

## Safety, Sexual Education, & Sexual Health

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### Learning Objectives: Participants will ...

- Identify typical social, emotional, cognitive, and moral development of children and young adolescents as well as the impact of development on sexual knowledge and behavior
- Identify potential risks for children and young adolescents who do not receive accurate safety, sexual education, and sexual health information from their caregivers along with potential benefits
- Identify common caregiver barriers to discussing safety, sexual education, and sexual health with their children and young adolescents as well as methods to overcome those barriers
- Identify helpful and accurate safety, sexual education, and sexual health information and resources for children and young adolescents and how to implement content on safety, sexual education, and sexual health in diverse families

## Is Sexual Development Just About Sex?

- Relationships
- Communication
- Respect
- Boundaries
- Friendship
- Intimacy – level of closeness
- Choices
- Identity
- Connection with others
- Physical and emotional changes that occur through puberty

## Impact of Technology

- Increased access to devices with recording capabilities and Internet.
- Using technology for a range of communication and interactions with others, learning, and entertainment.
- Online identity is being shaped and is shaping sexual knowledge and identity in new, faster, and poorly misunderstood ways.

## Potential Risks of Increased Technology Usage

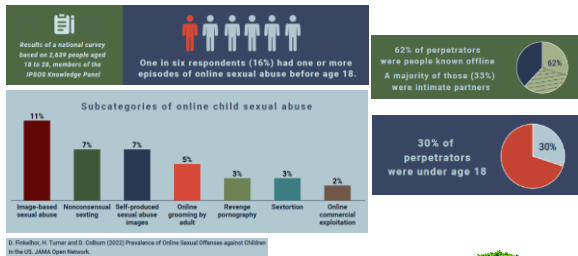
- Youth that are less likely to have adult support around healthy relationships (e.g., traumatized, in foster care, homeless, LGBTQ, etc.) often seek information and on sexual health and sexual behaviors and more interpersonal connections online compared to other youth. This increases risk for exposure to inaccurate and/or unhelpful information.
- LGBT youth experience the highest levels of sexual harassment online (Mitchell, Ybarra, and Korchomarovs (2014)
- LGBT teens face highest risk of being targeted by online solicitations and sexual requests (Svedin and Priebe, 2009).

## Sexing Behavior

- 19.3% had sent a sext
- 34.8% had received a sext
- 14.5% had forwarded a sext without consent
- Girls receive more sexts than boys
- Older teens are more likely to send sexts
- Older and younger adolescents receive sexts at around the same rate

Mori, Park, Temple, & Madigan (2021)

## Online Safety



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## Teen Exposure to Pornography

- 90% of boys and 60% of girls are exposed to pornography before age 18.
- Some level of exposure to pornography occurs before age 13 in 50% of males and 33% of females.
- Almost 1/3 of teens are exposed to pornography before the age of 10.
- For approximately 2/3 of teens, pornography exposure is unwanted and unwarranted.

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**“Kids are learning about sex from porn stars – imagine if I left my kids to learn about drugs from drug dealers.”**

– Erica Lust, Porn Producer

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## The Perfect Storm

- Time of significant sexual growth and development
- Area of brain responsible for logical thought and advanced cognitive processing not fully developed. Results in sense of invincibility/lack of forethought about consequences of decisions.
- Moral compass focused on avoiding punishment rather than serving the greater good.
- Peer relationships are important, but fraught with uncertainty.
- Ready access to technology and pornography.
- Individuation from parents is in full swing.

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## How Are Kids Hiding Their Online Activity?

- Privacy Browsing – Disables history and web cache (stored internet data)
  - Incognito Mode, Private Browser, TOR Browser
- Deleting History
- Proxy Server/Site – A passthrough between the person and website which disguises the website as an “innocent” site in the history
- Virtual Private Network (VPN) – A privacy tunnel through the internet which hides and secures internet activity and bypasses filters
- Connecting to other WiFi networks

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## Continued: Hiding Online Activity

- Fake Educational Sites
- Secret Picture Apps or Photo Vaults
- Close or Minimize Browser/App when Others are Near
- Self-Destructing Message Apps – Messages (including pics & video) can be hidden and will automatically delete after a short period of time
  - Snapchat, Telegram, Wickr Me, etc.
- Software Loopholes
  - Some Google products, Insert picture/video features, etc.
- Others

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Friendship, relationships, communication, nurturance and intimacy are challenging to manage well.

