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Relationships – What's the go?

Relationships are an important part of life. They can be fun and give you comfort, support and security. It's good to have lots of different types of relationships.

"The relationship that I have with my family is loving and positive. They support all that I do and all that I am."
(Katie, 17)

Know yourself

Some relationships come and go and others will remain for a lifetime. The relationship you have with yourself is the most important. Many things make you who you are. Your values, beliefs, culture, experiences, relationships, identity, sexuality, thoughts and feelings are just a few! Figuring out what makes you who you are and what's important to you can help you understand and express what you want and need from your relationships with others. Knowing what you're comfortable with physically and emotionally can help you feel confident about the choices you make.

Sexuality and identity are about how you feel about your body and how you choose to express these feelings. Both sexuality and identity can change over time as you develop and grow. Remember, only you can chose how you identify or define your sexuality as it should be what feels right for you and makes you happy.

Family

As you get older, your relationship with family will change and you will probably become more independent. Talking to family members you trust about what's happening in your life is a good thing.

Friends

Friends are people you can talk to and share your feelings and experiences with. Sometimes you might argue or want to spend time apart for a while, but friends are people who make you feel good when you're with them. It's great to have special people that you're close to, but it's important that friendships don't stop you from making new friends or being yourself. It's also OK to spend time on your own.

Intimate relationships

Sometimes you might become attracted to someone. You might want to spend more time with them and think about them in a sexual way. Sometimes that person will feel the same way, but sometimes they won't.

If people are attracted to each other, they might decide to have a closer or intimate relationship. Both people need to talk about how they feel and how the relationship will work best for them.

A healthy intimate relationship shouldn't get in the way of your other relationships with friends and family. Try to balance your time between your different relationships.





Healthy relationships

A healthy relationship is one of mutual respect, trust, good communication, understanding and honesty. Being in a relationship should be a positive experience for both people. This is particularly important when starting an intimate relationship.

"I feel like I'm in a healthy relationship. My partner listens to me and respects my decisions." (Jamie, 22)

A healthy relationship includes:

- Having fun together
- Having respect for yourself and your partner
- Feeling comfortable
- Being able to say 'no' and making your own decisions
- Feeling accepted and free to be yourself
- Listening and being heard
- Expressing your thoughts and feelings honestly with each other
- Being able to talk things through together and make compromises
- Supporting each other through the good times and bad.

Let's start talking...

Communication is the key to a healthy relationship. It helps to make sure you both want and expect the same things. Talk and listen to one another – remember your partner can't read your mind!

You might talk about the positive things, but you should also try to bring up difficult topics if you need to.

In a healthy relationship you should be able to discuss how you feel free of judgment from your partner. For example, if your partner does something that upsets you, talk to them about it. Try not to hold it in.

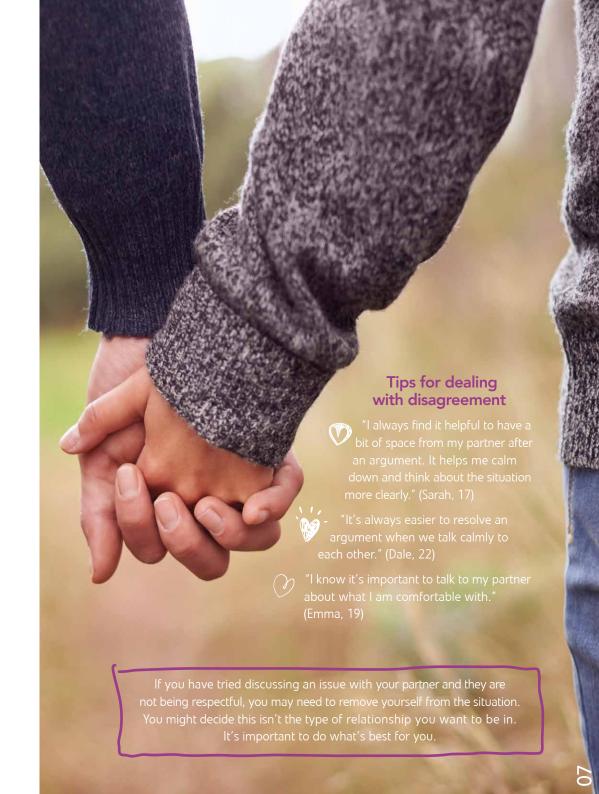
Your partner won't know how you feel unless you tell them, and it's good to talk about things that have upset you.

