

Let's talk:

Building Understanding and Compassion with Your Children



Shutting down questions only leads to children trying to find the answers elsewhere. Today, we often use the internet to seek answers, but it can be hard to know whether we're finding useful resources, or harmful, misleading or inaccurate information. Social media can be a particularly challenging space to navigate, as anyone can share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions without them being regulated or backed up with evidence.

Ensuring your children have access to accurate information safely is important, so having conversations with them will eliminate Google searches that may or may not be providing truthful information.

It can be hard knowing where to start when talking to your children, especially about sensitive topics or issues that might be considered taboo in some contexts.

Below are some top tips, conversation starters, and websites to support you to have safe and meaningful conversations with your children.

Top tips

Use body language

Using your body language in conversation is key. Maintaining eye contact, smiling, and having an open posture will go a long way in ensuring your child feels comfortable talking to you.

Be positive

Sometimes children may say something that you find amusing, but don't laugh at them as this may discourage them from opening up further. Be encouraging, let them decide when and where the conversation ends, and what they're comfortable talking about.

Be a language role model

Don't shy away from using the correct terminology in discussions; it is key to increasing understanding. Using anatomical language and accurate terminology keeps

children safer, as if they ever need to report sexual bullying or abuse, they'll know exactly what to say and you'll understand exactly what they're telling you. Ensure you explain any new words used in conversations so that they can be used in the correct context. Equipping your children with the right language will support your children to express their observations and concerns in conversations at school and beyond.

Listen actively

When having meaningful conversations, it is important to show that you care about what the other person is saying. Don't strike up conversations whilst either of you is busy, to avoid distractions. Try not to interrupt or interrogate your child, but instead, listen intently. It is okay not to respond to everything they say, but it is important to listen to everything they say.

Be honest about what you don't know

It's okay not to have all the answers for your children during these conversations. There may be certain questions they ask that would involve you doing some of your own research. It's important to share up-to-date and informed knowledge with your child, so taking some time to do your research is important. You could even do some research together and learn alongside your child, making it a fun activity and an experience you can share.