Some children are in need of extra support through the process.



## Reducing Internet Risks

- Supervision
- Monitoring Devices
- Kid Friendly Devices
  - Pinwheel, Troomi, Gabby, Flip Phones, Circle
- Setting Rules and Limits with Devices and Internet Use
- Parental Controls
  - Most Devices/Apps Have Basic Parental Controls
  - External Parental Control Software
  - Network Controls and Internet Service Provider

- Open Communication
- Model Responsible Internet Behavior
- Take Interest in Your Child's Activities and Friends
- Create a Safe and Non-Judgmental Environment for Your Child to Talk
- Education



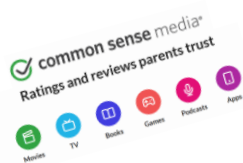
## Parental Control Software

- Can be a useful tool but not a replacement for supervision and education.
- Choose the software with the features that are best for your needs.
- They are *NOT* 100% effective and can be bypassed by kids.
- Discuss parental controls with kids. Can impact caregiver-child relationship.
- Most have security vulnerabilities and can increase danger risks.
- Carrots&Cake software – Science based to encourage healthier screen choices.



## Keeping Up With The Information

- Information is constantly changing, and it is important to keep up with it
- Use reputable and current research articles
- Use information from reputable organizations or governmental agencies
- Beware of organizations with an agenda that appear reputable
  - Information may be manufactured, distorted, exaggerated, or manipulated
  - Pornography is not an “epidemic”



the Carly Ryan foundation.



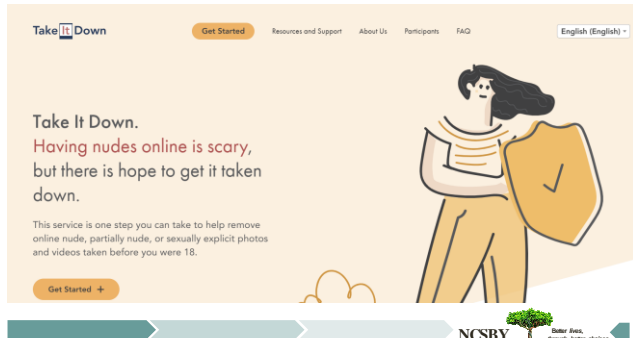
## Enhancing Safety

- Electronic and online Safety
- Netsmartkidz
- Thorn
- NoFilter
- Stopitnow



[missingkids.org/netsmartz/resources](https://missingkids.org/netsmartz/resources)





## Crisis Resources

### TrevorLifeline

Call 1-866-488-7386. Crisis intervention and suicide prevention phone service for LGBTQ+ youth available 24/7/365.

### TrevorText

Text START to 678-678. Confidential text messaging with a Trevor counselor, available 24/7/365. Standard text messaging rates apply.\*

### Trans Lifeline

Call (877) 565-8860. Suicide prevention helpline for trans youth, staffed by trans people.

### Crisis Text Line

Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a crisis counselor for free 24/7 support at your fingertips.

### 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call 988 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.



## SEX EDUCATION



## Respecting the Family

- Cultural factors and family beliefs/rituals
  - Who does the teaching
  - When is the teaching done
  - What is taught
  - How is teaching done
- Importance of provider
  - Level of comfort and knowledge
  - Beliefs and values
  - Awareness of cultural factors



## Barriers to Communication

- “My kid is too young (or naïve) to learn about this.”
  - They may have already learned something about body parts, sex, etc. Often not accurate and/or healthy. Let’s give them the safe place to talk about their questions and curiosity so they get the right information, and know they can come to you about difficult things.
- “They are going to talk about sex with other children (e.g., peers, siblings, etc.).”
  - We’ve been teaching the children who, when, and where to talk about sex and discussed why other children are not good people to talk to about sex. The children learned the sexual behavior rules, which includes not using sexual language or making others uncomfortable with their sexual behavior.



