

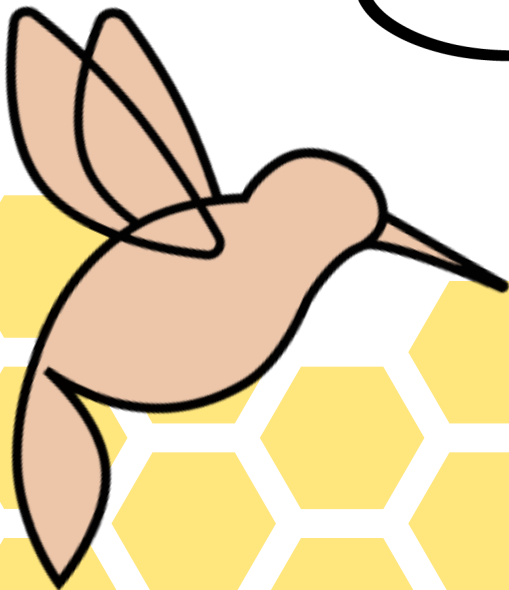
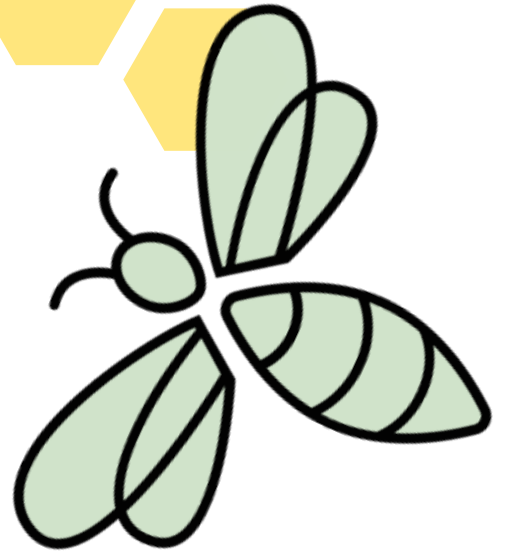
4 TIPS

for talking about the

BIRDS



BEEES



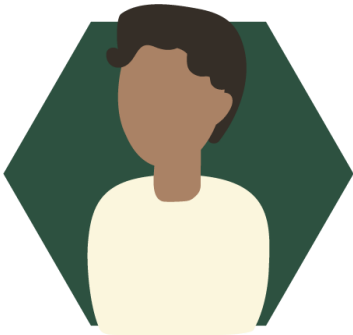
by Mary Flo Ridley & Megan Michelson

Tip #1 - When Do I Begin?

One of the primary questions we get is, “WHEN is the best time to tell my child about sex?” As parents we want to get this right. We don’t want to tell our children too early and we definitely don’t want to be too late.

Here is the tricky part of answering that question: parents want us to give them an exact AGE, but we don’t do that because it doesn’t take into account the fact that children who are the very same age may actually live under the influence of different age groups.

Let us explain by introducing you to two 6-year-old boys.

