-Vincent Foundation. We encourage you to use this content to develop parent-teacher collaboration and communication strategies regarding sex education for young children, and to put into place protective factors against sexual violence against young children in a consistent and concerted way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 What are the psychosexual development stages of young children?</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 How should I answer my children’s questions about sexuality?</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Can we walk around naked in front of our children?</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 When should we stop taking baths with our children?</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 When should we stop giving baths to more than one child at the same time?</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Can we kiss our child on the mouth?</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 What should we say and do if our child walks in on us as we are having sex?</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Should hygiene care only be provided by the mother?</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Can hygiene care be provided by a new partner?</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Is it normal for a child to become interested in a toy or activity normally associated with the other sex? Is my child gay?</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources and references

This part of the handbook provides three complementary fact sheets. The first summarizes all the other prevention tools included in the Lantern program. The second suggests a list of resources that can respond to the specific sex education needs of young children. The last one is the list of all the works that directly or indirectly helped us in writing the Tell Me Everything, Marvin discussion handbook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTIONS</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 Complementary tools from the Lantern program</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Resources</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 References and bibliography</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sex education for young children: the basics
How should we answer children’s questions about sexuality?

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

Here’s an overview.

• Show openness. Reinforce the fact 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 sexuality.

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

• Avoid prejudices about differences.

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 avoid telling you if they are in a risky situation or are a victim of sexual violence.
Me
Anatomy
Anatomy

1. Did you know that **all parts of your body are important** and each serves a purpose?
   → Ask the child to recognize their body parts: head (hair, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, etc.), shoulders, arms, hands, chest, stomach, back, buttocks, legs, feet, toes, etc.

2. Can you tell me **where your private parts are?**
   **Answer:** They’re the body parts that are covered by your underwear or your bathing suit.

Many children find it funny to talk about private parts, but **they are parts of your body like all the others!**

3. The names doctors use to talk about a girl’s private parts are: **breasts, buttocks and vulva.**

4. The names doctors use to talk about a boy’s private parts are: **buttocks and penis.**

5. **What are your private parts for?**
   **Answers:**
   - Level 1: Your vulva or your penis let you go pee. Your buttocks help you go poo, but also to sit down.
   - Level 2: Your sexual parts produce little cells, and in grown-ups, those cells help them make babies.

6. It’s normal to discover your body and all kinds of sensations, including the ones your private parts feel. Did you know that the only difference between a little girl and a little boy is their private parts?

**Remember**

You can use the words “private parts” or “sexual parts.”
Hygiene

1. It’s important to **wash all the parts of your body**, especially the ones that are kept warm or that are warm.

   → Invite the child to identify these parts of the body: hair, armpits, behind the ears, neck, belly button, vulva, penis, buttocks, groin, between the fingers, between the toes.

2. Did you notice that red arrows are pointing at some of Milo’s body parts on the picture? **These parts are more fragile**. They’re like little doors, and germs can get into your body through them. It’s important not to touch them if you have dirty hands, and not to put objects in them so you don’t hurt yourself. When it comes to your private parts, it’s also important to change your underwear regularly.

3. Did you know that, even if someone takes a bath with you, **you are always the person in charge of washing your body**? And the other person is in charge of washing **their** body?

   → Invite the children to pretend to wash themselves, one body part at a time.
Body development and body image
Body development and body image

1. **Your body is changing** and will keep changing all your life!

2. Every person you know started out as a baby. When people grow, they become children, then teenagers. Later, they become adults, and then, seniors.
   → Invite the children to talk about body development, as illustrated, and to point out where they are on the chart.

3. **When you’re little**, the only thing that’s different between girls and boys are your private parts. **When you grow**, all the parts of your body grow, too, and that’s normal. **When we become adults**, our body stops growing, but it keeps changing over time.

4. Remember! Not all women have the same kind of body, and not all men either! Some people are tall while others are short. Some people have dark skin and others have pale skin. Some have brown eyes and others have green eyes. Some people have long hair and deep voices, while others have short hair and high voices. **Every person is different! This is normal and natural!**
   → Invite the child to recognize the similarities and differences between the characters in the illustration.

5. **Your body is unique.** Nobody has the same body as you. Your body is yours, and my body is mine. Your body is very precious. It helps you walk, eat, sleep, play and love! Your body doesn’t need to be the same as anyone else’s body. It is the way it is, and that’s what makes you unique and special.

6. It’s normal to be curious about your body and other people’s bodies, to be interested by their changes over time. Remember, though, that you must never laugh at someone else’s body, even if it’s different from yours.
   → Invite the children to ask their questions about the body.
Self-knowledge and self-esteem
Self-knowledge and self-esteem

1. Did you know that **there’s nobody else like you?**

2. There is only one ___________ (name of a child) and one ___________ (name of a child).

3. **You have lots of things in common with the other kids and also lots of things that are different.** You have your own family, your house, your games, your joys, your fears, your strengths, your challenges, your friends.

4. **There are things you like, but that other kids don’t like.** There are things other kids like, but that you don’t like.

   → Ask the children if they recognize themselves in the emotions, attitudes and activities of the children in the picture: giving and receiving a hug, playing blocks, reading, playing alone or with others, crying or being in a good mood, etc.

   Invite the children to raise their hand if they like to:
   • play in the park
   • see clowns
   • play with bugs
   • get their hands dirty
   • eat broccoli
   • go swimming
   • pet a dog
   • put on a show, etc.

   Point out what they have in common and what is different between them.

5. **Some things, you find easy to do, and other things, you find hard to do.** You can ask your friend to help you with something that’s harder for you, and your friend can also ask you for help.

   → Name a quality or a strength for each child. For example: funny, curious, energetic, creative, agile, etc.

   Point out how your group is made up of children who have different skills, regardless of their sex. Put the emphasis on the self-confidence, autonomy and resourcefulness the children show in different situations.

