



# Helping our children *thrive* through puberty

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# Be informed, not surprised.



island  
sexual  
health



**Victoria (Main)**  
101-3960 Quadra St.  
Victoria BC  
250-592-3479

**Camosun College**  
3rd Floor, Richmond House  
Landsdowne Campus  
250-592-3449

**Belmont High School**  
Open to SD 62 students  
250-888-6814

[www.islandsexualhealth.org](http://www.islandsexualhealth.org)

CONFIDENTIAL SERVICE \* EDUCATION \* TESTING \* BIRTH CONTROL



# island sexual health

be informed, not surprised

[www.islandsexualhealth.org](http://www.islandsexualhealth.org)

- Pap/Pelvic Exams
- Breast/Testicular/Genital Exams
- STI Testing, Treatment, Management, Vaccination, and Support
- IUD Insertions and Removals
- Pregnancy Testing and Pro-Choice Options
- Birth Control (Planned and Emergency) at reduced rates
- FREE safer sex supplies
- Community Education Workshops and Events
- All ages, genders, identities, orientations, abilities welcome – no referral needed. Female and male physicians available

ALWAYS CONFIDENTIAL

*3 locations serving Victoria, Camosun College, and Belmont High School*

Thinking back to your own  
experiences with sexuality  
conversations in your childhood

**What worked?**

**What, if anything, would you do  
differently?**

What are the **most**  
important messages you  
would like your children to  
receive about growing up  
and sexuality?

# Why is sexual health education important?

## Health

- Helps children to better care for their bodies
- Helps children ask for health care more easily
- Helps youth feel proud of their bodies and confident in themselves

respectful

educated

comfortable

assertive

confident

## Safety

- Knowledge is protection against exploitation/abuse
- Helps children to be taken seriously when asking for help

proud

## Values

- Helps develop an understanding of values and beliefs around sexuality using factual and current information
- Helps situate their understanding of sexuality within family, spiritual, and cultural values and beliefs

# What is Sexuality?

- Sexuality is part of the makeup and personality of every human being. From conception to death, we are sexual beings.
- A Person's Sexuality includes:
  - Body Image
  - Body Function
  - Sexual Health
  - Biological sex
  - Gender Identity
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Relationships
  - Personal Values (including culture, religion, and family beliefs)
- Sexuality also includes sexual feelings, emotions, and experiences as well as how a person experiences pleasure, love, compassion, intimacy, joy and sorrow.
- Sexuality includes far more than sexual practices such as intercourse—it plays a significant role in the way we lead our everyday lives. To understand ourselves and our children and why we behave the ways we do, we must understand the role of sexuality.



**Parents are their  
children's primary  
and most important  
sexual health  
educators.**



# The good news...

**Global Research confirms that students who have access to ongoing comprehensive sexual health education:**

- Are older when they engage in sexual activity
- Have fewer sexual partners
- Have fewer unintended pregnancies
- Have fewer sexually transmitted infections
- Have more positive sexual experiences

Source: [sexualityandu.ca](http://sexualityandu.ca)



# What's going with me at 9-13 years:

- Physically, I am ready to begin puberty. Emotionally, I may not be or vice-versa
- I may feel confused/overwhelmed/indifferent/excited about growing up
- I am very conscious of my outward appearance and concerned if my body is normal.
- I may be experiencing mood swings
- I understand jokes with sexual content.
- My friendships are becoming more important
- I may be interacting more with a different sex and develop infatuations and crushes that include sexual attraction.



# What's going with me at 9-13 years:

- I may be showing lots of affection (hugging, cuddling, kissing) towards others (friends, family, bfs/gfs)
- I may ask questions like *What is a wet dream?; What is sex?; What happens during a period?; What is a tampon or pad?; How do I know if someone likes me?*
- I may also feel very shy about asking questions.
- I really value my privacy and need to be reminded that exploring sexuality is a private event that requires responsibility.
- I may explore sexuality through my own body (masturbation) and/or media.