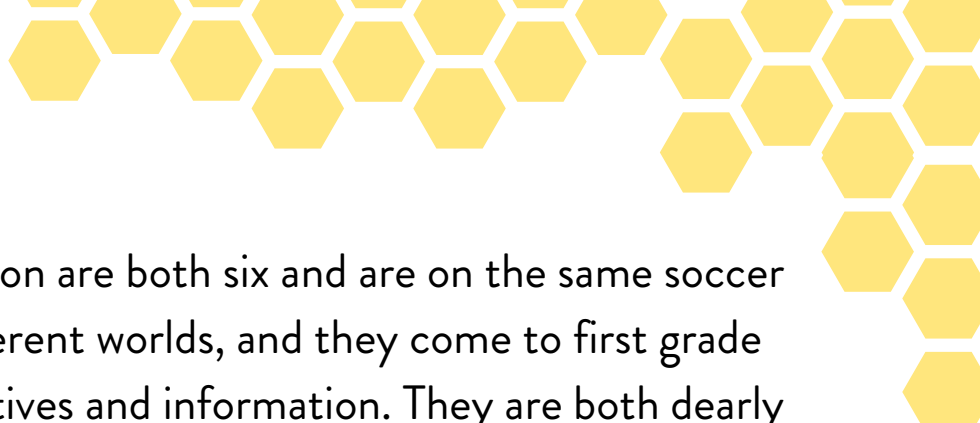


Here is Will. Will is a first born 6-year-old. He lives in a 6-year-old world, laughs at 6-year-old jokes, watches 6-year-old shows and movies, and is involved in 6-year-old activities. Basically, Will’s world does not reach beyond the scope of a 6-year-old.



Now we’d like for you to meet Hudson. Hudson is also a 6-year-old, but in his family he is the youngest of four. Hudson has a 16-year-old brother and sisters who are 10 and 12. Hudson hears and shares 16-year-old jokes and watches 16-year-old shows and movies. His sisters call him a baby if he watches Daniel Tiger, but in fact Hudson is no baby....he sees everything his siblings see on You Tube as their phones get passed around the back seat.





Even though Will and Hudson are both six and are on the same soccer team, they are living in different worlds, and they come to first grade with very different perspectives and information. They are both dearly loved by their parents...but they are growing up in different environments.

You see, our families are the age of our OLDEST CHILD...and the rest of the kids just have to keep up!

Families are involved in the activities of the oldest child and our younger ones get exposure to things that our first-born wasn't exposed to. Because of this REALITY, the question of WHEN to talk to our children changes to a different question.... "Do I want to be the one to tell them?" If your answer is yes, then talking to them about sex will come sooner than you think!

Does this idea make you panic a little?

That's ok. It can actually be very good news. Understanding this reality and then being empowered with the skills to talk to your child means that YOU will give them the first impression on this important topic.

In light of this reality, The Birds & Bees course is designed for parents of younger children so that families can have foundational conversations before others get the chance to make the first impression.



Tip #2 - Be PROACTIVE not REACTIVE

As with most challenges in life, it's much simpler to tackle them when you have a plan. With the topic of sex, some parents' plan is to be passive and just WAIT and SEE what they ask. We have a better plan. If parents only answer the questions that are asked, then there will be quite a bit of information that never gets covered and it won't come to your children in an orderly or cohesive way.

Let's put YOU, not your children, in charge of this topic.

So where do you want these conversations to go? Let's think about this for a bit...

The biology of sex remains the same for everyone, but the values surrounding the biology will be different from family to family...so take some time to consider exactly what your family values are...your core beliefs about sex. What do you want your children to understand the most about sex as they grow up in your home?

Answering that question will start you on the path to knowing what your values are and being able to communicate them clearly.

This tip, what we call “YOUR MESSAGE”, is the cornerstone of our Birds & Bees course. It encourages parents to build their conversations around the basic biology (which is universally the same) and your values (which are personally important to YOU!).

Being grounded in this message will help you to answer your children's questions with clarity. They will need more than the basic biology...they also need context and the reasons for why any of this matters.



HOW DO YOU ESTABLISH THIS MESSAGE?

Here are a few things you may want to think over:

- Consider what the purpose(s) of sex may be? What was it designed to be?
- What do you wish you had known or understood about sex from an early age?
- If you want to incorporate your faith into these conversations, what are the faith messages you want to send? What are your beliefs or values regarding sexual activity?
- If faith is not the direction you want to go, then consider what major themes you may want to focus on and what are your beliefs or values regarding sexual activity?
- What are the purposes of their reproductive parts, and how do they act respectfully and take care of them?
- How may your message be different from the messages they are likely to get from our culture?
- How would you define healthy attitudes and behaviors about sex and sexuality?

Think about these questions. Talk them over with your spouse or a close friend.

Try to condense the answer to the question of “What is your Message?” into ONE SENTENCE. It’s challenging, but very helpful.