   Point out to the children how they can count on each other in different activities or situations. For example: You often help others out when we’re doing puzzles. You help others when they’re feeling sad or missing their parents.
You and me
Interpersonal relationships

→ Invite the children to point out the different types of relationships shown in the picture.

1 We all like to be with the people we love. When we’re babies, we like to be with the people we know really well, and that we see often, like our parents, our brothers, our sisters, our grandparents and so on. That is family love...

→ Invite the children to talk about their families:
  • Talk to me about your family.
  • What do you like to do with your brother or sister? With your parents? With the other people in your family?

2 When we get older, we become interested in other people around us. We like spending time with girls and boys of our own age, and in places other than at home. We like to play, talk, laugh, and do things with these people. It makes us feel happy. That is friendship...

→ Invite the children to talk about their friends.
  • Tell me about your friends.
  • What do you like to do with your friends? What kind of games do you like to play with ____________ (name of friend)?

3 When we become teenagers, and then adults, we may feel a very strong feeling about another person. Our heart, our head and our body want to be close to this person. That is falling in love... Remember, a grown-up cannot fall in love with a child.

4 Beyond family, friends and love, you are also in relationship with other people whom you see a lot and who take care of you. All these people like to teach you new things and take care of you. That is affection from a grown-up...

→ Invite the children to talk about activities or moments when they were being taken care of by other people: teacher, babysitter, swimming or dance instructor, etc. How did this person take care of them? Care, safety, teaching, etc.
Teacher Gabrielle
Milo
Friend Ling
Daddy
Neighbour Nassim
Boundaries
Friend
Justine
Neighbour
Milo
Stranger
Neighbour Nassim
Teacher Gabrielle
Mommy
Boundaries

1. There are people **we know very well**, people **we know a little** and people **we don’t know at all**. The people we don’t know at all are called “strangers.”

   → Invite the children to point out the people around Justine and to place them in the various colour circles:
   - Does Justine know her mom very well?
   - Is she a person close to her? So she goes in the yellow circle. But the man sitting in the park is a stranger. He goes in the red circle.

2. Did you notice that **the better you know a person and the closer they are to you**, the closer their circle is to yours? And that when **a person is a stranger and far away from you**, their circle is farther from yours?

   → Invite the children to talk about their coloured circles and the people close to them.

3. Did you know that there are things you can do with people you know really well, but you can’t do with people you know less well or with strangers?

   → Discuss with the children about acts that are acceptable based on how well you know the person by referring yourself to the coloured circles.

   Examples of acts:
   - Giving a hug
   - Going off alone with a person
   - Getting tickled
   - Holding hands
   - Etc.
Milo doesn't like it when people touch his head.

Milo only wants a hug from his daddy.

Milo doesn't want a hug from his friend.

Milo doesn't want a kiss.

Milo wants to be quiet.
Personal space and privacy

1. Some kids like to get hugs or be tickled, and others don’t like that.

2. On some days, you might not want to be cuddled or touched by anyone, and it’s okay to say it, so that people leave you alone.

3. Did you know that it is important to always ask the other person if they want a hug before you give one? Did you know that if the person says no, it’s not because they don’t like you, but because they just need a little space? It’s important to listen to the person when they say no. We call this “respecting their personal space”.

Your personal space is the space around you that you need in order to feel good. Your personal space might be big or small, it depends on each person.

4. There are people you don’t want to snuggle with or kiss, and it’s okay to refuse to come close to them, even if they ask you a lot!

→ Refer to the picture for examples where a number of people enter Milo’s personal space without asking his permission.

5. Did you know that you always have to knock on the door or ask if you can come in before you go into the bathroom, the bedroom or anywhere else someone is changing their clothes? These places are private, so it’s important to wait for the person to say yes before entering. A private space is a space where you can be by yourself, with nobody else with you.

6. Waiting before you enter a private space is called respecting privacy.

→ Explain to the children that they can always ask to be left alone when they are getting changed or going to the bathroom, and that nobody gets to see their private parts or their underwear.

Referring to the picture, check to see the children’s comprehension by asking them the following questions:

- Do you have the right, like Milo, to refuse a hug? (THE CHILDREN MUST SAY YES)
- How do you know if your friend wants a hug?
- What do you need to do if someone doesn’t respect your personal space?
- Are you allowed to watch a friend when they go to the bathroom?
Self-affirmation

Stop!
I don't like that!

Stop!
Self-affirmation

1 What does it mean to self-affirm?
Self-affirming means being able to say what you like and what you don’t like to other people. It also means deciding what you want and don’t want. Self-affirming means asking others to respect us. For some kids, that’s easy; for others, it’s not.

→ Referring to the picture, ask the children to talk about situations where they can self-affirm. For example:
  - When another child makes a face at you
  - When someone pushes you
  - When someone hurts you
  - When someone laughs at you

2 Did you know that nobody can know what you’re thinking in your head and feeling in your heart if you don’t say it clearly with your words and with your body?

3 If you want to say something clearly to someone, you have to:
  - Stand up straight, one foot forward planted on the ground, and put your hands on your hips.
  - Look the person in the eyes.
  - Inhale deeply, speak loudly and clearly so they understand your message.

→ Invite the children to practise self-affirmation by taking the posture and repeating various sentences such as:
  - Back off! You’re bothering me!
  - Stop! I don’t like that!
  - No! I don’t want to play that game!

4 If it’s still hard for you to self-affirm, you can help yourself by thinking about things that give you courage or strength.

→ Invite the children to name places, characters, animals, elements of nature that are courageous, and that they can think about when they want to self-affirm (for example, a superhero, a lion, a tree), or invite them to mentally repeat sentences like: I can do this! I’m strong! I’m right!, etc.
My heart, my head
Basic emotions

Milo is happy

Justine is scared

Ling is sad

Justine is angry

Milo is happy

Justine is scared

Ling is sad

Justine is angry
Basic emotions

1. Did you know that everyone feels emotions in their heart?

2. Show me where your heart is. What emotions do you know?
   → Invite the children to name the emotions of the characters in the picture: joy, anger, fear and sadness. Ask the children what the characters feel and why they feel that way.

