Guidelines for Parents When Discussing Sexuality with Their Children

1. Be willing to answer any and all questions.
2. Be honest—don’t lie.
3. Develop a rapport first; show your child you are not afraid of or embarrassed by the material.
4. Tell your child how normal his or her questions are and that it is normal to be curious and have a lack of knowledge about his or her own body.
5. It’s okay to acknowledge that you don’t know something. You and your child can look it up together or you can get the answer and have another “session” with your child, thus continuing the dialogue.
6. Buy age-appropriate books with explanations and have them available on family bookshelves. When the books are missing from the shelf, you’ll know that your child has a question and that it may be a good time to start a conversation.
7. Encourage pride in their bodies; there is no “sin” involved, and nothing about it is “dirty.”
8. Dispel myths and fears.
9. When your child tells a “dirty” joke, have him or her explain it. (They may want you to really explain it to them!)
10. When your child uses words with a sexual context, have him or her define them.
11. Encourage children that they need to know about their bodies so that they can take good care of themselves in the future.
12. Enforce the idea that only THEY can touch their own bodies; that if someone wants them to do something and it “feels” wrong, then it is wrong.
13. Explain your values related to sex and sexuality, and your rationale for those values.
14. When your child has a first period or wet dream, have a private celebration (e.g., a dinner out with adults only). Let your child know that it is exciting and special to grow up, and that you are proud of them... but that this is the beginning of new responsibilities related to their bodies.
15. Teach them to respect the bodies (and belongings and reputation) of others.