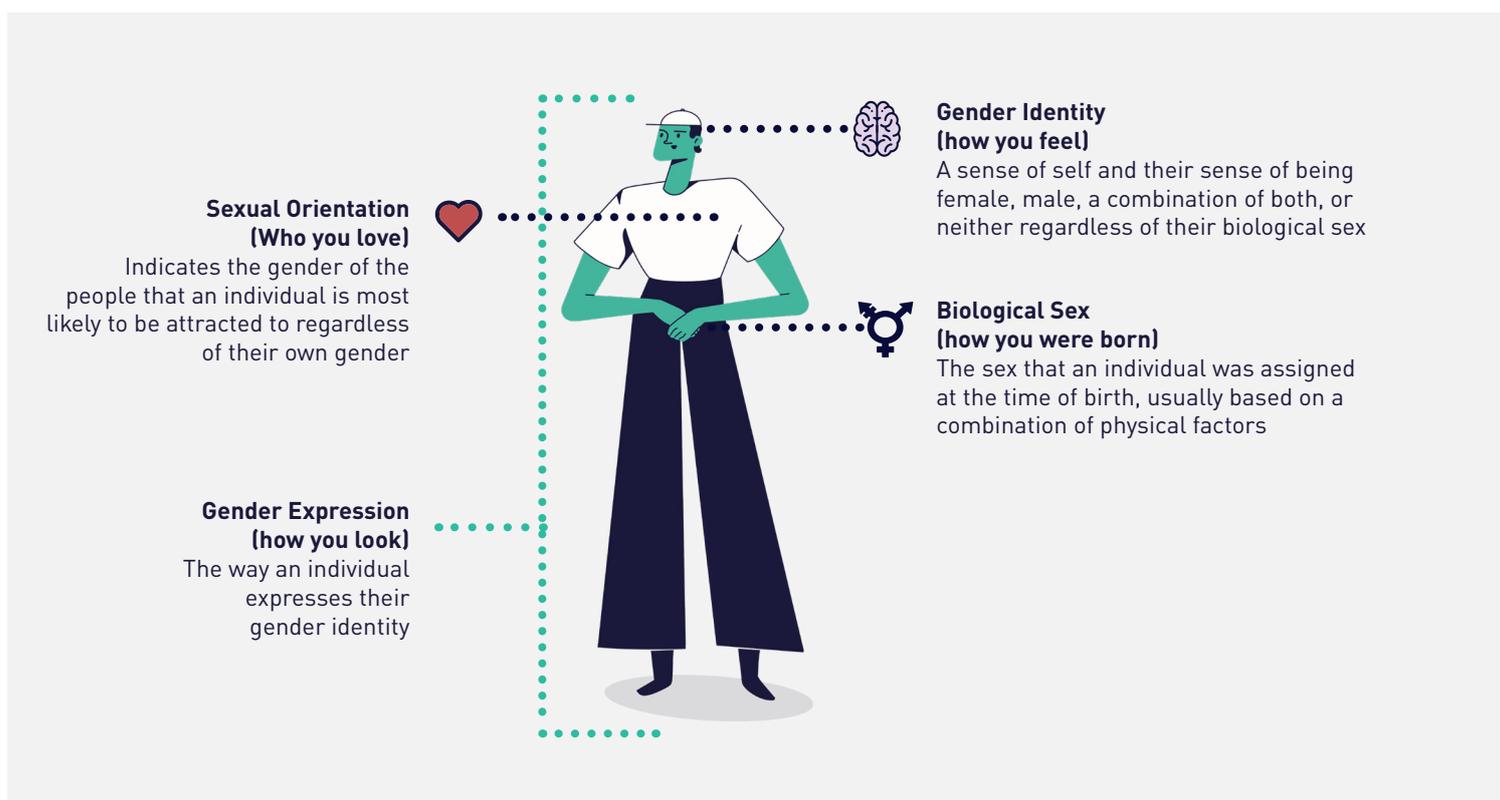
Challenge your own beliefs

You may have your own preconceptions and beliefs about different topics and sometimes those views can be pushed onto others. Talking to people with different experiences and worldviews is a great way of opening up our perspectives on issues. Reading, podcasts, and conversations with people from different backgrounds are wonderful starting points.



Conversation Starters

Use the questions listed below as a starting point for conversations about consent, gender and sexuality with your children. The 'understanding gender' image below is a useful point of reference, or as a conversation starter of its own.



Discuss this image together. You might both learn something!

Consent, boundaries and bodies

- **What can you tell me about consent? What does the word mean to you?** This is an important topic that I would like to talk about with you.
- **Do you know what boundaries mean?** Let's talk about how you can set boundaries with people.
- **If someone touched you without you wanting them to, who could you tell?**
- Everyone's bodies are different, and some people even change the way their bodies look if they don't feel comfortable in their own skin. **Have you ever noticed that people's bodies are different from yours?**
- **As you get older your body will go through some changes, is there anything that you would like to know about this?**
- **Do you know what upskirting is?** This is a very serious thing, and it would be great to talk about what it means with you.
- **Have you ever heard people say inappropriate comments to others about their bodies?**
How do you think this made them feel?
How can we challenge these behaviours?

Gender and sexuality

- **Do you know the difference between sex and gender?**
- Historically, some genders have been seen as weaker than others, **how can we ensure that everyone is included and given equal opportunities?**
- **Do you know what the LGBTQ+ community is?** Let's talk about this community and all the different people who are a part of it.
- **Some people get bullied for being part of the LGBTQ+ community. How would you support them?**



Reflection

After having these meaningful conversations with your children, it is important to reflect on what was discussed. Were there any misconceptions that arose? Is there any research you need to do to give your child more informed information? Who else could you talk to in order to learn more about the topics you may be unfamiliar with?

Having conversations about the world and the people in it, whether it be related to the topics discussed in this guide, or beyond, know that having any conversation is better than having no conversation at all. Continue to foster lifelong curiosity and a trusting relationship between you and your child. These conversations are not just a one-time 'birds and the bees' talk. Staying in touch with what your child is learning during their RSE/PSHE lessons is a great way to continue the conversation at home!

Trusted websites for you to find out more

The websites listed below are for you to find out more about consent, boundaries, bodies, gender, sexuality, and much more! Ensuring your own knowledge is sound before diving into a conversation will help you be best equipped to talk to your children. It is for you to decide when it is appropriate to discuss these topics with your children.

- <https://fumble.org.uk/>
(Created by young people, for young people)
- <https://www.millyevans.com/>
- <https://www.brook.org.uk/>
- <https://amaze.org/>
- <https://www.scarleteen.com/>
- <https://splitbanana.co.uk/>
- <https://www.popnolly.com/about>

We're proud to be the only charity set up in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales, and her belief that young people have the power to change the world. It's a big mission but there are two things within it that we focus our charity's efforts on – young people and change.

Throughout all of our programmes and initiatives, 'change' for and by young people is central, including our anti-bullying work which encourages change in attitudes and behaviours.

We hope you found this resource useful and wish you all the best in your anti-bullying journey. If you would like to help us create more resources and train even more Anti-Bullying Ambassadors, you can make a £5 donation by texting CHANGE 5 to 70470 or visit diana-award.org.uk/donate

Give us feedback on this resource:
<https://tinyurl.com/ab-feedback>



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