3. Did you notice that there are nice emotions, like joy, calm, excitement and surprise? These are “sunny emotions.” There are also less pleasant emotions, like sadness, fear and anger: these are “cloud emotions.”

4. All children have emotions and express them using words or with their bodies.
   → Invite the children to stand up and mime the emotions one after another. Pay attention to the body language related to the emotions, and not only the faces.

5. Here is how your body talks to you when you have an emotion:
   - **When you’re sad**, you **might** cry, have a tight feeling in your throat, lean your body forward, curl up in a ball, go off alone in a corner.
   - **When you’re angry**, you **might** growl, frown, make big eyes, grit your teeth, stomp your foot, make fists with your hands, turn red.
   - **When you’re afraid**, you **might** jump, freeze, feel your heart beat faster, get a stomach ache, hide, make jerky movements with your body, tremble.
   - **When you’re happy**, you **might** smile, feel like you’re floating on a cloud, want to be around people, feel calm, feel light, feel excited.
Managing emotions

Talk about it with words

Distract yourself

Breathe

How can you bring the sun back to your heart?
Managing emotions

1. It’s normal to have “cloud emotions” in your heart, but it doesn’t feel good. Luckily, there are lots of ways to bring the sun back to your heart, such as:

   • **Breathing** gently. To help, you can imagine that you’re smelling a flower, and then, that you’re blowing out a candle.

   → Invite the children to pretend they’re picking a flower in one hand and picking up a candle from a birthday cake with the other hand. Show them how to smell the flower **slowly** and blow out the candle **slowly**, until they feel calmer.

   • **Changing your mood** by making movements or doing activities that feel good.

   → Invite the children to name hobbies that help them calm down or come out of a bad mood. For example, drawing, playing with clay, playing outside, jumping in place, etc. Use the picture for help, as needed.

2. Did you know the best way to find out what someone else is feeling in their heart is to ask them, “**How are you feeling in your heart?**”

   → Ask the children, one by one, how they are feeling in their hearts right now.

3. **Say with words how you feel** to the person who put a cloud in your heart or to another person you trust who can help you feel better.

   → Give examples to the children by saying clearly:

   • [_______], I feel sad when you won’t let me play with you.
   • [_______], I am angry because [_______] took the toy I wanted.
   • [_______], I was afraid when you turned out the light.
Normalizing emotions

1. Did you know that **you’re allowed to be angry**? It doesn’t mean you’re not nice. Everyone feels angry: girls and boys, adults and kids. Everyone sometimes wants to yell, hit and throw things when they’re mad.

   → Emphasize that girls can also get angry, like Justine on the picture. *Tell me about the last time you were angry.*

2. Did you know that **you’re allowed to cry when you feel sad**? It doesn’t mean you’re a baby. Everyone feels sad sometimes: girls and boys, adults and kids. Everyone wants to cry when they feel sad, even grown-ups.

   → Emphasize that boys can also feel sad and cry, just like Milo in the picture. *Talk to me about the last time you felt sad.*

3. Did you know that **you’re allowed to be scared**? It doesn’t mean you’re not brave. Everyone feels scared: girls and boys, adults and kids. Everyone can freeze or feel like running away when they’re scared, even grown-ups.

   → Ask girls and boys to talk. *Tell me about the last time you were scared.*

4. Did you know that **every person around you has a heart full of emotions**, like Justine and Milo’s dad on the picture? Did you know that emotions are always changing? They show up, stay a while and then leave, depending on what’s happening that day.

   → Ask the children to express their emotions. How were you feeling in your heart this morning? And now? Give the example of a child whose emotional experience has changed since arriving at the daycare. Emphasize that feelings pass and change over the course of the day.
Helpful and harmful thoughts
Helpful and harmful thoughts

1. Did you know that **all kids and adults think about things inside their heads** all day?
   
   → Invite the children to say what Ling is thinking about on the first picture, and what he’s thinking about in the second picture.

2. When we’re thinking about something, we might say words in our head. Like Ling, who is surely saying to himself:
   - “I can’t wait for my birthday and to blow out the candles on my cake!”
   - “Oh no! I broke my toy!”

3. **These words we say in our heads are thoughts.** We say them in our heads, but we don’t say them with our mouths.
   
   → Invite the children to recognize what they’re thinking about in various situations by having them raise their hands if they’re thinking these words in their heads:
   - When you taste something you don’t like at lunch, who thinks in their head: “Ew! I don’t like this!”
   - When you wake up in the morning, who says: “I’m hungry! I want my breakfast!”
   - When you have to pee and it’s getting urgent, who says: “I have to go to the bathroom, quick, quick!”
   - In the afternoon, when the day is almost done and your parents start arriving to pick you up from daycare, who thinks in their head: “I miss my mom! I miss my dad!” or “I can’t wait to go home!”

4. These thoughts are always there, in our heads. At night, they turn into dreams.

5. Did you know that nobody, not even your parents, can know what you’re thinking in your head?

6. The only way to know what someone is thinking is to ask them: “What are you thinking about?”
I take care of myself

* This section addresses sexual violence. Make sure to address all the indicated subsections on the same day.
I feel good.
My heart is happy!

I don't like this.
I want to leave.

I feel good.
Why heart is happy?
Listening to your head, your heart and your body.
Listening to your head, your heart and your body

1 (WHILE POINTING TO EACH OF YOUR BODY PARTS, EXPLAIN)

Your head, your heart and your body send you messages all day long.

It is very important to listen to what your head, your heart and your body say, and that you trust them.

2 (POINTING TO THE PICTURE OF HAPPY JUSTINE, EXPLAIN)

There are acts that can bring sunshine into your heart and your body. They help us feel calm, happy, joyful, comforted, etc. These acts often bring sunshine into your thoughts, like when we say in our heads: “I feel good,” “I want to stay here,” “My heart is happy,” etc. Tell me about acts that make you feel good in your heart, in your head and in your body.