As you run ahead of your children to make your family message, you will be amazed at how greatly this benefits you in future conversations. You will have a purpose and direction for your conversations and vocabulary that you can lean into even in these early foundational conversations.

Make a clear message based on YOUR family values. Make it be the message your children hear throughout all of your conversations and the message they can carry with them into adolescence and adulthood.



Tip #3 - Look BACK before you move FORWARD

We have one more tip to share before the conversations actually begin. We have found it VERY helpful to glance in the rear-view mirror before moving forward.

So let's think about your experience in learning about sex. Think back to when your parents gave you "The Talk"...if they even did at all. How would you like to do things differently??

Was it awkward? Was it too late?

Did it shape your views about sex and sexuality in a positive or negative way?

Did it affect your behavior?

Did you feel equipped? Embarrassed? Overwhelmed? Empowered? Confused?

How would you describe the tone about sex in your home?

What do you wish the tone had been?

How do you want your children to think back on your conversations with them about sex?

Did influences outside of your parents play a key role in shaping your attitudes and behaviors about sex and sexuality? If so which, and how?

What influences outside of your home do you think will influence your child?

Stop for a time to reflect on:

1. What your experiences were
2. Which you would like to repeat for your children
3. Which you would not like to repeat for your children

All are important for establishing your own family plan.

You can do this differently if you want to. Remember this:

**IT IS NO LONGER ABOUT YOU AND YOUR PAST
IT IS ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN AND THEIR FUTURE**

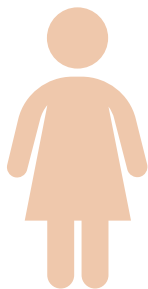


Tip #4 - USING RESPECTFUL VOCABULARY

For their safety and understanding, it's important for your children to be able to identify their body parts and to know that they are private.

It's actually okay to use the word "privates" as long as "penis" and "vagina" and other anatomically correct words are included regularly.

Most of us grew up and still use silly words for private parts when we really don't need to. This can be confusing for young kids - it can send a message to them that these are "bad" words or "bad" body parts. As parents, it is our job to be respectful and use medical words when identifying of body parts. We do not want to encourage silliness or shame.



You don't want your child to hear about penis and vagina for the first time when they are older and you explain sexual intercourse. That is just too much all at once! Using these correct words in a matter-of-fact way prevents shame, secrecy, and silliness.

But there is another very important reason for teaching them the correct words...THEIR SAFETY!

The number one way to protect our children from abuse is for them to be able to identify the anatomically correct names of their body parts and understand that they are private parts.



AND WHAT DOES PRIVATE MEAN?

It means no other person should see, touch, or take pictures of these parts unless it is mom or dad or a doctor who is given permission by mom or dad. If your family has another safe person, you can certainly include them. But even within these safe people, let your child know that if ANYONE makes them feel uncomfortable about their privates, they **MUST** let the safest person know.

These conversations can take place regularly and matter-of-factly. Try not to let too much emotion be infused. At bath time, while potty training, or changing clothes, simple reminders (with a smile and calm tone of voice) can be given:

Their bodies have special parts.

This is what they are called.

They are good.

They are private.

**EMPOWER YOUR CHILDREN BY GIVING THEM ANATOMICALLY
CORRECT VOCABULARY AND AN UNDERSTANDING THAT
THEY ARE PRIVATE.**





The Birds & Bees is here for you in this journey of talking to your child about sex. We hope you take our course and continue to explore what this will look like for you and your family.

Think about the opportunity before you! YOU get to equip your children with the knowledge and values that will guide some of the most important decisions they will make in their lives.

You'll be ahead of the curve, preparing your child for what lies ahead. You'll be having natural and positive conversations that will build as they grow.

Our hope is that Birds & Bees will prepare you to lay a solid foundation and that this strategy will be a blessing in your family!

Mary Flo & Megan

TEACH ME MORE!

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