

TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT DIFFICULT SUBJECTS

Sometimes children ask us questions that make us uncomfortable and we are not sure how to answer. The topics of the children's questions that we dread most are often the same ones many of us were taught to avoid talking about: sexuality, drugs, religion, politics, war and human suffering.

There was a time when there was a separation between the world of adults and the world of children. Children were not even aware of these topics until they reached adolescence. Those days are no longer. Due, in part to the media, today's children are exposed to just about everything.

So, as a parent, you must be prepared to guide your children through an increasingly complex world. Here are some tips to help you when your child asks questions that give you pause:

- First off, breathe. Collect your thoughts if you have not had a lot of experience talking about these subjects.
- It is okay to say "I don't know" or "let's find the answer to your question together, in a book or on the internet." Don't feel like your child needs you to be an expert on every subject.
- Ask your child questions to determine why they are interested and how much they already understand. Give them just enough "developmentally appropriate" information until they feel their question was answered.
- Don't feel like you need to explain every aspect of a subject. Trust that more opportunities will arise to revisit topics with your child.

Strive to protect your child from adult information – turn off the television (especially the news), heed ratings for movies and videogames, be aware of your grown-up conversations when your child is in the room. Remember, you cannot completely shield your growing child from the world. Protect your child from the world, but also teach your child how to live in it.