→ Ask the children what makes them feel good, for example:
   • A hug from your grandmother to console you when you feel sad.
   • A high-five from your friend when you did a good thing.
   • When your parents stroke your head or your back before you fall asleep.

3 (POINTING TO THE PICTURE OF SCARED JUSTINE, EXPLAIN)

There are acts that bring clouds into our hearts and our bodies, like when we feel angry, sad, scared, etc. These acts often bring clouds into our thoughts, like when we say in our heads: “I don’t like that,” “I want to leave,” “My heart is angry,” etc. Tell me about acts that make you feel not good in your heart, your head or your body.

→ Ask the children what makes them feel bad, for example:
   • When another person pushes them.
   • When someone gives them a hug they don’t want.

4 Trust yourself. If an act brings clouds into your heart, your head or your body, it’s because something’s not right, and you need to self-affirm and say, “Stop, I don’t want this!”

I take care of myself
Risky situations
Risky situations

1 Did you know that there are some things grown-ups are not allowed to do to children? What are they?

2 It is very important for you to remember that:
   • (POINT TO THE HAND PICTURE) Nobody is allowed to touch your private parts
   • (POINT TO THE EYE PICTURE) Nobody is allowed to look at your private parts
   • (POINT TO THE MOUTH PICTURE) Nobody is allowed to kiss your private parts
   • (POINT TO THE TELEPHONE PICTURE) Nobody is allowed to take pictures of your private parts

3 Can you tell me what your private parts are?
   Answer: They’re the parts of your body that are covered by your underwear or your bathing suit.

4 Nobody is allowed to ask you to touch, look at, kiss or take pictures of their private parts.

5 (MAKE A VOICE AND, IF NEEDED, USE THE MARVIN PUPPET WHO’S COVERING HIS EARS.)
   If these things happen to you, your heart, your body and your head need to say, “Uh-oh, that’s not right.”

6 The only times where a grown-up can touch and look at your private parts is when:
   • You go to the doctor and your parent is with you
   • You need help to wipe yourself in the bathroom
   • You need help washing in the bathtub
   • Your parent needs to look when your private parts are itchy or sore
   • You seem to have a fever and your parent needs to take your temperature
Learning to protect yourself

1. Self-affirm by saying

2. Go away

3. Talk to a trusted adult
Learning to protect yourself

It is very important to know what to do if:

- A person does something or asks you to do something they are not allowed to do.
- Your heart, your head or your body say: “Uh-oh, that’s not right.”

**1. You need to self-affirm.**

Self-affirming is when you are able to tell others what you like and don’t like. It also means deciding what you want and don’t want. Self-affirming means asking others to respect us.

- **With your body**
  - Stand up straight, one foot forward planted on the ground, and put your hands on your hips.
  - Look the person in the eyes.
  - Inhale deeply and yell so they understand your message.

- **With your words**
  - Yell: “NO!”
  - Yell: “STOP!”

**2. You need to leave and...**

- get out of the room;
- go to a place where there are other people;
- go find your parent, your teacher or any other trusted adult.

**3. You need to talk about what happened with a trusted adult.**

It can happen that you weren’t able to say “NO!” or “STOP!” or that you weren’t able to leave the room. If that happens, it is not your fault. You need to talk about it so that it doesn’t happen again. You are brave for being able to talk about it.

→ Invite the children to practice each step so they can integrate the self-protection skills. Some children may hesitate to yell or self-affirm. It is all the more important to regularly repeat these skills with the children.
An adult you feel good with

An adult who can help you when you have a problem
Adults you trust

1. A trusted adult is someone you feel good with. It’s someone you like to see, who makes you smile and who can help you when you have a problem. It’s also someone who respects your personal space.
   → Invite the children to remember what their personal space is.
   
   **Answer:** Your personal space is the space around you that you need in order to feel good. Your personal space can be big or small; it depends on the person.

2. You need to talk to a trusted adult when:
   - A person does something or asks you to do a thing they are not allowed to do.
   - Your heart, your head or your body say: “Uh-oh, this isn’t right.”
   - Your head says: “I don’t like this,” “I’m not sure this is okay,” “I want to leave.”
   - You are scared of a person or don’t want to be near them.
   - A grown-up you don’t know asks you to come with them or go somewhere with them.
   - You have a problem, even if the problem happens in your family or with a person you love.

3. Did you know that when you speak with an adult about what’s wrong, they have to help you? If they don’t help, talk to another adult, until one adult you trust believes you and helps you.

4. “Tell me about the adults you trust in your life.”
   
   **Possible answers:** My mom, my dad, my grandparents, my aunt, etc.

   You can talk to people other than your parents. Who are the adults you trust, other than your mom and dad?
   
   **Possible answers:** Police officers, nurses, teachers, etc.

5. (Point to the picture of Milo and his teacher)
   Did you know that I am always here for you, to listen if you come and talk to me? My job is to listen to how you feel in your heart, to help you when you have problems and to answer your questions. I am a trusted adult for you, and you can talk to me whenever you want!
Me and the world
Girls and boys

Justine, the super-heroine, is flying her plane!

Girls and boys can become whatever they want

Justine is angry

Ling, the master chef who is feeding his baby

Ling is sad
Girls and boys

1. Did you know that the only difference between a little girl and a little boy is their private parts?

2. (Point at Ling’s shirt)
   There are no girl colours or boy colours. Boys can like purple and pink, and girls can like blue, red and green. Some men wear pink because they like the colour. How do moms dress? How do teachers dress?

   → Point out to the children that most women around them wear pants and wear few if any pink or purple clothing items.

3. (Point at Justine in her superheroine cape)
   Girls and boys are all strong, they run fast and can all want to be heroines and heroes.