## Barriers to Communication

- “They’ll learn new things about sex, which will make them curious and want to go out and do it.”
  - Anecdotally, that has never happened to our knowledge. Children learn the SBRs and problem-solving skills to help them make good choices.
  - When children learn about other serious things, like drug use, truancy, and violence, most do not try it out.
  - Opposite is actually true. Learning decreases curiosity when given accurate information.
- “Why does my child need to know any of this?”
  - What might they already know? If curious, where will they get their answers?
  - Research supports that effectiveness of sex education in reducing negative outcomes.



## Barriers to Communication

- “This is really uncomfortable to talk about.”
  - Yes, it is uncomfortable. Adults don’t want to think about children as sexual beings, so we tend to avoid talking about sex with children. Most caregivers report that it is easier to discuss sex ed with their child in therapy sessions and that the experience wasn’t as bad as they expected. They even report feeling more prepared for talking to their child at home.
- “Can’t you have that session without me?”
  - It certainly can be uncomfortable to talk to children about sex. What is so important is for you to be present to share your values about sex, and for your child to know they can come to you in the future if they have questions about sex.



## Barriers to Communication

- “They don’t need to know this until they are 40 years old.”
  - We really want children to be children for as long they can be. However, what we know is that children have been learning about sex from the world around them, especially from their peers and the media. Let’s talk how you learned about sex and how you might want that to be different for your child. How do you want your child to learn your morals and values about sex?
- “The schools teach sex ed already, so why do we have to do it here?”
  - Yes, most schools teach sex ed to children once or maybe twice typically starting at 5th grade. Unfortunately, that learning happens without the most important person – you.



## Barriers to Communication

- “It’s against my religion and/or spiritual values to discuss sex with my children at this age.”
  - Tell me more about those beliefs and how that looked for you when you were growing up.
  - I hope we can work together to support you in helping prevent future challenges while respecting boundaries you may have around some of these conversations.
  - *Things to consider: explore how our education materials fit (or don’t) with family values and need for safety and collaborate with the family; bring in spiritual leader or encourage family to explore this discrepancy with their religious or spiritual community*



## Sex Education for Children

- Appropriate people, times, and places to discuss sex education
  - Reasons peers and media are not appropriate informants
  - Reinforcing caregiver’s values
- Medical names and functions of sex parts
- Appropriate interactions with others
  - Friendships, intimacy, trust, romance



## What to Teach When (Less than 4 Years)

### Basic Information

- Gender differences.
- Accurate names for body parts including private parts.
- Babies come from adults.
- Rules about personal boundaries (for example, keeping private parts covered, not touching other children’s private parts).
- Give simple answers to all questions about the body and bodily functions.



## What to Teach When (Less than 4 Years)

### Safety Information

- Your body belongs to you.
- Everyone has the right to say “no” to being touched, even by grownups.
- The difference between “okay” touches and “not okay” touches.
- No one — child or adult — has the right to touch your private parts.
- It’s okay to say “no” when grownups ask you to do things that are wrong, such as touching private parts or keeping secrets from mommy(s) and/or daddy(s).
- Who to tell if people do “not okay” things to you, or ask you to do “not okay” things to them.



## What to Teach When (4-6 Years)

### Basic Information

- Bodies change when they get older.
- Simple explanations of how babies grow into adults and about the birth process.
- Rules about personal boundaries (such as: keeping private parts covered, not touching other children's private parts, hula-hoop space).
- Simple answers to all questions about the body and bodily functions.
- Touching your own private parts can feel nice, but is something done in private.



