

Elements of Healthy Sexuality

Children and young people with disabilities have the same sexual needs and feelings as anyone else and have the same right to be given accurate information about their bodies and sexuality. When teaching about sexuality it is important to include the following skills and information.

In order to ensure that sexuality education is effective:

- Provide information suitable for both physical and social maturity;
- Modify information for young people with disabilities which affect communication or learning;
- Discuss the impact of physical disabilities on sexual development and activity.

It is important for adults to:

- Model healthy relationship skills;
- Be open to sharing information about sexuality.

***General Information on Age-appropriate Topics**

{Adapted from Maksym, Diane (1990). Shared Feelings: A Parent Guide to Sexuality Education for Children, Adolescents and Adults Who Have a Mental Handicap. North York: The Roeher Institute.}

3-9 years of age:

- Difference between boys and girls
- Parts of the body
- Public and private places and behaviours
- Ways to recognize and say no to inappropriate touching
- How babies are made
- Masturbation

10-15 years of age:

- Menstruation, wet dreams and other changes during puberty
- Sexual feelings
- Sexual orientation
- Building and maintaining relationships

16 years of age and older:

- The difference between sex and love
- Responsibilities of sexual relationships
- Responsibilities of parenting
- Laws and consequences of inappropriately touching others