   • To girls: Tell me about a time when you felt brave.
   • To boys: Tell me about a girl character you like.

4. (Point at Ling who is feeding the baby)
   Boys are allowed to play at cooking and with dolls as much as girls are. Is there anyone here whose dad cooks food at home? Can dads look after babies? Everyone can cook and take care of children, it doesn’t matter if they’re boys or girls.

5. (Point at Justine playing with her airplane)
   Girls are allowed to play with tiny cars and airplanes as much as boys are. Do moms drive cars? Buses? Anyone can drive a car, a boat or an airplane if they want to. It doesn’t matter if it’s a girl or a boy.

6. (Point at angry Justine and sad Ling)
   There are no girl feelings or boy feelings. Girls are allowed to be angry and boys are allowed to cry. Did you know that all people, grown-ups and children, feel the same emotions: anger, fear, joy and sadness?

7. Girls and boys can be what they want when they grow up: teachers, police officers, cooks, scientists, dinosaur researchers, ballet dancers... there are no girl jobs or boy jobs.
Diversifying your activities
Diversifying your activities

1 Girls and boys are human beings who need one another. They are born into the same families and grow up side by side. They are able to do the same things and may be interested in the same activities. There is no reason not to play together because one person is a girl and the other is a boy.

   → Invite the children to name a child of the other sex they like playing with. What do they play? Why do they like playing together? Point out the similarities and differences they find when playing with someone of the other sex.

   • (TO GIRLS)
   Do you have a brother? A boy cousin? A friend who’s a boy? What do you like doing together? What kind of games do you play?

   • (TO BOYS)
   Do you have a sister? A girl cousin? A friend who’s a girl? What do you like doing together? What kind of games do you play?

2 Did you know that, as a boy, you’re allowed to do things like dance, drawing, gymnastics, music, even if the other boys aren’t doing those things?

   Did you know that, as a girl, you’re allowed to do things like play hockey, play with toy cars and construction games, even if the other girls aren’t doing those things?

   → Invite the children to talk about an activity normally associated with the other sex that they tried recently. As needed, refer to the picture.

3 When you try something new, you can find out if you like it. Often, we can be surprised! Like when your parent serves a new food for dinner! You need to taste it before saying, “No, I don’t like it!” It’s the same thing for activities, TV shows, toys... You need to try it before you say, “No, that’s for girls!” or “No, that’s for boys!”

   → Tell me about a time you played with a new person or tried a new activity.

4 When you taste things, try things, take a chance, you discover who you are!
Celebrating differences
Celebrating differences

1. Have you ever seen a rainbow! Did you know that **rainbows are very rare**? They form when the light from the sun shines on tiny drops of water in the sky. A rainbow is like a miracle of nature.

   → Ask the kids to talk about the picture of the rainbow. Ask them what they like about the picture, what they find beautiful: the colours, etc.

2. Tell me, if the rainbow was just one colour, all yellow or all green, would you find it as beautiful and fun to look at? **What makes a rainbow unique is the presence of all the colours at the same time.**

3. **Just like children!** You are different from your friend. Your friend is different from you. You each have your own colour. Did you notice there are lots of different people around you? Your family, your friends, the people you see at the park, at the store or when you’re taking a walk...

   All these people have different skin colours. They weren’t all born in the same country and they don’t all speak the same language. They’re not the same age.

   → Tell me about a person who speaks a different language from you or who has a different skin colour from you, or whose family isn’t the same as yours: two dads, two moms, one parent, a dad and a mom, grandparents, and so forth. What do you like about that person? What do you or your family do like them?

4. All these people around you have families, people they love and who love them. They have dreams. They also all need to eat, sleep, have fun, be safe and be loved. All these people around you have names and they are each unique. They are human beings just like you. **We are all different.** If we were all the same, it wouldn’t be as much fun, just like the rainbow!
Sex education for young children: special situations
Talking about sexuality with young children: educating to protect!
A child in my group is self-stimulating

Preamble

Sometimes, very young children have suddenly discovered the physical sensations that come from stimulating their private parts. In the same vein as their need to put things in their mouths, some children at this age may stimulate their private parts regularly. Because young children are not yet aware of social norms, their behaviours may make the adults around them feel uncomfortable. That said, self-stimulation of the genital organs is normal human behaviour, regardless of age. Preschool-aged children are only seeking the soothing and pleasant physical sensation that comes with stimulating the nerve endings in their genital organs, and the general relaxation of their bodies.
Suggestions for individual intervention with a child age 3 to 5 who self-stimulates in front of others

It’s normal to explore your body. I noticed that, for a little while now, you have been touching your private parts in front of others in the group. Private parts are the parts covered by your underwear or your bathing suit. Sometimes, when you touch your private parts, it feels tickly, and that can feel nice. It’s normal and it’s okay to do this. But private parts are special parts of the body. They’re just for you, and other people shouldn’t see you touching them.

We don’t touch our private parts in front of other people.

You can do this in private. Do you know what the word “private” means? It means when you are alone, and nobody else is with you.

Normally, a 3- to 5-year-old child should be able to gradually stop the behaviour with these explanations. It is important to keep a calm tone and not moralize. Above all, it is important to normalize their need and, if necessary, offer alternate solutions for their behaviour. For example, they could spend a little time in a quiet corner with objects that stimulate other sensory spheres, turn their attention toward another activity they love, expend their energy or do a relaxation activity, etc.

The following are cause for concern!

The child does not stop their behaviour despite the interventions.
The child’s behaviour intensifies.
The child seems to be feeling unpleasant emotions linked with the behaviour (such as anxiety, sadness, anger, aggressiveness, etc.).
The child complains of pain in their sexual parts or you see redness or unusual secretions coming from their sexual parts.
The child involves other children in their sexual behaviours.
Suggestions for intervening with a child age 3 to 5 who self-stimulates at naptime

Some children like to touch their private parts as they fall asleep at naptime. The tickling sensation helps them relax and fall asleep. But you know, when you touch your private parts at naptime, there are other children around you.