# WHAT Children need to know



- **Puberty**

- Physical Changes (all happen at your own pace):

- Pubic and underarm hair (facial and chest hair come later)
    - Breast Tissue Development (tender breast buds/nipples)
    - Menstruation (usually begins 2 -2.5 years after breast development)
    - More Erections
      - Sperm Production and Wet Dreams begin
    - Skin changes
    - Hygiene
    - Changes in Height/Weight and body shape.
    - Female bodies *usually* begin earlier than male bodies

# WHAT Children need to know & WHEN they need to know it

- **Puberty**

- Emotional Changes:

- Mood Swings (MADS, SADS, GLADS)
    - Feeling overwhelmed, confused
    - Difficulty expressing feelings
    - Crushes, feelings, relationships
    - Body Image
    - Coping strategies for the not so great days in puberty



# How to help our kids thrive during puberty:

- Talk to them often
  - Help them take downtime away from busy lives and families
  - Make sure they get enough sleep
  - Help them express themselves
  - Keep your sense of humour
- Remind them:
    - They are not alone
    - They are normal
    - They are doing a \*great\* job of growing up



# How to help our kids thrive in puberty:

- Make a puberty survival kit:
  - Deodorant
  - Body Wash
  - Shampoo
  - Facial Cleaner (gentle!)
  - Bra (sports and other)
  - Cotton boxers/underwear/socks
  - Razors/shaving gel
  - Period supplies
    - A school case (extra underwear, pad, pantyliners, medication)
  - Treats for the BIG days
  - Books for them to use as a reference

Change is never easy.  
You fight to hold on.  
You fight to let go.

*The Wonder Years*

# How to support your 9-13 year old:

- Acknowledge and discuss different rates of development.
- Find a way to make pubic hair, breast size and penis size, menstruation, ejaculation and wet-dreams every day topics of conversation.
- Be open to questions about developing sexual feelings and relationships
- Share your values about sexual behaviors and relationships – your child will need something to work with in order to make responsible decisions.



# How to support your 9-13 year old:

- Be interested in your child's relationships with peers. Social and relationship skills develop through experience.
- Help your child practice identifying and expressing his/her/their feelings in friendships and other relationships
- Help your child understand that while she/he/they're maturing physically, there is a still lot of emotional and cognitive growth to do.



# How to support your 9-13 year old:

- Remind them of the differences between public and private behaviours.
- Talk about the responsibilities of relationships and the importance of empathy
- Discuss the benefits and challenges of social media especially in the context of sexuality and privacy.
- Remind them that feeling curious about sexuality is normal but that sex is an adult action

# Ideas for Teaching 9-12 year olds:

- Talk *equally* about emotional and physical changes
- Check in with them regularly
- Buy them their own books to read
- Find out what is being taught at school
- Answer all questions
- Use media (Music, TV, Movies, Video Games) for conversation starters
- Some families use a Q&A journal to share information.



# *How* do I start conversations about sexuality?

- Pick a time that you can talk casually but seriously with your child. It may be more comfortable for all involved when direct eye contact is an option *not* a requirement.
- Be prepared to balance the talking and the listening
- Relax, breathe and pay attention to your body language

## Begin a conversation with something like this:

- Have you ever wondered (how babies are born, how a person knows if they're starting puberty, how condoms work...)
- I remember when I was your age, I was really curious about \_\_\_\_ or I thought that \_\_\_\_
- What have you learned/heard about...(puberty, healthy relationships, sex, etc.)
- I just found this cool website that has tons of info on it. Let's look at it and tell me what you think.

## Begin the conversation with something like this:

- I know we haven't talked much about (growing up/relationships/birth control...) so I thought I would just check in to see if you had any questions?
- I heard something on the news that I want to talk to you about... do you think that's true?
- What kinds of things do your friends want to know about growing up?
- What would you do if \_\_\_\_\_ happened? What kind of advice would you give them?

What if this is my child's response?



# What if my child does NOT want to talk about sexuality?

- Give your child some time to digest what you've said
- Revisit what you've spoken about before
- Acknowledge the topic is sensitive but important
- Re-assure them you are not trying to scare them
- Use other forms of communication (journals/texting, etc.)
- Identify an adult whom you feel comfortable with as someone your child can connect with



