

Let's Talk About Sex!



A Muslim Parent's Guide to Having "The Talk" With Their Kids



Table of Contents

01	Introduction: Why Have The Sex Talk?
02	Background: Myths About Sex Ed
05	The Guide
08	Step One: Openly Communicate
15	Step Two: Provide Information
32	Step Three: Encourage Questions
36	Step Four: Normalize Sex and Puberty
45	Appendix A: References
46	Appendix B: References
47	Appendix C: Consent Exercise Answer Key

Suggested Citation: HEART to Grow. (2026). Let's Talk About Sex!: A Muslim Parent's Guide to Having "The Talk" With Their Kids. HEART to Grow.

Published in October 2026.

Introduction

Why Have the Sex Talk?

Providing your child with comprehensive sexual education is important. Our bodies are an *amanah* (trust) from God, and young people need information about their bodies. From a young age, children should know the anatomically correct words for their private parts and be able to distinguish appropriate from inappropriate touches. As they grow older, they need critical thinking and decision-making skills to make informed decisions concerning sexual and reproductive health. Having this information helps them navigate and cultivate healthy relationships, protects them from abuse, and helps them have healthy sex when they become sexually active.

Yet, having such conversations can feel daunting. You may be unsure of when to start these conversations, what information to share, and whether you even have the requisite knowledge. You may worry that discussing these topics with your child may lead them to engage in unsafe sexual practices at a young age. These worries may be especially heightened if you grew up in an environment where conversations around sex and healthy relationships were one-time, messages limited to telling you to abstain from sex. It might tempt you to push these conversations off or leave school to fill in the blanks.



Background

Myths about Sex Ed

There is a common misunderstanding that comprehensive youth sexual health education on contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy may lead to increased sexual activity and early age of sexual debut. **Research actually shows the opposite.** Furthermore, there is no evidence that comprehensive sex education programs lead to increased rates of sexual activity and earlier initiation (Guttmacher Institute, 2025). Rather, these programs have been shown to have the opposite effect, as they empower young people with the tools to delay sex and make more responsible decisions.

After partaking in a comprehensive sexual education program, 56% of participants reported planning to abstain from sex in the next 3 months (Mittone et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2018). This is because sexual education empowers young people with the tools to delay sex and make more responsible decisions.

Parent-child conversations about sex can actually be protective in nature and play a role in providing a child with comprehensive sexual education outside of their school sex ed. **Studies indicate that children who are comfortable talking about sex with their parents are actually more likely to delay sexual activity and be older when they first have intercourse (Deptula et al., 2010; Inanc et al., 2020).** These conversations also protect youth when they become sexually active, making them more likely to intend to avoid sexual risks and use condoms and birth control when they have sex. Additionally, the earlier parents begin these conversations, the easier it will be to tackle “harder” conversations about puberty and sex.

The Need for Sex Ed for Muslims

Current efforts in sex education are missing the mark. Multiple studies show that Muslim youth feel frustrated with sex education programming at public schools because it does not take into account their cultural and religious worldview, and instead speaks to students as if sexual activity is predetermined (Orgocka, 2004). On the other hand, they expressed that religious programming does the exact opposite: it assumes that information about sex and sexuality is not relevant to youth because sexual activity shouldn't be taking place anyway (Orgocka, 2004). As such, programming at religious institutions typically excludes a great deal of important information, both on anatomy and other aspects

Why Have the Sex Talk?

However, viewing these conversations as immodest or delaying them until marriage, only leads Muslim youth to be left unprepared to deal with issues of reproductive and sexual health, and consequently, they may:

- Be unprepared for the major changes their bodies are undergoing, which can lead to confusion, curiosity, and/or unsafe exploration;
- Lack an understanding of sexual health, sexual experimentation, and its consequences;
- Make uninformed decisions about their sexual health that can lead to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or unplanned pregnancy;
- Seek out (mis)information online;
- Derive expectations on sex and relationships from pornography and movies;
- Rely on information picked up from peers at school or work;
- Depend on inaccurate cultural traditions, myths, and practices;
- Be unequipped to identify abuse and how to seek help;
- Have unhealthy sex in life;
- Feel pressured to engage in sexual activity, even if they are not ready.

This ultimately perpetuates misunderstandings about sex and fosters unhealthy attitudes toward gender, sexuality, and relationships.

Not receiving such education can lead to children, adolescents, and young adult Muslims being in vulnerable situations that could have been avoided with timely conversations about sexual health and healthy decision-making.



- Reflect on a time when an adult - outside the classroom - had a conversation with you about sex. What went well? What could have gone better? What was missing?



of sexual relationships. For example, the programming barely focuses on topics such as pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), self-esteem, healthy relationships, and decision-making. Moreover, most young Muslims reported receiving sexual health information from the media, and least often reported receiving it at home. These findings are consistent with HEART's fieldwork with over 2000 women and girls nationally: more than 60% of respondents in our needs assessments shared that they needed more information on sexual experimentation, along with other issues they were dealing with. This signals the need for resources that are both spiritually and scientifically grounded.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines or other markings on the page.

The Guide

Due to notions of privacy, modesty, and shame, conversations about sex and sexual development may be uncomfortable for many Muslims. Yet, it is crucial now more than ever for parents, guardians, and other family members to engage in candid, two-way conversations with the young people in their lives about sex to encourage safe, healthy relationships and to model and encourage healthy communication about sensitive topics. Starting and having these conversations creates a supportive and encouraging environment where your child knows they can express their needs in the future.



This guide is designed to help you have conversations covering comprehensive sexual education with your children, from age 3 to 18. It will give you tips on opening the floor for such conversations by establishing community agreements and using the OPEN conversation framework. It suggests topics to cover with your child that range from consent and healthy relationships to human reproduction, using the RIDHA framework. It also includes interactive activities to ensure that they understand how to apply these concepts to their own lives.

The Guide

This guide offers practical steps for parents who are thinking of having these crucial conversations with their kids: either in addition to health education class in school or in place of it. While we do promote a developmental approach and starting these conversations with children as young as 3, parents of pre-teens and teens may find this guide most helpful and relevant.

The steps are easily memorable through the acronym O.P.E.N., to set the tone for open & honest conversations, and stand for:

O PENLY COMMUNICATE

P ROVIDE INFORMATION

E NCOURAGE QUESTIONS

N ORMALIZE PUBERTY & SEX

This guide contains 4 components:



BACKGROUND

Information on the subject matter and practical tips on how to apply that information using the OPEN approach.



REFLECTION

Questions to consider as you prepare for these conversations



PUTTING IT IN PRACTICE

An example of how one can apply this information in real-time conversations with your child.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

Short ice-breaker activities that help begin these sensitive conversations with your child. These are not just questions for your child to answer, but are meant to serve as a two-way dialogue.

Before you start...

All ages:

- What are you comfortable sharing with your child at this time, and will you need someone else's assistance to cover certain topics?
- How will you monitor your body language, tone, and your response to a question you were not expecting to be asked? What are you expecting your child to ask?
- How will you prevent language that stigmatizes, scares, or perpetuates unhealthy ideas about gender? (e.g., men cannot control their urges, a woman can be blamed for tempting a man based on what she is wearing, etc.)
- What are the biases you have regarding sexuality? Pregnancy? Stigma against the LGBTQ+ community?