The nap room is not a private space.

It would be better if we could find another solution to help you fall asleep without touching your private parts.

Depending on the child, a range of strategies may be used.

• Directed at the child: Ask the child to lie on their belly. Occupy their hands with a sensory object. Apply light pressure on the child’s joints—ankles, knees, hips, shoulders and wrists—to help them relax in a different way.

• Directed at the group: Hold a short yoga session before the nap. Do muscle relaxation exercises or deep breathing exercises.

While it’s based on good intentions, we do not recommend taking the approach of creating a private space for the child at naptime by isolating them from others so they can touch their sexual parts. While self-stimulation is a normal behaviour that meets a need, nonetheless, just like any other behaviour in young children, it must be explained, normalized and redirected. Isolating a child does not teach them to find other strategies when they feel the need to self-stimulate in a group setting. This could adversely affect their social interactions when they start school or in other contexts that may be less tolerant than the daycare.
Suggestion for intervening with a child age 2 or under

At this age, it is useless to talk about the concept of privacy with the child. It is preferable to tell the child to stop the behaviour and to redirect them, as much as possible, toward another activity that will produce a pleasant physical sensation, or fully distract their attention. We do not recommend taking a punitive approach.

When you are changing their diaper, it may be useful to occupy the child’s hands with an object to prevent them from touching their private parts. You can put an attractive picture on the wall near the child’s face, sing a funny song, and so forth. Collaboration with the parent is essential, because it is highly likely the child is showing these behaviours at home as well. We recommend a consistent approach.

When should you be concerned?

If the child’s sexual behaviours intensify.

If the child seems to be in distress during these behaviours or when you intervene.

If the child seems to have pain in their sexual parts, or redness or unusual secretions.
Children in my group are engaging in sexual exploration games

Preamble

It is entirely normal for preschool-aged children to explore their bodies and show curiosity about others’ bodies. Every child is different. Some will be more curious about sexuality than others, regardless of their gender. This curiosity may lead them to engage in sexual exploration games with other children. Most of the time, sexual exploration games between young children can be summed up by saying they voluntarily show each other their private parts in a friendly context. They may also touch one another’s sexual parts to discover new bodily sensations or to observe their similarities and differences. In all cases, it is not unusual to come upon preschool-aged children in the midst of their sexual exploration. That being said, it is important to teach children various concepts related to privacy when this happens.
Suggestions for intervening with children age 3 to 5 who are engaging in normal sexual exploration play

Above all, keep your tone calm and neutral. Often, the simple fact of surprising children in their exploration makes them feel momentarily uncomfortable and guilty. Ask the children to stop their behaviour and get dressed. Explain to them that it’s normal to want to explore their bodies and each others’ bodies, but it’s best to keep their private parts for themselves and not to show others or touch others’ private parts. Explain to them that private parts are not for games. Mention that this exploration should not happen between children or between grown-ups and children. Redirect the children toward another game and carry on with your activities.

While these situations are a normal part of psychosexual development, that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t intervene. In fact, not intervening send the children the message that this type of game is tolerated and can happen in other contexts, such as with a grown-up. Failing to intervene opens the door to poor understanding of sexual victimization or to the manifestation of sexual behaviour problems.

If you come upon one or more children with sexual behaviour problems, refer to the Lantern Guide What Should I do, Marvin? to learn how to intervene.
A child asks me: “How are babies made?”

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: “How are babies made?,” “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 at 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 situation that may be making them feel anxious about change. The young child needs to be reassured or have their curiosity satisfied about an unusual situation. As adults, it is our responsibility to provide answers.

With this in mind, this section 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. That being said, we strongly encourage you to consult with the parents before answering the child, and ask if they want to personally handle the situation, or what level of answer they want you to provide.

**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.

**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.**
Conceiving babies

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 meets up with 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.

Inspired by:
- Responding Simply to Children’s Questions by the LGBT Family Coalition. familieslgbt.org
- L’histoire merveilleuse de la naissance (in French only) by Jocelyne Robert.
**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 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.
A child asks me: “Why doesn’t my friend have a mommy? Why doesn’t my friend have a daddy?”

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 you’re 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 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.

Continued on the next page →
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 and some have even more! Some families go to bed late, some don’t eat the same things 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 take care of younger children. Every family organizes itself 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.

Inspired by

Responding Simply to Children’s Questions by the LGBT Family Coalition.

familleslgbt.org
Sex education for young children: common questions from parents
What are the stages of psychosexual development for young children?

From birth, sexuality contributes to the overall and ongoing development of every human being. In children, sexuality is involved in the development of their personality and identity and in the development of their need for attachment relationships and interpersonal relationships (tenderness, friendship, love). As such, their learning in relation to sexuality is essential to overall smooth development, and it is best for children to accomplish this learning within the family, through their environments and their bodies.

To develop in a harmonious way, children must integrate various dimensions of human sexuality as they grow up.

Just like other spheres of development, psychosexual development changes quickly and at a different pace for each child. The child learns about their sexuality through observation and imitation, just like they do when learning to walk, talk and play. As such, a child’s psychosexual development is a fundamental aspect of their self-actualization, just like the other areas of their development.
Here is an overview of the various stages of psychosexual development in preschool-age children:

**0-2 years**
- I take pleasure in exploring my environment and putting everything in my mouth.
- I explore my body with curiosity and pleasure.
- I can feel physical pleasure when my genital organs are stimulated (this is not associated with eroticization or with sexual fantasies).
- I become aware of sexual differences and I know if I am a girl or a boy.
- My parents introduce me to potty training (around age 2); my focus area is the anus.
- I like physical contact with others.
- I start to discover my body and I realize that not all children are made the same way.
- I enjoy games where I explore my genital organs (boys starting at 6-7 months; girls at 10-11 months).
- I take pleasure in recognizing all the parts of my body; I love to be asked “Where’s your nose?” or “Show me your ears!”

