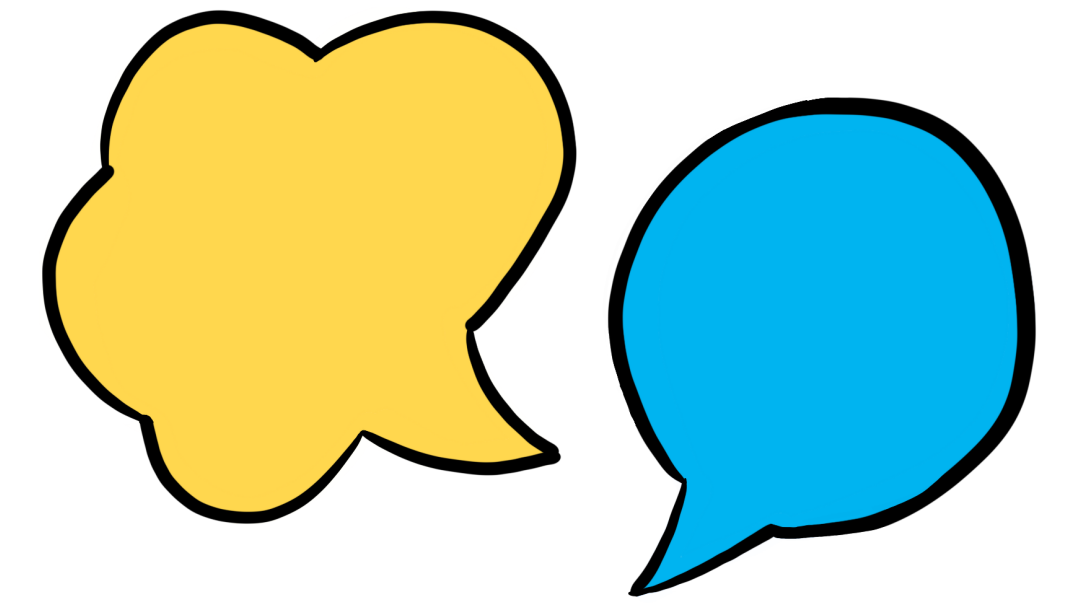


answering questions



SMART
THINGS
TO SAY

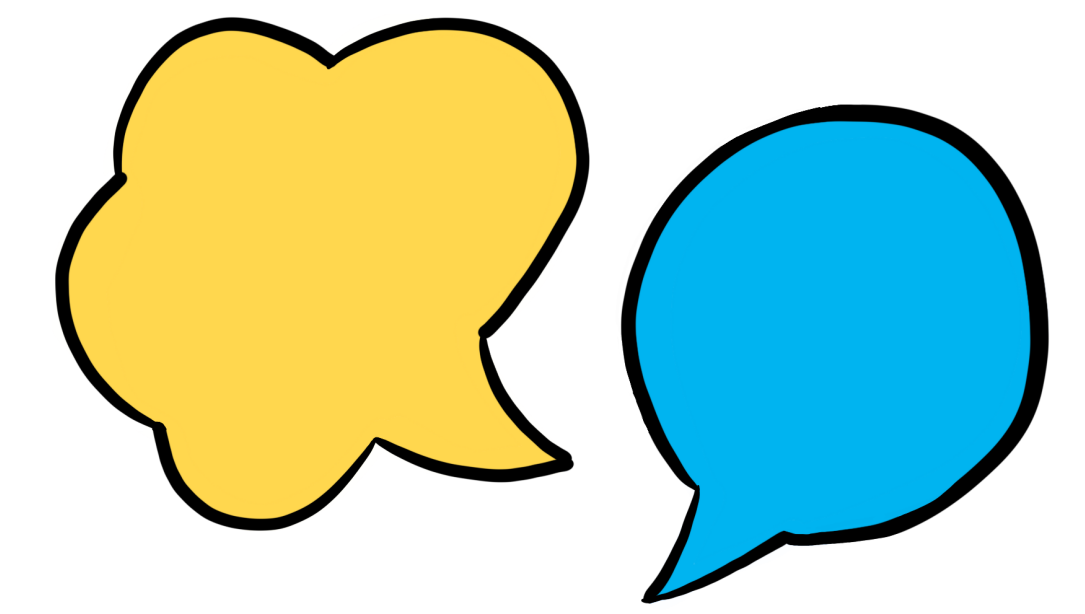
*with Saleema Noon
sexual health educators*

say this

- "Great question! Can I ask where you heard that word/term/information?"
- "That great scientific question deserves a scientific answer."
- "I didn't get this body science information when I was your age so I find it a bit difficult to talk about. But I know how important it is so I'm going to be as honest and open as I can be."
- "I'm so glad we're having this conversation because I want you to be protected and safe. But it wouldn't be a good idea to go to school tomorrow and tell your friends what we talked about. Let's wait for adults in their lives to have a chance to teach them."
- "This might be information for someone older than you but I think you're mature enough to handle it."
- "I'm so proud of you for asking such a scientific question! Let me think how best to answer it for you, let's talk about it [insert appropriate time...before bed, when our guests leave, when we get out of the grocery store...]."
- "This may be too much information but..."
- "I'm not exactly sure what the answer is. Let's figure it out together."
- "Remember this morning when I answered that question you had? Well, I think I can do a better job. Can I have a re-do?"
- "That question tells me how maturely you're thinking about this stuff. Nice work!"
- "Thank you for trusting me to answer that question for you. You can ask me anything and I will always give you an honest, scientific answer. You deserve to know the truth."

rather than this

- ✗ "You're too young to know that!"
- ✗ "We made you by kissing."
- ✗ "Where did you hear that? You've been watching way too much YouTube."
- ✗ "Kids shouldn't know about that stuff."
- ✗ "We'll talk about it when you're older."
- ✗ "I don't have time to get into it right now."
- ✗ "Why would you ask that?"
- ✗ "We prayed and hoped for you and then you came."
- ✗ "Did your older sister make you ask me this?"
- ✗ "You should be talking about that at school soon."
- ✗ "It's not polite to ask questions like that."
- ✗ "Ask your mom when she gets home."
- ✗ "Go ask your brother."
- ✗ "I don't know, why don't you look it up online?"



SMART THINGS TO SAY

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quick tips

talking to kids about body science

- Remember that you can't tell a child too much...everything that's not interesting or relevant to them will go in one ear and out the other.
- Use scientific names for body parts. Kids who have this vocabulary are less targeted for abuse.
- Keep in mind that it doesn't need to be a painful two-hour long conversation. Even a two-minute conversation is valuable because it normalizes the topic and send the message to your kids that you want to talk about it.
- Use books, apps and educational websites. They're fun and engaging, and they say everything for you!
- Tell your kids a bit more than you think you need to, a bit sooner than you think you need to. And be prepared to review and repeat. Over and over again.
- Give information before they ask. Some kids will never ask questions about their bodies, but still need to be educated and protected.
- Don't panic when your child asks a question. If you can't think of an answer right away, explain that you need some time to think about how best to answer and revisit later (i.e. at bedtime, after dinner, when your guests leave...).
- Take advantage of teachable moments...bring up topics when they come up naturally while watching Netflix, listening to the radio in the car or scrolling through Facebook.
- No matter how shocking or embarrassing your child's questions are, don't freak out. Be proud that they are curious about sexual health, and remember that questions mean your kids trust you as a reliable source of information. Nice work!
- Practice, practice, practice! If you can rehearse a few key words or phrases, answering kids' questions on the spot will be much easier.
- Have fun with it. Enjoy the hilarious use of words and misunderstandings. Laugh. And don't take yourself too seriously!