Ages 10 and up:

All ages:

- What are the biases you hold against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)? Uncomfortable topics such as masturbation? Abortion?
- What topics are being covered in your child's health classes? Do you have enough knowledge to answer the questions your child might come to you with?
- What cultural or religious assumptions do you need clarification on before starting this conversation with your child? (e.g., Do girls need to hide their periods from their male relatives?)

The Guide
OPEN

Step One

Openly communicate

Set the stage for open and ongoing communication before having sensitive conversations.

Your child will inevitably obtain knowledge about sex and sexuality from somewhere - either their peers, the internet, or you from an early age. This is a unique opportunity to provide medically accurate information that is consistent with your faith-based tradition.

The most important element is setting the stage for open, honest, and safe conversations. This will not only help you build trust between you and your child, but it will also facilitate the ongoing conversation we talked about above. You can start by setting a safe space.

A safe space is an environment in which everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully, without fear of attack, ridicule, or denial of experience. It is important to create this space well before adolescence sets in so that your child is comfortable discussing concerns with you before major issues arise.

Important elements to setting a safe space include:

- Group agreements
- Reflective listening
- Affirmations and validation



Conversation Starters

- Who would you like to involve in these conversations?
- What would help you need to make these discussions more comfortable? Face to face? By writing?
- What do you need to feel physically and emotionally safe enough to have a conversation on sensitive topics that come up in sex ed?



Group agreements

Although it may seem awkward at first, it is helpful for parents and children to sit down together to create a set of agreements. These agreements can set the tone and expectations for how parent and child will interact and communicate, build trust, and facilitate healthy dialogue.

**PUTTING IT IN
PRACTICE****For parents of younger children:**

- I agree to be honest.
- I agree to listen.
- If I don't know the answer, I will think about it and get back to you.
- I agree to remain calm. I may become upset but I won't use mean words or raise my voice to express disappointment.

Additional agreements for parents of older children:

- I agree to maintain a judgment-free zone and to be open to discussing any thoughts, opinions, and behaviors that may come up.
- I agree to have open discussions with my child about values or beliefs that may differ from my own.
- I agree to allow the person who is talking to completely finish their thoughts before I talk.
- I agree to be present and turn off all distractions while having these conversations.
- I agree to maintain this as a conversation and not a lecture.
- I will not minimize or dismiss my child's struggles.

Sample agreements for children

- Age 5: I agree to tell the truth.
- Age 6: I agree to listen.
- Age 7: I will always be respectful. If I am upset, I will use respectful words to express my frustration.
- Age 9: I agree to allow the person who is talking to completely finish their thoughts before I talk.
- Age 12: In accordance with my faith, I will not be shy when it comes to seeking knowledge about my body.
- I agree to think through and discuss different points of view on topics as they arise.
- Age 16: I agree to be present and turn off distractions (i.e., cell phones and electronic devices while having these conversations.



Conversation Starters

- What happens when these agreements are violated? Is trust broken? Discuss how to maintain the space and the consequences when agreements are violated or trust is broken.

Space for Reflection

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Practice reflective listening

This is a very important first step to building healthier relationships. Reflective listening is a skill that involves remaining calm, being present when the other person is talking, not interrupting them, and repeating what they said to you so they know you heard and understood them. It also helps clarify what they are looking to get from you – whether it's just a listening ear or a helping hand. The Office of Adolescent Health has learned that teens hesitate to talk about sex with their parents because it will make their parents angry, or because their parents will assume they are having sex. While these conversations and questions may make you anxious or even upset, the key is to remain calm. Losing your cool may result in your child being upset or, worse, not reaching out in the future.



PUTTING IT IN PRACTICE

Practice reflective listening with your child. Instead of asking how their school day went, ask them to describe a challenge they encountered. Listen attentively to their entire story without interrupting. Avoid offering solutions or criticisms like “Why didn’t you ask your teacher for help?” or “You should have studied harder for the exam.”

“I had a geography exam today and it was so hard! We only had 25 minutes to finish it and I forgot the capitals of Maine and Wyoming.”



Not reflexive listening

“You should’ve studied harder!”

Reflexive listening

“It sounds like the exam was difficult because there wasn’t enough time. Let’s review those two state capitals at home, OK?”



Validate and affirm your child's feelings. Simple statements like "It's normal and not surprising that you feel scared" or "You're doing the responsible thing by talking to someone, and know that you're not alone" may seem insignificant, but they're incredibly important for a youth trying to make sense of the various social, emotional, and physical changes they're experiencing. Reassure your child that puberty is a natural process that everyone goes through at their own pace and in varying degrees. It's perfectly normal to feel confused or curious about these changes and the desires that often accompany them. However, these changes will require them to take responsibility for their bodies and make decisions that align with their values.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Keep the conversation going

The second most important component of “the talk” for parents to remember is that it should be ongoing, throughout a child’s adolescent years. Though historically these conversations have been portrayed as being only a one-time lecture from parent to child, it is hard to imagine that one conversation at one point in time will suffice. Even if you are well-prepared for “the talk”, a single conversation cannot adequately equip a child with the information and skills they need for a lifelong set of experiences.

Put another way, in school, children learn about academic subjects such as math, science, and English. As they move through school, teachers build upon their previous knowledge to introduce more complex concepts, which ultimately provides them with a comprehensive understanding of the subject. In the same way, repeated, age-appropriate conversations about puberty, sex, relationships, and consent are crucial to give them the information they need to fully process the big picture of their sexual health and figure out how they fit into it. Having ongoing conversations also helps foster safe and communicative environments so that your child feels comfortable asking questions as they arise. Additionally, ongoing, developmentally appropriate conversations are important.

Appropriate conversations normalize discussions around sex and sexuality so that it is not seen as a shameful or embarrassing topic. Introducing concepts like consent throughout the elementary and adolescent years lays the foundation for lifelong critical decision-making and healthy relationships. And perhaps most importantly, as mentioned earlier, these conversations allow you to talk openly about your family’s values and norms about sex and sexuality.



For example, instead of avoiding further conversation about sex and sexuality when seen in the media, use those as teaching moments to counter what may be unhealthy messaging with a couple of positive and healthy messages.



Conversation Starters

Movies, music, ads, and TV shows make great conversation starters and teachable moments. Try using a scene from a movie or a situation in real life to start the conversation. For example, you may ask what your child thinks about:

- A music video objectifying women
- A movie scene containing sexual violence
- A novel about teen relationships
- A movie scene containing sexual violence
- A news story on increased rates of sexually transmitted infections.
- A popular teen TV show displaying risky sexual behaviors

What messages about sex are being promoted in the media? About consent? Are there any contradictions?

Let your child share what they think. If they still seem uncomfortable, start by offering your thoughts.

Space for Reflection

Step Two

Provide information

Now that you've set the stage for honest and open communication about this sensitive topic, you can begin preparing for the conversation.

As you prepare for this conversation, consider the various avenues through which your child may receive information about sex.