**3-5 years**
- I am in a period where I am particularly likely to show sexual behaviours.
- I demonstrate curiosity about anatomical differences between men and women.
- I take pleasure in exploring body parts with other children (playing doctor, looking at myself naked in the mirror).
- I enjoy taking my clothes off and showing myself naked in front of others.
- I start by asking questions about urination (“Where does peepee come from?”), conception (“How are babies made?”), pregnancy, birth, genital organs and so forth.
- I feel physical pleasure when my genital organs are stimulated (this is not associated with eroticization or with sexual fantasies).
- I explore my genital organs (self-stimulation) and I become aware that I feel pleasure when I touch them.
- I become closer with my opposite-sex parent.
- I discover and experiment with new behaviours and gender roles through play (for example, playing at being daddy or mommy, playing together and pretending to be lovers).
- I like to watch others when they are in the bathroom or taking their clothes off.
How should I answer children’s questions about sexuality?

“How should I answer children’s questions about sexuality?” is a fundamental question for parents. It applies to everything that’s discussed in the section about parents’ common questions. With that in mind, we have made a point of repeating the content provided in the first part of the Discussion Handbook for caseworkers.

• Show openness. Reinforce the fact 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 sexuality.

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

• Avoid prejudice about differences.

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 avoid telling you if they are in a risky situation or are a victim of sexual violence.
Can we walk around naked in front of our children?

This is a question that refers to lifestyle choices particular to each family. In some families, people walk around naked and it causes no problems. Parents may take this approach for many reasons, including the belief that it’s essential to feel free in one’s own home or that it’s good for children to see other people’s bodies at different ages to put their own body image into perspective, and so forth. In other families, people walk around naked only when they’re going from the bathroom to the bedroom to get dressed; they simply don’t feel the need to cover up to move from one room to the next. And in other homes, nobody walks around naked. Nudity only happens alone or between the couple, for instance in order to give the children clear understandings of privacy or because modesty is an important value. Note that even within the same family, members may have different relationships with nudity. It depends on their own history, their culture and their values. In short, it’s important, above all, to be comfortable with your values and for other family members to be comfortable with them as well. With all this in mind, can you walk around naked in front of your children? The answer is yes, as long as it respects your family, cultural and personal values, as long as it does not make your children uncomfortable, and as long as your child doesn’t have difficulty understanding the concept of boundaries and privacy in other spheres of their life. If that’s not the case, you may wish to rethink your practices.
When should we stop taking baths with our children?

The answer to this question is practically the same as for the last one. In some families, the parents may at times bathe with the children. This may be a time for laughter, relaxation or even learning by imitating how to wash. **There is no age when you need to stop taking baths with your children.** However, as part of psychosexual development, there comes a time when the child may be more conscious of their own privacy and their body, and gradually develops a sense of modesty around others. This may be expressed, among other things, through comments like “Gross! Mom, I don’t want to see you naked!” or “Hey! I’m changing, close the door!” **You need to pay attention to these kinds of comments, because they indicate the child needs their privacy.**

At that point, the child will probably not enjoy bath time together. As well, the parent may begin to feel uncomfortable if the child asks embarrassing questions about the adult’s body, such as “What does daddy have between his legs?” or when the child touches the parent’s sexual parts out of curiosity. **These moments of adult discomfort are examples of indications that may make the parent want to stop bathing with the child.**

Note that, in many families, parents never take baths with their children and so don’t wonder about this question.
When should we stop giving baths to more than one child at the same time?

Giving a bath to several children together helps save time and energy while spending some pleasant time together as a family. That being said, many parents prefer to give baths to each child individually for reasons related to their family, personal or cultural values. For families that give baths to several children at once, there isn’t really an age where you need to stop doing it. It’s more that the comfort level of one or more children may change or the child may feel a need to have their modesty and privacy respected; these indicate you must stop the practice. For example, even if the children have taken their bath together for three years, if the oldest child wants to take their bath alone or seems annoyed in the presence of the younger child, it is important to respect that need. Another indication that you may want to change your practices is if a child begins to engage in sexual behaviours, such as touching another child’s private parts, becoming excessively excited about seeing the other child’s private parts, etc., and if these behaviours persist over time despite your interventions. In short, the bath should remain a pleasant experience, often while getting ready for bed, and free of conflict or discomfort related to modesty and privacy.
Can we kiss our child on the mouth?

This depends once again on each family’s lifestyle and family, cultural and personal values. **It also depends on the parent’s personal reference points for what they consider to be affectionate and tender gestures toward their child.** Note, however, that it is forbidden to kiss a child on the mouth with the tongue in the way that two consenting adults might do. This last point illustrates the complexity of this answer. Some parents may give a close-mouthed kiss on their child’s mouth that lasts a fraction of a second, particularly when saying goodnight or goodbye. **As long as it has no sensual connotations and the child understands the difference between this act and a kiss between lovers, this practice remains acceptable in these families.** But be careful: this can easily go off course. For example, a child may repeat the act with other people and this may draw comment or other trouble. If need be, we recommend stopping this practice. **In all cases, it’s important to be very clear with your child about what is acceptable and unacceptable contact by an adult toward a child.**
What should we say and do if our child walks in on us as we’re having sex?

It may be particularly embarrassing for parents when their child walks in by surprise as they are having sex. That being said, a child can feel just as mixed-up from witnessing to their parents’ sexual relationship or from seeing their parent with a new partner, or with a person they don’t know well. You may make the personal choice to not talk about the situation with your child, but you run the risk that your child may ask many questions and possibly invent scenarios that may cause them anxiety. For example, some children who hear their parents cry out during sexual intercourse may get the idea that the other parent or partner was hurting them. Depending on the situation, the child may have flashbacks about what they saw and experience behaviour or concentration problems. It is also reassuring for the child when the parent or parents bring up the situation with them.