Dealing with disagreements

Disagreements or arguments can still happen in a healthy relationship.

This is also healthy and helps you learn about and understand each other.

Try and deal with conflict at the time that it happens. This helps to manage differences and come to an agreement.





Feeling safe

It's important to know that you may not always experience healthy relationships.

As you learn about one another, you may come across things that you don't agree on or that are frustrating. Think about whether it's something you want to work out, or if you think it will continue to cause problems in your relationship.

You may find yourself in a relationship with someone who says they care for you but actually makes you feel anxious, afraid or upset. You may have strong feelings for them, but their behaviour towards you is unsafe. This behaviour can be harmful to your emotional and physical health, and can often get worse the longer you stay in the relationship.

Keep safe by identifying the warning signs of an unsafe relationship. This information can also be helpful if you have a friend experiencing an unsafe relationship.

> If you do not feel safe, please call 000

Emotional

- · Constantly teasing, bullying, insulting or humiliating you
- Threatening to harm you
- Being obsessively jealous
- Isolating you from friends/family

Physical

- · Hitting or pushing you, pulling your hair
- Injuring you with objects/weapons
- Attempted choking/strangulation
- Throwing objects or punching the wall
- Denying you access to medical care, including contraception

Social

- · Always checking up on you to know where you are - including checking your emails, phone and social media
- Controlling and preventing who you see, where you go and what you do
- Stalking you by repeatedly calling, texting, watching and /or following you

Unsafe behaviour

Examples of unsafe behaviour that intimate partners might display are included below. Remember, unsafe behaviours can happen in a number of ways. Sometimes they are obvious, but other times they are subtle.

Verbal

- Calling you names
- Harassing you over the phone
- Shouting or swearing at you

Financial

- Taking your money or always asking for money
- Forcing you to buy them things
- Not letting you have access to your money
- Pressuring or forcing you to work or not to work

Who can you talk to?

- Trusted adult e.g. teacher, parent/ carer, relative, youth worker
- eheadspace eheadspace.org.au or call 1800 650 890
- In an emergency situation call 000

- Any forced or unwanted sexual behaviour, including kissing, touching or having sex with you without consent
- Pressuring you to send sexual texts and images of yourself or sharing these images with others without your consent
- Forcing you to watch pornography
- Pressuring you to not use contraception, or lying to you about using contraception

Remember...

...you have the right to choose to be in any relationship, and this includes the choice to leave. If you, or someone you know, are experiencing unsafe behaviour or abuse there are people who can help.

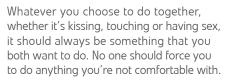
Many of these unsafe behaviours are considered to be partner (or domestic) violence. If someone is hurting you or making you feel unsafe, please seek help by calling 1800 RESPECT (1800respect.org.au).





Thinking about sex?

It can be enjoyable spending time with your partner, getting to know them and experiencing new feelings. There are heaps of ways to have a good time and show your partner that you care about them.



Both you and your partner need to feel emotionally and physically ready and sure about your decision to have sex.

Ready or not?

Having sex for the first time (or with a new partner) is a big decision and may make you feel nervous, anxious, excited or confused.

Sex can mean different things for different people. Some people feel that it's an extremely personal and intimate experience. For others it might just be about the physical experience. People's views on sex can be influenced by lots of different things including personal or family values, religion, the media and personal experiences.