It is likely your child will receive information from the following different outlets:

- School sex ed programming
- Friends & peers
- Internet & media

Sex ed in schools

If your child takes a sex education class in school—which is a great way to ensure they are getting scientifically accurate, foundational knowledge—familiarize yourself with the approach and content your child will be exposed to in the classroom. You can do this by reaching out to your school before or after their class. Knowing what will be taught in class will give you an idea of what concepts you should focus on to create a more holistic sex education experience.

It is unlikely the school your child attends will be able to cover all topics in detail. Because curriculum content and objectives differ for each state and school district, sex ed curricula taught in public schools range from abstinence-only, abstinence-based, and fear-based to comprehensive sex education. Thus, your child's learning experience may or may not cover topics such as peer pressure, healthy relationships, and decision-making.



TIP

The [State Profile Curriculum Content Review](#) by the Sex Ed for Social Change can be useful when evaluating your child's sex ed curriculum. This excellent guide outlines and reviews each state's sexual health education requirements.

Friends and peers

As your child gets older, sex, sexuality, and relationships will become an increasingly important part of conversations and interactions with their friends and peers. Because they will be having these conversations regularly, it is even more imperative that your child has access to accurate, correct information for the following reasons:

- Because of their limited understanding of sex, teens often have a wealth of misinformation that they are very quick to share with their friends.
- Having accurate information will help your child make decisions that are not based on false information.
- With accurate information, your child can be a resource for their friends and peers, and correct false information or myths, ultimately empowering their peers with the information they need to make decisions



Reflection (puberty & up)

- Do you know your child's friends? Are you comfortable correcting false information and myths about sex?
- What type of information are your child and their friends seeking or engaging with on sex and sexual activity?

Internet and media

The internet, media, and literature are information channels that you may want to monitor, but they are also opportunities to engage in discussion with your child about gender roles, healthy

relationships, and sexual experimentation. Often, children hear technical information in the classroom setting and more explicit information from friends, the media, and online platforms. Nowadays, young adults are increasingly learning about sex through smut and romantic novels that contain explicit sex scenes. Have conversations about the topics and expectations that arise as they encounter different types of media. Be prepared to counter misinformation or unrealistic expectations that they may spread and explain when (if ever) certain words, phrases, or actions are appropriate.

Additionally, if your child has a smartphone, you should have conversations with them about responsible phone usage. These conversations should also cover social media use and the expectations you have with your child regarding what they are posting publicly or sending privately on social media apps or messaging platforms. When having these conversations, it is important to remind your child that anything posted on the Internet can remain there forever. It can be helpful to explain social media and artificial intelligence usage as being similar to consent. Access to their social media accounts should be limited to those they have consented to view their profiles. Additionally, it is important to get consent before feeding a person's photos into artificial intelligence for any purpose.

Finally, share expectations regarding sending and receiving sexts (texts with explicit sexual messaging or nude photos). It is very common among young people to either send or receive, or be pressured to send messages with sexual content. Young children, in particular, are vulnerable to grooming and manipulation by strangers online.

Or by their peers as a form of bullying. Being pressured to send explicit photos to an adult is a form of child abuse that should be swiftly addressed. Tell your child what they should do if they are pressured to send sexts or if they receive unwanted explicit messages. Keep an open line of communication to ensure they feel comfortable coming to you for support.



Conversation starter (puberty+):

- What sources of media do you engage with?
- What are the different media you learn about sex from?
- What are the main messages you get about sex from your friends? From your peers? From online spaces and the media?
- How do you determine if online information is accurate?

Space for Reflection



- What concepts come up in the television shows they watch or books they read?
- What kind of musicians do they follow and how might this influence their ideas about gender roles?
- Does your child have a phone? What social media platforms are they active on?
- What are the agreements and expectations that you have regarding Internet and social media usage?
- What websites and resources is your child visiting to learn information about sex?
- Do they have an understanding about how to navigate information on the web, and to distinguish between what is a reliable, accurate resource, versus what is not?

Space for Reflection

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slightly aged or off-white appearance.This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines or other markings on the page.



PUTTING IT IN PRACTICE

Age >12: Sex is an act between two consenting people. Consent means that both people have agreed to what is happening and can stop at any time they want. In Islam, most believe that sex is only permissible when those two people are married, and it is considered an act of worship. Of course, there are many people—Muslim or not—who choose not to wait until marriage because the decision to have sex is different for everyone and requires both parties to think about what factors need to be present to move forward. While sex can and should bring much pleasure, sex is also an act of great responsibility. People choose to have sex for many reasons: to express their love and desire for someone, to fulfill a physical desire, or to have children.

Age 12+: Because it is a responsibility, you must be prepared for sex. Preparing for sex involves educating yourself

Below are scripts that can help you have conversations about sex with your kids.

on birth control and contraception options and how to access and use them. Contraception is your right, and no one should pressure you to have sex without it. Before having sex, you should engage in open communication with your partner, and reflect and explore your values, ideas, and desires before the heat of the moment. If you are not prepared, it may have an impact that you did not plan for. Physical consequences may include unplanned pregnancy, which can delay your goals or make them difficult, and sexually transmitted infections, which affect your future health. Sex may also have social consequences, such as tension in your relationship. A person may also feel spiritual consequences, such as guilt if one of their boundaries—such as delaying sex until marriage—was not respected.



Conversation starter (high school+):

- What are some reasons people have sex? What are some reasons people don't have sex?



PUTTING IT IN PRACTICE

Communicate your expectations for your child through conversations: “I hope that you wait until you are **[enter expectation]**. I know that there will be many times you will feel like not waiting, because the urge to satisfy your romantic and sexual desires is natural, and we live in a world where the pressure to have sex can feel overwhelming at times. So, I hope that you will wait until **[insert expectation]**, but I also know you are a very thoughtful individual who will make the best decision for you and your body.”

Space for Reflection

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines or other markings on the page.

Emphasizing the importance of consent

Unfortunately, sexual violence is rampant in our society. The CDC reports that nearly half of all women and 1 in 6 men will experience a form of sexual violence in their lifetime (CDC, 2025). There is no racial, ethnic, or religious community immune to sexual violence. Thus, it is critical to empower youth with the skills and knowledge needed to create a safer society. This involves understanding consent, how it is expressed, and knowing what the resources are if they or someone they know experiences sexual violence. As much as we can teach our kids to be in control of their sexual decision-making, there are still people who may try to cross their boundaries. Thus, it is crucial that you explore situations involving boundaries and consent, so they may practice their skills in preparation for the real world. This information helps lay the foundation for healthy relationships in the future and can also prepare your child to be a resource for their friends and peers if they are ever bystanders in a situation involving sexual violence.

What is consent?

Consent is defined as a situation in which both people involved have agreed, or given permission, to what is happening, *and* either party can decide *at any time* that they no longer agree to continue.

Permitting one behavior does not obligate you to give permission for something else.

Consent is not exclusively a sexual concept. We navigate consent in everyday life constantly: asking before borrowing a friend's thing, asking before posting

someone's photo, asking before a hug. In Islam, seeking permission (isti'dhan) before entering someone's personal space (their home and, by extension, their body, their privacy) is a well-established ethical practice rooted in prophetic example. Framing consent in this light connects it to values your child likely already holds.