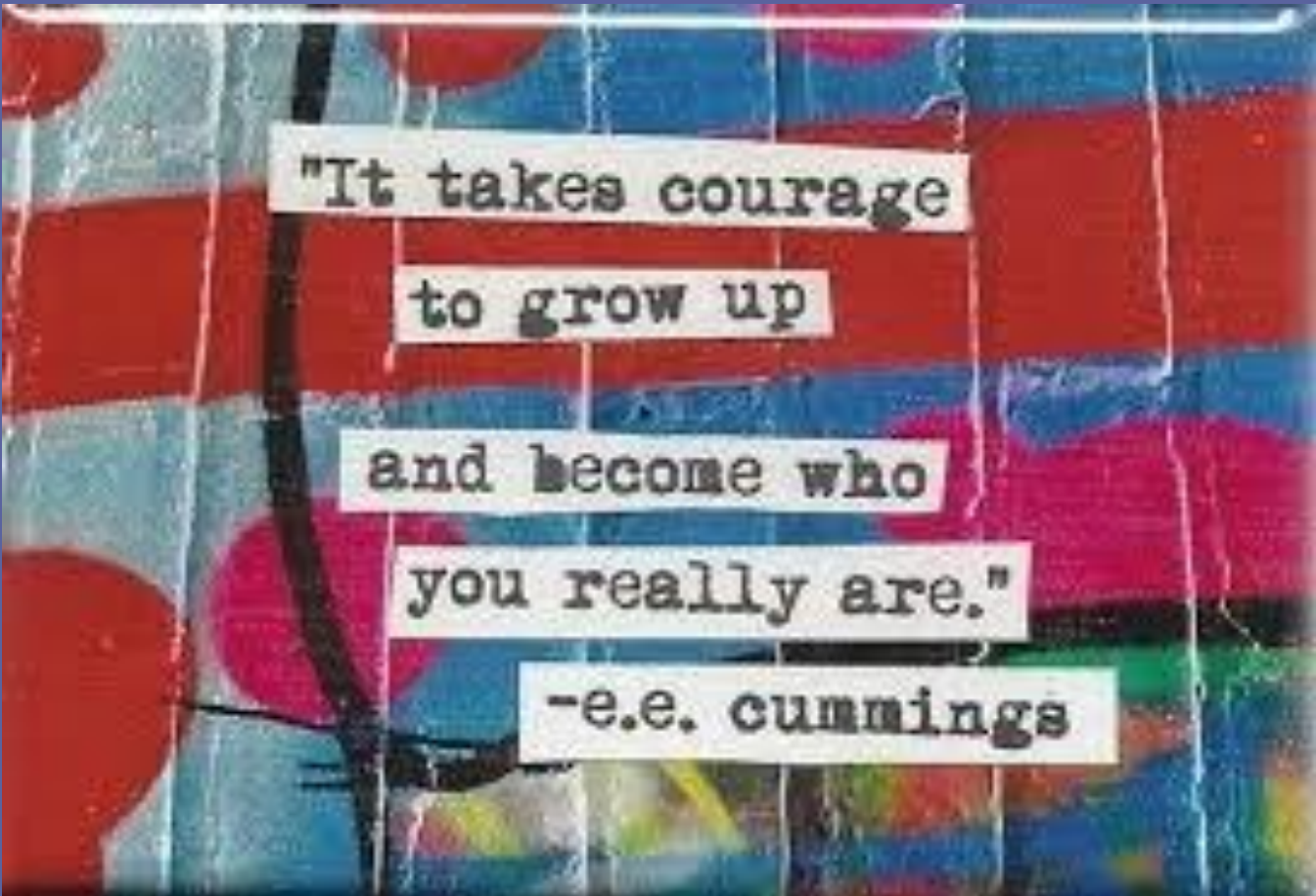
# Ideas to help minimize the *AWKWARD* moments:

- Pay attention to your child's body language and signals
- Try not to overload anyone with information
- Pick a time when you're all as relaxed as possible
- Humour and Acknowledge awkwardness
- Ask if there's anything you can do to make this more comfortable for them
- Some families use a question journal
- Talk about these topics *often* – practice makes perfect!

# How do I encourage more conversations about sexuality?

- Check in regularly to see if your child has any questions
- Thank your child for talking/sharing/asking questions
- Revisit what you talked about in your previous conversations and add in additional information
- Relate current life moments back to past conversations

**What additional tools or information do you need to help you be *more* approachable and knowledgeable?**



"It takes courage

to grow up

and become who

you really are."

-e.e. cummings



Thank you so much for attending.

Jennifer Gibson

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[beyondthetalk.ca](http://beyondthetalk.ca)

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