You might want to consider a few things before you start having sex:

- Is this something YOU want to do?
 Do you feel excited about it? Or more anxious about it?
- Do you feel safe with the person you're thinking about having sex with?
- Consent is sex something you and your partner have discussed and do you both feel comfortable and ready for it?
- Safe sex do you know how to protect yourself from sexually transmissible infections (STIs)?
- Contraception do you know how to avoid unplanned pregnancy?

Check out bodytalk.org.au for more info on safe sex.



Negotiating safe sex

If you're ready, discuss safe sex with your partner. It might feel awkward but, in most cases, your partner is probably wondering how to bring it up with you too! In a healthy relationship your partner will respect you for taking care of your health and theirs. You may be surprised by how much both the emotional and physical parts of your relationship will benefit.

- First of all, gain consent make sure you and your partner agree and feel comfortable about what you're going to do together.
- Then, talk about how you're going to prevent STIs, getting tested and using condoms and/or dams.
- If you're in a heterosexual relationship (girl and guy), talk about what contraception you will use to prevent unplanned pregnancy.

The more prepared and comfortable you are about safe sex, the easier it will be to discuss it with your partner.

Things like having condoms/dams already with you, and knowing how to use them, can make you feel more confident about having safe sex.





Yes! Keep going! That feels great!

Consent is when one person agrees or gives permission to another person to do something. It means agreeing to something based on your knowledge and understanding of what's involved, possible consequences and having the option of saying 'no'.

I'm not sure... I'm not comfortable... Umm...

No! I want to stop. I don't want to.

Consent is really important when it comes to sex. Everyone needs to feel safe and comfortable every step of the way.

Legal stuff

It's important to be sure that the person you're with is consenting to any sexual activity. Sexual activity without consent (anything from touching and kissing to oral, vaginal or anal sex) is against the law. If someone is forcing you to do something that you are not OK with, there are places to go for help. A good place to start is by phoning 1800 RESPECT or talking to someone online at 1800respect.org.au

There are many legal issues around sex and consent. In NSW the legal age of consent for sexual activity is 16. These laws vary between states. To find out more about the laws in your state visit lawstuff.org.au

Negotiating consent

The only way to know if someone has given consent is if they tell you. It's not always easy to let people know that you don't want something to happen. Sometimes the person you're with might look like they're happy doing something, but on the inside they're not. They might not know what to say or are scared to tell you to stop. The best ways to find out if someone is comfortable or uncomfortable with any situation, especially a sexual one, is simply to ask.

Try saying:

- 'Are you ok with this?'
- 'What would make you comfortable?'
- 'Is there anything that you don't want to do?'
- \bullet 'Do you want to stop?'
- 'Do you want to go further?

Recognising non-verbal communication

There are many ways of communicating.
The look on someone's face and their body language are also a way of communicating how they feel. Some non-verbal ways of communicating comfort level are:

Comfortable signs

- Actively touching, kissing, hugging
- Pulling you closer
- Relaxed body and facial expressions
- Laughing/giggling
- Enthusiastic noises
- Responding to your touch

Uncomfortable signs

- Pushing you away
- Holding their arms tightly around their body
- Turning away from you or hiding their face
- Uncomfortable or painful facial expressions
- Stiffening muscles
- Not responding to your touch

When negotiating consent, it is important to look out for both verbal and non-verbal responses. You may ask your partner questions and listen carefully to their responses but also be aware of their body language. This will help you identify when your partner is either comfortable or uncomfortable in the situation.

If you get a negative response or uncertain answer to any of your questions, or if your partner's body language is showing uncomfortable signs, stop what you are doing and talk to them about it. They may not be ready or they may have changed their mind – that's totally OK – and you need to respect their decision.



Consent needs to be gained every time, even if you've had sex before. If someone withdraws their consent,

STOP what you are doing.

Respect their decision.



Kissing doesn't always lead to sex

There are different types of intimacy, like holding hands, writing love notes, sexting/Snapchats, kissing, hugging, massaging and having sex. Different people will be keen to do and try different things. Kissing and getting intimate doesn't always lead to sex.