Bodily Autonomy: Starting Before the 'Big Talk'

Consent education should not begin during adolescence. It should be incorporated during the earliest conversations about the body. Children who grow up knowing that their bodies belong to them, and

that they have the right to decide who touches them and how, are far better equipped to recognize and resist boundary violations as they grow older.

That said, parents must also acknowledge an important nuance: children do not have full autonomy over everything. Medical care, hygiene, and safety are non-negotiable. The goal is not to give children the right to refuse everything, but to honor their feelings and model respectful communication even when their preferences cannot always be honored. A parent can say, 'I know you don't want to do this right now, and I understand. We still need to, and here's why. Can you help me make it as comfortable as possible for you?' This models the spirit of consent (that bodies deserve communication and respect) even in situations where the parent must make a health or safety decision.



Age 3+: Building the Foundation

- Teach your child the anatomically correct names for all body parts (penis, vagina, rectum, anus, etc.). Using accurate language empowers children to communicate clearly if something happens that they need to tell a trusted adult. Additionally, explain the conditions under which a trusted adult can view or touch their private parts, like at the doctor's.
- Explore the concept of a “good touch” and a “bad touch.” Good touches involve a known adult or peer holding their hands, hugging them, or squeezing their cheeks. “Bad touches” involve someone viewing or touching their private parts, forcing them to view or touch another person's private parts, or kissing them on the lips or another body part. You can also explore the difference between comfortable and uncomfortable touch framing, helping children recognize how touch makes them feel: 'Does this feel okay? Does it feel wrong? What does your body tell you?'

Age 3+: Building the Foundation

- Explore the concept of boundaries with your child. What type of good touches do they like? What sort of good touches could they go without? Teach them statements that demonstrate how to set their boundaries: “I don’t want a hug right now,” “I don’t want a hug, but I can shake hands,” or merely shaking their head no.
- Teach them that their body is an *amanah* (trust) to them from God, and they can say “no” to any touch they don’t feel comfortable with. Emphasize that no one is allowed to violate their boundaries (whether it’s physically, verbally, or emotionally through pressure) without their clear permission and approval. Likewise, emphasize that your child should respect other people’s boundaries. They should ask permission before touching others: “Can I give you a hug?” “Can we wrestle?” If someone doesn’t want to do something or be touched a certain way, they should step back and appreciate that no means no.

Model consent in your own interactions. Ask before hugging your child. Respect their answer. When you must handle their body for care (bathing, dressing, medical needs), narrate what you are doing: ‘I’m going to wash your hair now.’ This builds the habit of communicating around touch even when choices are limited.

- Emphasize that if they are ever touched in a way that makes them uncomfortable (even by someone they love and trust), they should seek help from a trusted adult, like a relative or a teacher. Even if they feel confused, scared, and ashamed, they are not at fault.



Ages 6+: Building Vocabulary and Critical Thinking

- Reinforce that everyone has the right to set their own boundaries, and that respecting others' boundaries is part of being a kind, trustworthy person.
- Introduce the idea that consent is also an everyday practice: asking before you borrow someone's belongings, asking before posting a photo of them, checking in before joining someone's game. Normalize consent as a social habit, not just a safety rule.
-
- Teach the difference between 'good secrets' (surprises that will be shared soon and make someone happy) and 'unsafe secrets' (anything an adult asks them to keep that makes them feel scared, confused, or ashamed). Unsafe secrets should always be told to a trusted adult.
- Help them identify multiple trusted adults they can go to: not just one, since that person may not always be available.
- Introduce the concept of coercion: if someone uses threats, bribes, or guilt to pressure them into something, that is not consent – even if they eventually say yes. Their 'yes' under pressure is not a true yes. Emphasize that if they are ever touched in a way that makes them uncomfortable (even by someone they love and trust), they should seek help from a trusted adult, like a relative or a teacher. Even if they feel confused, scared, and ashamed, they are not at fault.





PUTTING IT IN PRACTICE

3+

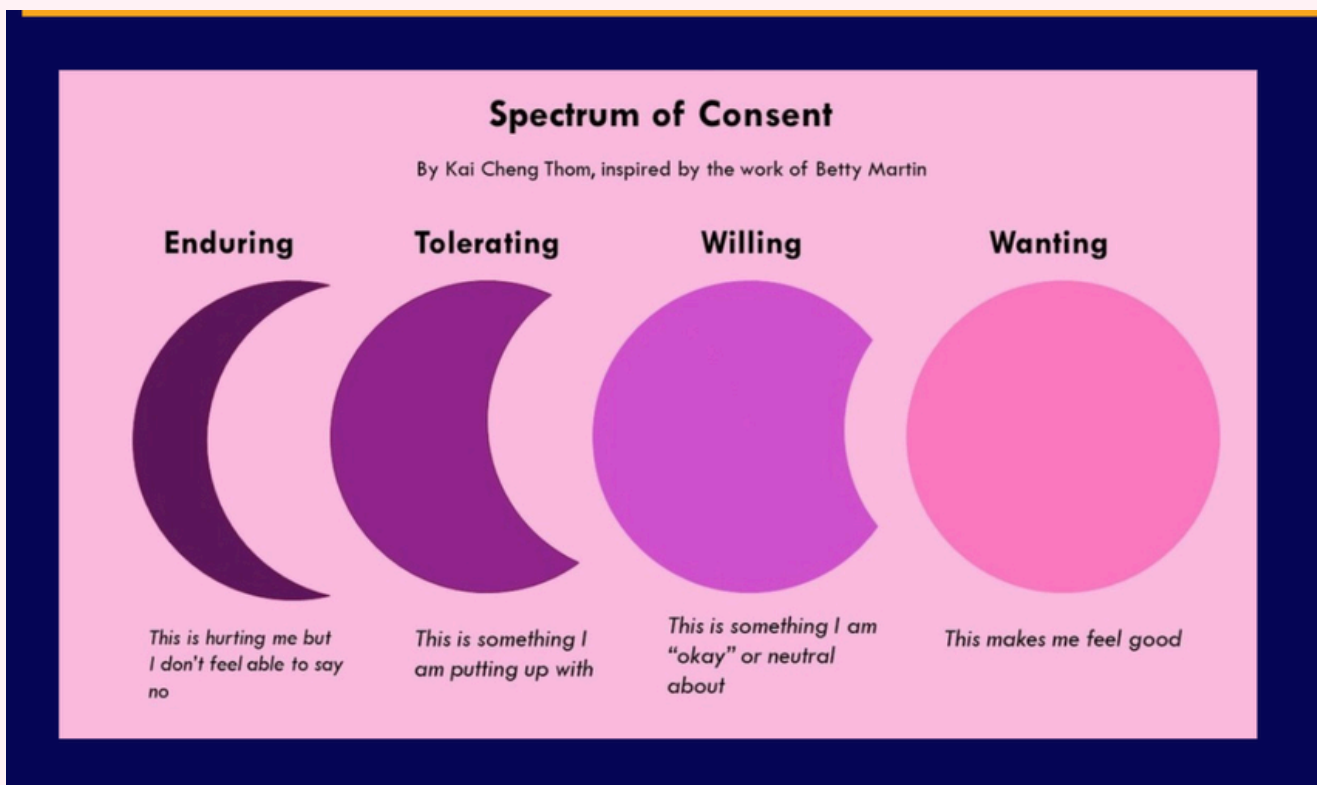
- Your aunt comes up to you and squeezes your cheeks. Is this a good touch or a bad touch?
- A cousin asks if he can hug you. You don't say yes, but you don't say no. Have you given consent?
- Your uncle asks if he can kiss your cheek. You lean your cheek in and say, 'Sure.' Have you given consent?