## What to Teach When (4-6 Years)

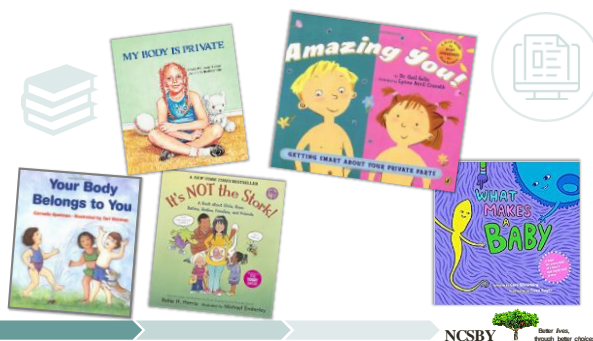
### Safety Information

- Sexual abuse (not okay touch) is when someone touches your private parts or asks you to touch their private parts.
- It is sexual abuse (a not okay touch) even if it is by someone you know.
- Sexual abuse (experiencing not okay touch) is NEVER the child's fault.
- If a stranger tries to get you to go with him or her, run and tell a parent, teacher, neighbor, police officer, or other trusted adult.
- Who to tell if people do "not okay" things to you, or ask you to do "not okay" things to them.



## Preschool Private Part Rules

- No touching other people's private parts.
- No other people touching your private parts.
- No showing private parts to other people.
- No looking at other people's private parts.
- No touching your own private parts when other are there or...
  - Touching your own private parts when you are alone is okay.
- Develop rules about okay touches that fit the child and family situation.



## Sex Education for Children

- Older children
  - Puberty
  - Physiological changes to body
  - Sexual behavior (e.g., masturbation)
  - Body image
  - Hygiene
  - Relationships



## What to Teach When (7 to 14 Years)

### Basic Information

- Basics of reproduction, pregnancy, and childbirth.
- What to expect and how to cope with the changes of puberty (including menstruation and wet dreams).
- Risks of sexual activity (pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases).
- Basics of contraception.
- Self-touch/masturbation is common and not associated with long-term problems but should be done in private.
- Consent
- Sex laws



## What to Teach When (7 to 14 Years)

### Safety Information

- Sexual abuse may or may not involve touch.
- How to maintain safety and personal boundaries when interacting with people online.
- How to recognize and avoid risky situations including peers, electronics and online (e.g., sexting, pornography, social media, chats).
- Dating and friendship rules.



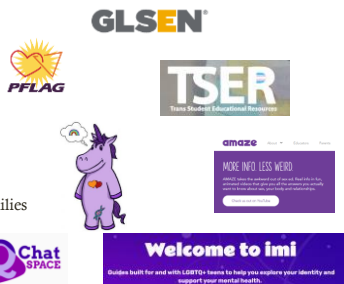
## Sexual Behavior Rules

- It is not okay to look at other people's private parts.
- It is not okay to show other people your private parts.
- It is not okay to touch other people's private parts.
- It is not okay to use sexual language.
- It is not okay to make other people feel uncomfortable with your sexual behavior.
- It is okay to touch your private parts as long as you are in private and do not take too much time.
- Develop rules about okay touches that fit the child and family situation.



### Additional Topics

- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Gender expression
- Diverse relationships and families
- Sexual health



### Pornography: Initial discussion points . . .

- What are the caregivers understanding of their child's use of technology?
  - What do their children do on the internet, social media, etc.?
  - What are the caregivers concerns, identified risks, and challenges?
- What are their own experiences online?
  - Have they ever been exposed to content on the internet that made them uncomfortable?



## Psychoeducation: Definitions and rates

- Defining pornography in today's world
  - It's not the same as when adults were growing up
  - See updated stats like those presented at the start of the presentation



## Open up the conversation ... Questions for caregivers

- Where are children seeing pornography?
- How do caregivers think that children access or see pornographic images?



## Key psychoeducation points to highlight

- Children are viewing pornography at younger ages
  - Children as young as 10 seek out pornography intentionally
  - Younger children may unintentionally stumble upon pornographic images
- Youth use pornography as a form of sex education
  - They report wanting to emulate what they see in pornography
  - The more that youth view pornography, the more realistic they find it, which subsequently relates to more positive attitudes towards casual sex



## Psychoeducation: Pornography is not a reflection of reality

- What are key points that children need to understand about pornography and its lack of realism?
  - Unrealistic Body Images
  - Relationships
  - Type of sexual acts
  - Aggression or other degradation
  - Lack of consent



## Honoring Children and their Families

- Honor our children; they are our future
- Intervention about respect
- Honor the family and their values
- Children learn to honor and respect their bodies and those around them
- Caregivers strengthen their skills to support and honor their children