It's important to communicate how you're feeling about what you want (and don't want) to do. Every time you engage in intimate or sexual activity it's really important that you and the person you're with are comfortable with what's happening.

Everyone has the right to say 'no' and everyone has the right to change their mind at any time and take things slower or to stop altogether.

"My partner didn't want things to move too fast, so we went on some double dates with other friends." (Sam, 19)

Slowing things down

Things can move fast sometimes. Below are some ways you can slow things down if you feel they are moving too quickly:

- 'I don't want to go any further'
- 'Can we stay like this for a while?'
- 'Can we take it slow?'
- 'I want to make sure that I'm ready'

Stopping

These are some things you can say if you want to stop:

- 'No'
- 'I want to stop'
- 'I don't feel comfortable'
- 'I need to go to the toilet'

Drugs, alcohol and consent

Drugs and alcohol can affect a person's ability to make decisions including whether or not they want to be sexual with someone else. If someone is really 'out of it' they cannot give consent. Being with them in a sexual way when they don't know what's going on is sexual assault and against the law.

Looking out for your mates

Sometimes you may need to help a friend out who's in an unsafe situation. If you see somebody you know who is 'out of it' and being intimate with someone, check in on them and try your best to make sure they are safe and understand what they are doing. If you see someone you know with the 'out of it' person, try to pull them aside and stop them from potentially doing something illegal.







Sexting

Sending nude or sexual images, Snapchats or videos is sometimes called sexting. Someone might choose to do this as a way to flirt with the person they are sending the image to.

If both people are over 18 and consenting, sexting can be a fun and intimate thing to do. However, it involves a lot of trust. There are a few things to think about before you decide whether sexting is for you and, if so, how to stay safe.

Things to consider

- Do you know the laws are around sexting?
- Do you have complete trust that the person you're sending the image to will keep it to themselves?
- What would happen if you broke up with your partner? How would you feel about that person having a nude or sexual image of you?
- How would you feel if the nude or sexual image was seen by anyone other than the person you sent it to?

Sexting and the law

In Australia, it's not against the law to participate in sexting if the sender and the receiver of the nude or sexual image are both over 18. Consent to the image being sent and received is also required.

Check out bodytalk.org.au/sexting for more info.

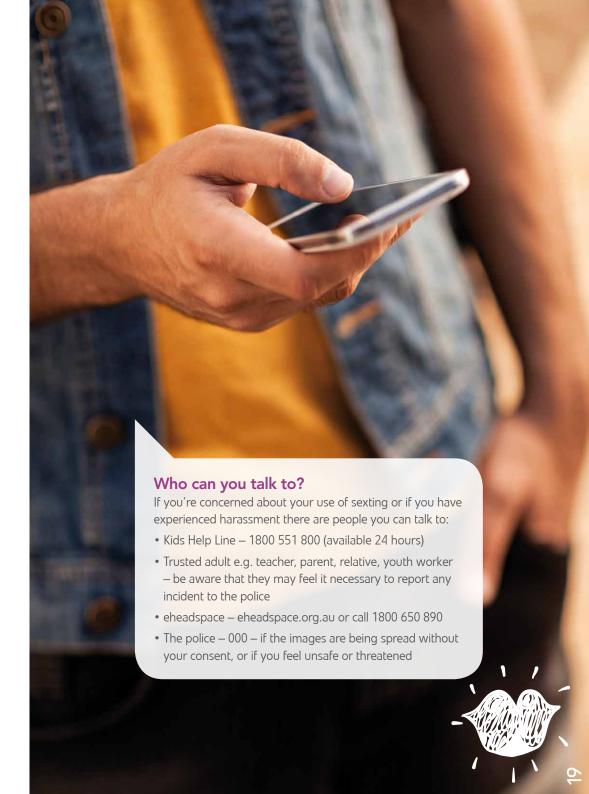
However, it's considered harassment and a crime to:

- ★ Pass on a nude or sexual image of someone without their permission
- ✗ Pressure someone to send you a nude or sexual image of themselves
- ★ Take a nude or sexual image of someone without their consent
- ✗ Use a nude or sexual image of someone as a way to threaten or force them to do something they don't want to do
- ✗ Post a nude or sexual image online of someone (e.g. an ex-partner) as a way to humiliate them
- Send a nude or sexual image to someone (or of someone) as a joke, prank or to intimidate them

In Australia, a nude or sexual image of someone under the age of 18 is considered child pornography. This means that you could get in serious legal trouble if:

- You're under 18 and you send a nude or sexual image (including one of yourself)
- You receive a nude or sexual image of someone under 18
- You pass on a nude or sexual image of someone under 18 (even if it's of yourself)

It's important to know your rights and responsibilities if you're going to sext.





Pornography

Sexual images and videos intended to arouse and excite are called pornography or porn.

There are many reasons why someone might want to view pornography: for education, out of interest, for arousal, to masturbate, to learn how to please their partner or to impress their friends. Some people may choose not to view porn and that's ok too. It's not illegal for someone under the age of 18 to view porn in private.

However, porn is covered by the same classifications law that covers TV, films, video games and other media, so it is usually rated R18+ and can be considered inappropriate for younger people.

It is illegal to show porn to someone else under the age of 18 or to show porn in public. To find out more about porn and the law check out lawstuff.org.au

Check out bodytalk.org.au/pornography for more info.

Porn vs reality

Whether or not you like porn, it's good to remember that porn doesn't always send positive or accurate messages, including:

- bodies may be enhanced
- consent may not appear necessary
- relationships may not be realistically portrayed

Basically, the sex, bodies and relationships shown in porn are fantasy versions of the real world.

Porn can teach people things about sex – some of this might be useful and some might not be including a lot of fake stuff!

Some of the unsafe things in porn include:

- Illegal sex acts child exploitation, animal exploitation, sexual assault
- Unsafe sex no consent, no condom use

Lastly, remember that some people don't like to watch porn or do the things that are shown in porn. Different people like different types of sex, so always check with your partner before you try something new.

SOME OF THE BIG FAIRES IN PORN



- No consent
- No ongoing communication
- Everyone wants to have sex with everyone else



The bodies

- Photoshopped genitals
- Altered labia
- Enlarged penises
- Fake breasts
- Complete removal of hair

The sex

- Instant erection
- Fake orgasms
- Limited foreplay
- Certain sex acts or positions shown as common simple and pleasurable for everyone





Online relationships

Online dating websites and apps are really popular ways to meet new people or partners.

Lots of people have positive experiences with meeting people online, but it's important to remember a few things before you meet up with someone in order to keep yourself safe and protect your privacy.

Here are some tips to help you avoid scams and risky situations:

- Don't share or display personal information such as your last name, address or where you go to school or work.
- Be choosy about who you contact, add, 'friend' or give your details to because some profiles may not be genuine.
- First impressions online can be very different to meeting someone in person so don't give away your whole life story in the first chat. Take your time getting to know them.
- Trust your instincts and immediately stop communicating with anyone that makes you feel uncomfortable. Block and/or report the user to the dating site – there's no need to feel embarrassed about it.

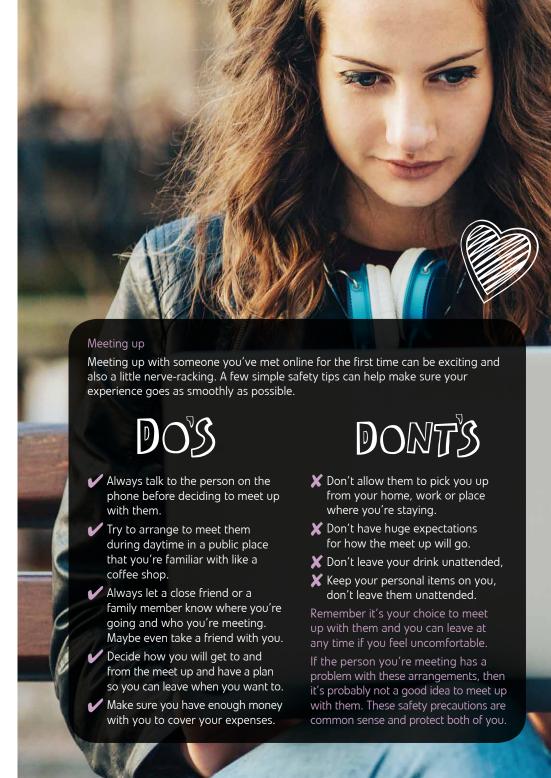
 Be wary of anyone requesting money or any personal bank details.
 Always keep your information private and stop contact immediately with anyone suspicious.