Space for Reflection

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slightly aged or off-white appearance.

Puberty & Up: The Full Consent Conversation

By the time your child reaches puberty, they should already have years of consent-related vocabulary and experience to draw on. Now is the time to explicitly connect those foundations to romantic and sexual contexts, and to deepen their understanding of consent as a spectrum.



- Introduce the idea of the spectrum of consent. There are things that they may endure or tolerate, but would prefer not to do. Have conversations with them about how they can express their preferences and communicate what they are willing or wanting to do. Make sure to mention that they should take a moment to understand their partner's desires as well.
- Emphasize that consent must be ongoing throughout any encounter. Agreeing to one level of intimacy does not obligate either person to go further. Either person can pause or stop at any time — and that decision must be respected immediately and without argument.

Puberty & Up: The Full Consent Conversation

- Teach them to both give and seek consent actively: 'Is this okay?' 'Are you comfortable?' 'Do you want to stop?' These check-ins are not awkward interruptions – they are marks of care and respect.
- Discuss how power dynamics can compromise consent. A teacher, religious leader, coach, or other authority figure cannot have a consensual sexual relationship with someone they hold authority over, even if that person appears willing. The power imbalance makes truly free consent impossible.
- Discuss digital consent explicitly. Sending or sharing someone's photo, messages, or location without permission is a consent violation, even between people who care about each other. Using AI tools to manipulate someone's image without their consent is a serious violation that can have legal consequences.
- Use teachable moments like billboard ads or TV show scenarios to initiate conversations about healthy relationships, media messaging, and sexual violence.
- Work with your child to differentiate between verbal and non-verbal consent, as well as between verbal and non-verbal non-consent. Explain that our bodies are a sacred trust from God, and using our autonomy to disrupt someone else's by disregarding consent and boundaries is a violation of this trust. Furthermore, it can also constitute a crime in many situations.

VERBAL SIGNS

CONSENT
 Yes/Absolutely
 I want to/I'm excited
 Keep going/Don't stop
 I'm sure/I know
 I'm ready
 Yes, that feels good
 I'd like that

NON-CONSENT
 No/Stop
 I'm not sure/I don't know
 I'm scared
 I'm not comfortable
 I want to, but...
 I'm not ready
 No, that doesn't feel right
 Silence (silence != consent)

NON VERBAL SIGNS

CONSENT
 Direct, engaged eye contact
 Initiating or leaning in
 Pulling someone closer
 Nodding yes
 Relaxed body/smiling
 Clearly indicating interest

NON-CONSENT
 Avoiding eye contact
 Pulling away/pushing someone off
 Frozen or stiff body
 Shaking head no
 Crying or looking fearful
 Turning away/closing off



PUTTING IT IN PRACTICE

Read the situations below with your child and talk about whether consent is being practiced in the situation. You'll find the answers at the end of this guide.

Age 12+

- A cousin asks if he can hug you. You don't say yes, but you don't say no. Have you given consent?
- You and a friend are at an amusement park, and your friend is wearing shorts. A bunch of boys start catcalling and making inappropriate comments, and your mom whispers that your friend deserves it, given the way they were dressed. Did they give consent to getting such attention based on their clothes?
- You sent a friend a photo of yourself trying on a new dress, which she decided to forward to your crush. You are upset, but she's telling you to lighten up because it wasn't a big deal. Did you consent?

Age 14+

- You've just arrived for a job interview, and as you greet the representatives for the company, you smile and extend your hand, indicating a handshake. Did you consent?
- A neighbor asks if you can stay with him while his parents are gone. You don't want to say yes, but he threatens you that he will tell your parents about the time you snuck out. So you reluctantly head over. Did you consent?



PUTTING IT IN PRACTICE

- Your friend went to a party last night and drank a few beers. She says she wasn't drunk, but can't remember what happened with the football player that night. Did she consent?
- Your friend was on a date and was holding hands with her boyfriend. He asked if he could kiss her, and she said yes. While they were kissing, he slipped his hand under her shirt. Your friend is upset because she thinks he crossed a line. Did she consent?
- Your friend takes a picture in a bikini and uploads it to their Instagram page. A group of boys from their high school use AI to remove the bikini and circulate the picture online. Your friend is devastated. Did they consent?

Space for Reflection

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



-
- A stylized illustration of a woman with dark, curly hair and a warm smile, wearing a light yellow sweater and blue jeans, kneeling on the ground. She is embracing a young child with curly hair who is laughing joyfully. The child is wearing a white shirt, blue overalls, and red sneakers. The background is a solid light pink color.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines or other markings on the page.

Your child will continue to explore these topics independently, so it is important that you offer tips to identify accurate and reliable resources. Familiarize yourself and your family with the medical and social services in your community, should you need them. Have conversations with the members of your community about what they can do if someone reaches out to them. Additionally, teach them to be a resource for their peers and how to identify the instances when they should reach out to a trusted adult.



Rather than a single 'talk,' think of consent education as an ongoing, lifelong dialogue that grows with your child. The scenarios above are starting points, not endpoints. Use teachable moments (a scene in a movie, a news story, a situation a friend described) to keep the conversation alive. The more normal these conversations are in your home, the more likely your child will come to you when they encounter a difficult real-life situation.

Most importantly: when your child tells you about something that made them uncomfortable, believe them. Ask what they need. Advocate for them. That response, more than any

curriculum or scenario, teaches them that their body and their experiences matter.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Step Three

Encourage Questions

The process described in Step Two (Provide Information) is meant to be a dialogue between you and your child. We hope the material and resources we have provided have helped you feel more equipped to begin the “talk” about sex education, values, and identity.

This section is meant to assist you in building your child's critical thinking skills on topics regarding sexuality and relationships. It can also help you define, clarify, and hopefully come to a close agreement with your child on your family norms, expectations, and responsibilities as they grow and develop.

Thus, you will find some questions that can help guide these conversations with your child. Some questions have been written from a young adult perspective, while others are posed from a parental lens. Be prepared to respond to these questions as relevant to your child.



The Guide

Puberty & Older: Physical and Bodily Changes

Private Parts:

- What parts of my body will change during puberty?
- What words are used when speaking about our bodies and the bodies of others?
 - When are certain words [in]appropriate?
 - How does using certain terms affect how we view others?

Breast/Chest Development:

- How will my breast/chest develop during puberty?
- Do bigger breasts mean I can't wear my favorite shirts anymore?
- Is it normal for my breasts to hurt?