You can first ask what they saw or heard. You can explain that you and your partner love each other very much and that sometimes, grown-ups who love each other want to be close to one another with their whole bodies. These moments of love and tenderness are very enjoyable and give the adults lots of pleasure. In all cases, it’s important to tell the child you are sorry about what they saw, to remind them that only grown-ups can make love, and that a child should not see them doing it. It would be good to say that you’ll be more careful next time, because normally this should be done in private and not in front of others. The child may ask other questions. As needed, use a book intended for young children (see the Resources section on Page 92) to get some distance and normalize the situation.

As an adult, it is important to remember that it’s unacceptable for a child to regularly witness sexual relations between their parents or between one parent and different partners. In some cases, the child may end up having more serious problems, such as sexual behaviour difficulties that may lead to unfortunate consequences, sometimes very serious ones, for which they are not initially responsible.
Should hygiene care be provided only by the mother?

When it comes to hygiene for young children, care may be provided by both parents. There is no counter-indication when it comes to a father changing a child’s diaper or giving them a bath. Quite the contrary, sharing everyday tasks helps create bonds between the child and their parent in different settings, and this encourages and promotes egalitarian relationships between women and men.

Can hygiene care be provided by a new partner?

There is no right or wrong answer here. It depends on the context and the people involved. That being said, it is important to remember that hygiene care for young children is unfortunately a time that may lend itself to sexual violence, particularly during baths, changing diapers and bedtime. As such, when a new person comes into your life, it is important to be present as much as possible or to keep watch if you let them provide hygiene care to your child. Without becoming suspicious of everyone, you must be especially vigilant if a new partner shows too much enthusiasm regarding hygiene care for your child, or wants to take care of them too much.
Is it normal for a child to become interested in a toy or activity normally associated with the other sex? Is my child gay?

It is completely normal for a child to explore all types of games and toys, regardless of their sex. We need to eliminate from our thinking the idea that there are toys, activities and fields of interest that are “typically for boys” or “typically for girls.” Each child is unique and explores the games that are within their reach and contribute to their overall development. If we refuse to frame a toy or activity as reserved for a particular sex, children can discover their own areas of interest and develop to their full potential. It is even recommended to suggest games and activities to children that are not normally associated with their sex. As for sexual orientation, that has no link with young children’s preferences in activities and games. As such, a child who is only interested in games or activities normally associated with their own sex may discover they are gay, as an adult, or may not.
References and resources
Talking about sexuality with young children: educating to protect!
**Complementary tools from the Lantern program**

Because preschool-aged children do not all progress at the same pace in the various spheres of their development, and because it is important to repeat teachings using a diverse range of methods to reach the maximum possible number of children depending on their areas of interest and their abilities, here is the full list of Lantern tools aimed at children and that may be facilitated by their parents or the workers in their lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOOLS</th>
<th>AGE BRACKETS</th>
<th>FACILITATED BY</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
<th>COLLABORATION STRATEGY WITH PARENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board picture book</td>
<td>Birth-2 years, 2-3 years</td>
<td>Parents, Workers</td>
<td>Egalitarian relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You as Me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td>2-3 years, 3-5 years</td>
<td>Parents, Workers</td>
<td>Personal space and privacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milo’s Boundaries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with discussion suggestions</td>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td>2-3 years, 3-5 years</td>
<td>Parents, Workers</td>
<td>Gender stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marvin Disappeared</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with discussion suggestions</td>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game</td>
<td>2-3 years, 3-5 years</td>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>Sexual violence and self-protection skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marvin, What Should We Play?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion handbook</td>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>Education about sexuality, egalitarian</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell Me Everything, Marvin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>relationships and sexual violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A number of teaching guides, storybooks, books for parents and websites address the topics addressed by the Lantern program. Here are a few! The reference information is listed further down.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOOLS</th>
<th>SEX EDUCATION</th>
<th>EQUITARIAN RELATIONSHIPS AND DIVERSITY</th>
<th>PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Guide</td>
<td>• J’explore (FRENCH ONLY)</td>
<td>• Talking about Family Diversity – Why and How</td>
<td>• Child sexual abuse: It is Your Business Brochure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Responding simply to children’s questions (FRENCH ONLY):</td>
<td>• Teatree Tells: A child sexual abuse prevention kit (FRENCH ONLY):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Filles et garçons accordons-nous</td>
<td>• Prévenir toutes les formes de violence faites aux enfants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• La poupée de Timothée et le camion de Lison</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• D’égal(e) à égaux</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story books</td>
<td>• Babies don’t bite</td>
<td>• You can be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• And tango makes three</td>
<td>• Otis and Alice</td>
<td>• Mia’s secret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Horace</td>
<td>• The paper bag princess</td>
<td>• That uh-oh feeling: a story about touch (FRENCH ONLY):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Baby Tree (FRENCH ONLY):</td>
<td>• Morris Micklewhite and the tangerine dress</td>
<td>• Le secret du petit cheval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Susan laughs</td>
<td>• Te laisse pas faire! Les abus sexuels expliqués aux enfants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Oscar ne se laisse pas faire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books for parents</td>
<td>• Everything You Never Wanted Your Kids to Know About Sex (But Were Afraid They’d Ask)</td>
<td>• Les livres et les jouets ont-ils un sexe? (FRENCH ONLY)</td>
<td>• Teatree Tells: A child sexual abuse prevention kit - Parent Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Talking to your preschool children about sexuality (FRENCH ONLY):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Que savoir sur la sexualité de mon enfant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>sexedrescue.com/sex-education-books-for-kids-age-guide/</td>
<td>kaleidoscope.quebec</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teachingsexualhealth.ca/parents/information-by-age/</td>
<td>familleslgbt.org</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References and bibliography


Talking about sexuality with young children: educating to protect!


Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine (2011). D’égal(e) à égaux: pour la promotion de rapports égalitaires entre filles et garçons dans les services de garde éducatifs, DVD et guides d’accompagnement.