People use dating websites for many reasons (e.g. to meet new people, make new friends, find a relationship, casual dating, for a fling/hook up) so it's important to be upfront and clear about what you're looking for.

Remember to keep socialising offline with friends and family!

If you're worried about how much time you spend online you can talk to Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800.

You can also have a look on: reachout.com or eheadspace.org.au





Break ups

Just about all of us will experience a break up (or a few) at some point in our lives. Sometimes a break up can be a good thing and may bring a feeling of relief if the relationship was making you unhappy.

Or sometimes it can be a shock and not something you wanted or were ready for. Regardless of how the relationship ended, chances are you will feel sad or miss parts of being in a relationship. You can both experience a range of feelings such as guilt, confusion, fear, rejection, loneliness, denial, shock or even relief and joy! There is no right or wrong way to feel after a break up — it will be different for everyone and for each break up.

Being single

Sometimes it can take time to adjust to being single again and it may seem daunting. There is nothing wrong with being single. Take time to do things that make you happy – spend time with friends and family and keep yourself busy with activities you enjoy to help take your mind off the break up.

Moving on

It can be especially hard when one of you moves on with someone else before the other. This can stir up lots of difficult feelings. It's important not to pester your ex or try to harm their new relationship – it won't make you feel any better in the long run. Things will gradually become easier with time and distance from your ex can help the process.

"I remember being upset after my breakup, but after hanging out with my friends and talking about it, I realised it wasn't the end of the world." (Alex, 17)

Some important things to remember when going through a break up:

- There is nothing wrong with you this just wasn't the right relationship. Lots of people break up and there's nothing to be ashamed of.
- It's better not to be in a relationship at all than to be in a bad one or in one where the other person doesn't feel the same way as you do.
- It's ok and normal to feel hurt, angry or to miss the other person, even if you were the one that broke things off.
- These feelings won't last forever. Give yourself some time to get over the loss of the relationship, but remember, you have so much more in your life to look forward to.
- Try to look at the positives in the break up – it's a good opportunity to learn more about yourself and what you really want in future relationships.





Talking with a parent

Talking with a parent, carer or another trusted adult about relationships and sex can be super awkward, but it can also be helpful when you need advice.

Remember, they were young once too and also had to make sexual choices. You might be surprised at how much they know about this stuff!

Starting the conversation

Your parent may be embarrassed, supportive, surprised, concerned or relieved to hear your questions about sex and relationships.

Whatever their reaction, it's important for you to stay calm and be patient.
Remember, it can be hard for them to get used to the fact that you're growing up.