Larger Hips/Pelvis:

- How can I find clothes that fit the body I'm in?
- Why do some people have wider hips than others?
- My hips aren't as wide as others. Does that mean something is wrong with me?

Pubic Hair:

- How often should I trim my pubic hair?
- My friend said their mom takes them to get a Brazilian wax. Have you ever gotten one? Can I get one?

Voice Development:

- How will my voice change?
- Why is my voice cracking?

Menstruation:

- Why do I get a period?
- Does having a period mean I am an adult?
- How does being on my period affect my worship? Can I touch the Qur'an? Recite it? Can I enter a mosque?
- Should I still wake up for Ramadan if I am not fasting?
- How should I navigate family prayer time when I'm on my period?
- What should I do if I don't have pads with me when I get my period?
- Should I still wake up for Ramadan if I am not fasting?
- Is it normal to feel irritable when I'm on my period? What types of emotions aren't normal (eg., extreme depression and irritability may be a sign of PMDD)?
- Is it normal for my period to be irregular? When might it be a sign of some irregularity (like PMOS)?
- What is ghusl (ritual cleansing)?

Sex

- What is sex?
- What parts of my body are responsible for sexual reproduction?
- Can I get [someone] pregnant?
- What does it mean to be a "virgin"? Does using a tampon mean someone is no longer a virgin?

Puberty & Up: Healthy Relationships & Spirituality

Consent:

- How can I determine and express the things I'm willing to do? The things I want to do?
- Do you need to give consent before someone texts you? Touches you?

Dating:

- Is it wrong to text a classmate of the opposite gender?
- What constitutes a relationship?
- Are two people dating if they “hang out” on a regular basis?
- When can I begin dating?

Modesty:

- What are ways different genders can maintain modesty?
- Does wearing a hijab immediately make someone modest?
- What kind of modesty rules are expected of us in the home?
- Do these rules change outside the home? At the mosque? At a same-gender function?

Acts of Worship

- What acts of worship do I have to begin engaging in after puberty?
- How can I be supported in this transition?

High School & Up

Dating:

- What does dating look like in Islam?
- Can I date the same way my friends do? If not, how will I find a spouse if I can't date the same way my friends do?
- What are the elements necessary for a healthy relationship?
- How should I navigate an ambiguous relationship like a situationship? A talking stage?

R **Rooted in compassion (“*rahma*”) and mutual pleasure.**
A relationship should be grounded in compassion (*rahma*) for one another and a commitment to mutual pleasure —core elements of a fulfilling and thriving relationship.

I **Informed by communication and knowledge (“*ilm*”).**
Open, honest dialogue and seeking knowledge (*ilm*) is key between partners to uphold informed consent, build trust, facilitate an ongoing connection and communicate boundaries, needs and desires.

D **Driven by equity and fairness (“*adalah*”).**
Everyone on this earth was created with equal value and integrity. A partnership that reflects this equality through shared power and privilege is necessary for a healthy relationship rooted in fairness and equity (*adalah*).

H **Housed in safety and security (“*hurma*”).**
A relationship should provide each partner with a sense of safety and security (*hurma*). Any threat, or actual acts, of any physical, digital, emotional, sexual, or spiritual violence, abuse, or coercion is in conflict with the ideal of love and mercy between partners.

A **Affirmed in commitment (“*aqd*”) and fidelity.**
A clear agreement (*aqd*) between the partners on the terms and boundaries of the relation, thus affirming their commitment to each other.

The Guide

High School & Up

Sex:

- How should I decide when to have sex?
- Why do you think that it's important that I wait until I am in a committed relationship—ideally marriage—to have sex?
 - Do I have to wait until marriage for sex?
- If someone engages in oral sex, are they still a virgin?
- If someone is sexually assaulted, does that mean they're no longer a virgin?
- Will God be angry at me if I lose my virginity?

Modesty:

- How do you define modesty?
- What does it mean to be modest in appearance and in your character and interactions?
- How does what we look at affect the state of our spiritual well-being and how we approach sex and relationships?
- How does it relate to pornography and smut?
- What ideas about sex and relationships does pornography promote? How may they be harmful?

Consent:

- What are some ways you can make sure someone knows you do not want to do something?

- How can you tell whether someone is interested in a certain activity or not?
- What is the difference between wanting, being willing to, and tolerating an activity?

Finally, welcome questions and discussion. Provide an open space for your child to share their experiences and opinions on any of these topics. Reflective listening will help you understand your child's concerns and stay attuned to the content and feelings expressed in their stories and questions. Leaning on the OPEN method is an effective way to keep the line of communication between you and your child open and will help you stay actively involved in your child's development through adolescence and towards adulthood.



Step Four

Normalize Sex and Puberty

Move beyond shame to build positive attitudes around sex and puberty.

As mentioned in step one (openly communicate), the key to having effective conversations about your child's development is ensuring they are open and ongoing. This provides your child with a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate understanding that builds on their previous knowledge as they grow older. Additionally, it helps frame the topics of sex and sexuality as natural, healthy conversations between guardian and child.

There are three ways you can begin to normalize these conversations in your household:

- Use anatomical terms, even as early as age 3.
- Separate shame from modesty and privacy.
- Challenge cultural myths as they arise.

The Importance of Using Anatomically Correct Terms

While this section is more relevant to those with younger children who are less likely to be familiar with the proper terms, it is still a useful overview for children of all ages. Too often, people grow up not knowing the correct anatomical terms for their

genitalia. Depending on one's familial and cultural background, that area could be referred to as "private parts" or through another code phrase. There are a few reasons for this. Some individuals in the Muslim community come from cultures with a strong sense of modesty and privacy, and view code words or phrases as a way to preserve them. Others may have received cultural messaging that these terms and body parts are "dirty" or "shameful." Others may not teach these terms simply because they're not sure how.

While families may have some expectations around when to openly use anatomical terms, learning correct anatomical terminology itself is not immodest. Perhaps you find it inappropriate to refer to these

terms during a dinner conversation, or in front of an elder—it's okay to respect family values around these topics—but knowing the proper terminology for when your child needs it is crucial. Your child's body is a sacred gift entrusted by God (amanah) that should be honored and cherished. Furthermore, our faith tradition values learning about our bodies and how to take care of them. Finally, learning about your body parts does not make them any less private. Your child's body is still their own, and by teaching them anatomical terms, you are equipping them with the tools they need to protect it.

Knowing these terms is important because:

- It helps children and medical professionals accurately communicate about any issue concerning their genitalia
- It helps children communicate if their private parts are being violated.
- It helps create boundaries (conversation around private parts and what is off limits).
- It also emphasizes that slang terms can often be derogatory and should be discouraged.



Conversation starter (all ages):

- What are some terms your family uses to describe private parts? What other terms have we heard around us? Are any offensive? Are there any unspoken guidelines in your family about when it is okay and when it is not okay to use proper anatomical terms?

Space for Reflection

[illegible]

The Guide

Separate Shame from Modesty and Privacy

It is important to distinguish between modesty and shame when talking about sexual health topics. Islam teaches the importance of modesty (*haya*), but cultural interpretations have often equated the concept of *haya* with shame, implying that topics related to bodies and sexuality are shameful. Yet, associating feelings of shame with sexual health is actually more damaging than beneficial, as a young adolescent navigating the many physical and emotional changes of puberty or an adult navigating relationships and sex.