When you're ready

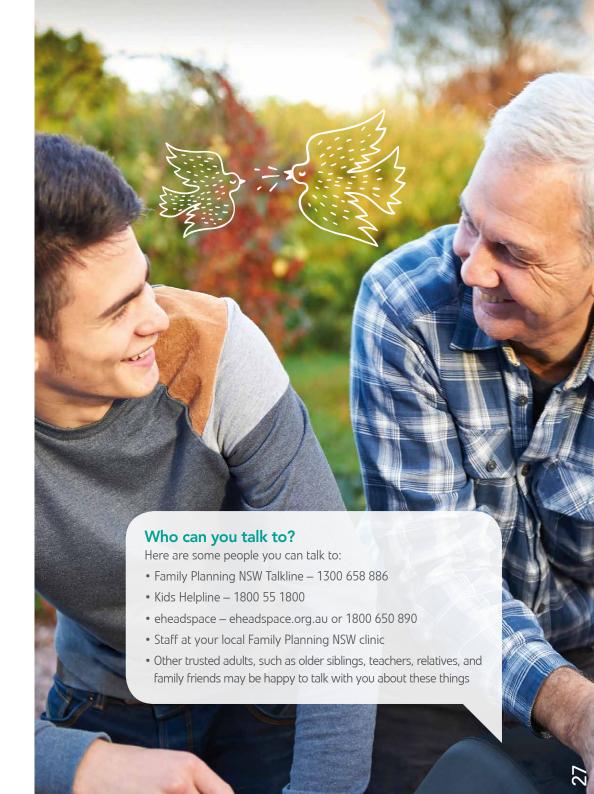
- Pick a time that's not busy so that the conversation won't be rushed.
- Pick a place that is private and comfortable where you won't get interrupted – like your bedroom or in the car.
- Be respectful of your parent's views and accept that you may not agree with all of them.
- Be honest and direct when asking your questions – this is the best way to get the answers you're looking for.
- Listen and allow your parent time to answer your questions – they might have some really great advice.
- Try to have ongoing chats with your parent about sex and sexual health, rather than a big one-off conversation. It will get easier each time.

"We talked about contraception after seeing an ad on TV about it – this made starting the conversation with my mum heaps easier." (Jessie, 16)

Sometimes it's easier to bring these topics up in a 'round about' way. For example, you could try using a TV show or something a teacher said in your PDHPE class at school to lead into the conversation. You can ask your parent what their opinion is of what you heard and then ask further questions from there. It may take a couple of conversations like this before you are ready to talk more specifically about yourself and how you feel.

Who else can you talk to?

Unfortunately, some parents do find it difficult or even impossible to get over their discomfort with talking about sex. If you're very concerned about your parent's reaction you might choose to put off this conversation until you feel you and your parent are more ready. Or maybe your parents aren't around. In these cases, you could turn to another trusted adult, such as an aunt, uncle or family friend.



Family Planning NSW

Family Planning NSW specialises in reproductive and sexual health information and services. Our friendly doctors and nurses can advise you about relationships, safe sex, contraception and more. Family Planning NSW has five clinics around NSW – check out a Family Planning NSW centre near you: fpnsw.org.au

Family Planning NSW Talkline also answers questions about reproductive and sexual health over the phone: Call Talkline on 1300 658 886, 8:30am to 5pm weekdays or by email via the Family Planning NSW website fpnsw.org.au/talkline

Also available in this series are:

- Me, Myself and I: Puberty information for every body
- What Suits Me? Contraception options
- Your Best Defence: Keeping an eye on STIs

Connect with us

Find us for news, information, resources and campaigns. We also share videos, photos and Family Planning NSW events.

f facebook.com/familyplanningnsw

№ @famplanningnsw

Our Facebook page isn't able to give you one-on-one advice. If you need medical advice, please visit one of our clinics or call our Family Planning NSW Talkline.



Contact us



Family Planning NSW, Ashfield

328-336 Liverpool Road, Ashfield NSW 2131 Phone: (02) 8752 4300

Family Planning NSW, Dubbo

2B / 155 Macquarie Street Dubbo NSW 2830 Phone: (02) 6885 1544

Family Planning NSW, Fairfield

24-26 Nelson St Fairfield NSW 2165 Phone: (02) 9754 1322

Family Planning NSW, Hunter

384 Hunter Street Newcastle NSW 2300 Phone: (02) 4929 4485

Family Planning NSW, Penrith

13 Reserve Street Penrith NSW 2750 Phone: (02) 4749 0500

Family Planning NSW Talkline:

1300 658 886 or fpnsw.org.au/talkline

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