Often, discussions are limited to, “Don’t have sex until marriage because that’s what our religion says to do,” which youth are expected to accept and follow. However, it is becoming clearer that this approach is ineffective, leaving youth to look for additional guidance. That being said, how do we move forward with this conversation? How can we impart our values and expectations in a way that is relatable to youth, but doesn’t portray sex and sexuality as something that is dirty and shameful? How do we approach the reality that many people—



Conversation starter (high school+):

- Conversation starter (high school and up):
What are some reasons people have sex?
What are some reasons people don’t have sex?

Including those of our own faith—may have different values or expectations?

Begin by validating how natural these changes and feelings are. It is crucial to emphasize that puberty, sex, and sexuality are extremely normal and natural, and a part of life that everyone goes through. There should be no shame or embarrassment in feeling attraction towards another person, or in feeling the desire to express that attraction in a physical way, such as holding hands or kissing. However, these desires also come with a lot of pressure to engage in sexual activity, not just from within but also from peers, media, and society. It is essential to think about empowered and informed decision-making when it comes to sexuality – whether one chooses not to wait until marriage to become sexually active or to become sexually active sooner, the key is to take ownership of that choice; otherwise, it will be laden with regrets and resentment.



PUTTING IT IN PRACTICE

>12

Sex is an act between two consenting people. Consent means that both people have agreed to what is happening and can stop at any time they want. In Islam, most believe that sex is only permissible when those two people are married, and it is considered an act of worship. Of course, there are many people—Muslim or not—who choose not to wait until marriage because the decision to have sex is different for everyone and requires both parties to think about what factors need to be present to move forward. While sex can and should bring much pleasure, sex is also an act of great responsibility. People choose to have sex for many reasons: to express their love and desire for someone, to fulfill a physical need, or to have children.

12+

Sex is a responsibility that you must be prepared for. This involves educating yourself on birth control and contraception options and learning how to access and use them. Contraception is your right, and no one should pressure you to have sex without it. Before having sex, you should reflect and explore your values, expectations, and desires before the heat of the moment and openly communicate them with your partner. If you are not prepared, you may experience unplanned impacts. Physical consequences may include pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Sex may also have social consequences, such as tension in your relationship. You may also feel spiritual impacts, such as guilt if one of your boundaries—such as delaying sex until marriage—was not respected. I hope that you wait until you are [enter expectation, if any, here to become sexually active]. I know that there will be many times you will feel like not waiting, because you may be feeling natural romantic/sexual desires in a world where the pressure to have sex can feel overwhelming at times. So, while I hope that you will wait until [insert expectation], I know you are a thoughtful individual who will make the best decision for you.”



PUTTING IT IN PRACTICE

Space for Reflection

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

The Guide

Inherently shameful, they are also not inherently dirty. Certain cultural traditions imply that a menstruating person is dirty. However, while menstrual blood is expelled from the body during menstruation, this does not mean that its origin, the body, is impure. A menstruating individual is only ritually impure, meaning they are exempt from performing specific acts of worship until the ritually impure state is lifted through ghusl (ritual bath). Another way to look at this time of the month is that since God ordained that certain forms of worship should not be performed while menstruating, the act of obeying God is an act of worship in itself.

All in all, different cultures have different expectations regarding sex and sexuality. Keep an open line of communication so you can move beyond shame and normalize discussions around sex and puberty. Communicate your values and dispel myths so that your child grows up with a healthy relationship with their body.

Challenge Cultural Myths

Muslims come from diverse cultures, some of which may hold and spread inaccurate information about sex and sexuality.

Cultural myths may place undue importance on virginity, especially in cisgender girls, and hold that virginity is determined by the presence of a hymen. This may lead to cisgender girls being discouraged from activities such as horseback riding and bike riding. In some traditions, the couple is expected to display bloodied bedsheets from their wedding night to prove the bride's virginity. These same cultures may praise cisgender men's sexual activity as a sign of strength, leading to sexually repressed women and sexually liberated men. It is important to address these cultural myths and norms as they arise. Some individuals do not have a hymen. Virginity does not represent purity, and historically, many Muslim women were not virgins when they were married. Addressing these myths will help your child remove shame around their body and have a healthy sense of sexuality.

Similarly, your child must internalize the fact that the



Reflection

- What are some cultural messages about puberty and sex that make you uncomfortable? What are some that you agree with?

The Guide

same way that one's body is not. Similarly, it is important that your child internalizes the fact that, just as one's body is not inherently shameful, it is also not inherently dirty. Certain cultural traditions imply that a menstruating person is dirty. However, while menstrual blood is expelled from the body during menstruation, this does not mean that its origin, the body, is impure. A menstruating individual is only ritually impure, meaning they are exempt from performing specific acts of worship until the ritually impure state is lifted through ghusl (ritual bath). Another way to look at this time of the month is that since God ordained that certain forms of worship should not be performed while menstruating, the act of obeying God is an act of worship in itself.

The best example to demonstrate this distinction is to compare menstruation—a natural, monthly, bodily process that most people with uteruses experience after they reach puberty—to urination and defecation, a natural, daily, bodily process that everyone experiences. We have guidelines for using the bathroom—we close the door, and we practice a certain level of privacy and modesty.

Yet, we still acknowledge it as a naturally occurring process.

Unfortunately, there is a stigma and shame associated with menstruation that is not comparable to other bodily functions. Specifically, this shame and stigma lead many Muslim youth to hide the fact that they are menstruating from the men in their lives, sometimes even being encouraged (or expected) to fake prayer and fake fasting, despite being lawfully excused from observing those rituals. The result of this approach is two-fold. First, we are more likely to lie than to be straightforward by saying, “I’m excused from praying and fasting today,” out of fear that others will feel uncomfortable. Second, we are cultivating a sense of shame and ignorance around something that is a natural part of life. Shame-



Conversation starter (puberty+)

- Many menstruators may feel familial or communal pressure to “fake” pray or fast so that other people do not know they are menstruating. This is an example of treating menstruation as if it is something shameful. Just as we are private, but unashamed about going to the bathroom, we can be private but unashamed about menstruating. What are some ways we can be better about making this distinction?

based approaches like these are problematic because they lead to a child feeling blameworthy for something that is a natural part of life, and more importantly, discourage them from asking questions or seeking help when they are struggling. The safer your child feels discussing reproductive health topics with you, the more you can facilitate increasing their knowledge and understanding of related information that still honors your family norms.



Having “the talk” with your child as a Muslim parent can be challenging, but it’s not impossible. With adequate preparation, you can become equipped to impart knowledge and have critical conversations with your child. While many parents may avoid having conversations on sex and sexuality with their children because they are embarrassed or don’t know how to begin, it is more important now than ever to commit to this discourse. Failing to do so risks the health of our future families and communities. If young people are not informed about their bodies and healthy relationships, they are not equipped to identify sexual health problems or when they are being abused, and they don’t know where to get help. We hope this guide is helpful and wish you and your families many years of OPEN conversations.

Space for Reflection

Appendix A

References

Ahmed, Sameera et al. "Prevalence of Risk Behaviors Among U.S. Muslim College Students." *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, 2014, 8(1): 5-19. Available at <http://bit.ly/RiskBehaviors>

Ali-Faisal, S.F. "Crossing Sexual Barriers: The Influence of Background Factors and Personal Attitudes on Sexual Guilt and Sexual Anxiety Among Canadian and American Muslim Women and Men." Doctoral Dissertation, 2014. Available at:

<http://bit.ly/CrossingSexualBarriers> Boonstra, Heather. "Sex Education: Another Big Step Forward - And a Step Back."

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About Sexual Violence. Sexual Violence Prevention. January 23, 2024. Accessed August 31, 2026. <https://www.cdc.gov/sexual-violence/about/index.html>

HEART To Grow: www.hearttogrow.org

Deptula, D. P., Henry, D. B., & Schoeny, M. E. (2010). How can parents make a difference? Longitudinal associations with adolescent sexual behavior. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 24(6), 731-739. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021760>

Guttmacher Institute. (2025, April). Federally funded sex education: Strengthening and expanding evidence-based programs. Guttmacher Institute. <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/sex-education>

Inanc, H., Meckstroth, A., Keating, B., Adamek, K., Zaveri, H., O'Neil, S., McDonald, K., & Ochoa, L. (2020). Factors Influencing Youth Sexual Activity: Conceptual Models for Sexual Risk Avoidance and Cessation. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/factors-influencing-youth-sexual-activity-dec-2020_0.pdf

Mittone, D., Hulsey, L., & Murphy, L. (2023). PREP studies of performance measures and adulthood preparation subjects PMAPS fact sheet: 2020- 2021 performance measures background. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://prepeval.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/PMAPS-2020-2021-Fact-Sheet_508.pdf

Orgocka, Aida. "Perceptions of Communication and Education About Sexuality Among Muslim Immigrant Girls in the U.S." *Sex Education* 2004, 4(3): 225-271.

UNESCO. (2018). International Technical Guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach. UNESCO. [Unesco.Org.](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260770)
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260770>

Appendix B

Resources

Heart to Grow's Resource Library: <https://hearttogrow.org/resource-library/>. A virtual resource library with resources on sexual and reproductive health across the lifespan.

Reproductive Agency Honoring Impacted Muslims (RAHIM): rahim.hearttogrow.org

SIECUS State Sex Ed Profiles: <https://siecus.org/siecus-state-profiles/>

The Sex Talk: A Muslim's Guide to Healthy Sex & Relationships.

I'm Muslim And I Might Not Be Straight: <https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Im-Muslim-I-Might-Not-Be-Straight.pdf>. A resource for LGBTQ Muslims.

The Village Auntie: @villageauntie on Instagram & Lights on w/ Angelica Lindsey-Ali on The Amaliah Podcast. Educator on sexual intimacy, sensuality, and spirituality.

Appendix C

Consent Exercise Answer Key

A cousin asks if he can hug you. You don't say yes, but you don't say no. Have you given consent?

No. Unless you give him a clear affirmative that he can hug you, you have not given him consent. If cultural expectations are that you hug people, elders acknowledge those expectations while maintaining that it is your right not to do so if you don't feel comfortable. If you're comfortable, you may provide alternatives to the behavior don't want to consent to (i.e., a high-five or a handshake, but it's important to remember that it is fine to refuse any kind of contact at all.

You and a friend are at an amusement park, and your friend is wearing shorts. A bunch of guys start catcalling and making inappropriate comments, and your mom whispers that your friend deserves it given the way she was dressed. Did they give consent to getting such attention based on their clothes?

No. This line of thinking is victim-blaming, taking away the blame from the offender and placing the responsibility on the victim. The assailants chose to act in that manner. Actions or style of dress are never invitations for harassment.

You sent your friend a photo of yourself trying on a new dress, which she decided to forward to your latest crush. You are upset, but she's telling you to lighten up; it wasn't a big deal. Did you give consent?

No. Another person cannot consent to an action involving you on your behalf. Though the picture in question wasn't sexually explicit, it is important to note that teenagers and young adults often circulate sexually explicit photos of others among their friends and peer networks. Circulating sexually explicit photos of someone without their permission is a federal crime.

For parents: Explain to your child that if they receive a sexually explicit photo, they should delete it right away and tell a trusted adult. If a photo of theirs is shared without their permission (leaked), they should also tell an adult, who can pursue legal action.

You've just arrived for a job interview and as you greet the representatives for the company you smile and extend your hand, indicating a handshake. Did you give consent?

Yes. Consent is not always verbal. In an ideal world, we would all give verbal consent all the time to prevent confusion, but the reality is that consent can be nonverbal, as well. Non-verbal signs of consent include reaching in for contact, moving toward the other person, smiling, and open body language. In this scenario, the one reaching out for the handshake is the one initiating contact, which also means they are also responsible for seeing whether the other person is consenting.

A neighbor asks if you can stay with him while his parents are gone, you don't want to say yes, but he threatens you that he will tell your parents about the time you snuck out. So you reluctantly head over. Did you consent?

No. Consent is not given when one person feels coerced into saying yes or not saying no (i.e. threatened, pressured, tricked, manipulated, blackmailed). This does not matter if it is a person of authority or not. Coercion exists if the person requesting an act holds some sort of authority (spiritual, institutional, etc), over the other person due to their hierarchical positioning. In these cases, coercion is considered to exist even without explicit threats, pressuring, manipulation, or blackmail. Simply being the person in authority is enough to tip the power scales, creating an environment of implicit pressure, making consent not possible.

Your friend went to a party last night and drank a few beers. She says she wasn't drunk, but can't remember what happened with the football player that night. Did she give consent?

No. You cannot give informed consent under the influence of intoxicants. It also does not excuse sexual violence if the football player was intoxicated; just as someone who is under the influence can be held responsible for driving a car.

Your friend was on a date and was holding hands with her boyfriend. He asked if he could kiss her and she said yes. While they were kissing, he slipped his hand under her shirt. Your friend is upset because she thinks he crossed a line. Did she give consent?

She gave consent to be kissed but not for him to slip his hand under her shirt. Giving consent once does not blanket consent for every act moving forward. As a young person, it is important for you to know your personal boundaries and to have them respected. Expecting that boundaries will be crossed normalizes sexual violence and makes it easier for perpetrators to offend, as their actions have become justified. Even though sexual activity before marriage is not allowed, it is still important that boundaries are respected to help break the cycle of sexual violence.

Your friend takes a picture in a bikini and uploads it to their instagram page. A group of boys from their highschool use AI to remove the bikini and circulate the picture online. Your friend is devastated. Did they consent?

No. Using generative AI to undress someone is a severe and unethical violation of privacy. If this happens to you or someone you know, tell a trusted adult for support.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS This guide was originally written by Nadiah Mohajir, Alia Azmat, and Vanessa Parvez, and was updated by Rayen Syed (research updates), Amatallah Saulawa (research and content updates, editing, and design), Navila Rashid (content updates), Nadiah Mohajir (content updates and editing), and Sabreen Mohammed (editing).

