



Romantic awakening

Ages 11-12

WHAT IS YOUR CHILD GOING THROUGH?

Sexual awakening refers to curiosity about and an attraction for people of the opposite sex and sometimes of the same sex. This interest generally starts around the age of 9. This awakening is often accompanied by new sensations and contradictory emotions, such as excitement and worry, a desire to seek out other people, as well as embarrassment. So how do children go through this stage?

Psychologically

- They want to please others and get attention: they take care of their appearance, worry about what others think of them, and show off their talents.
- They'll be afraid of making people unhappy, acting awkward, or being ridiculed or rejected.

Emotionally

- They want to be loved.
- They may feel love and attraction for someone of the opposite sex or the same sex.
- They may fall in love with someone: they may feel torn between wanting to keep their feelings a secret and wanting to tell the other person.
- They may want to get close to this person (laugh together, share looks, do the same activities).

Physically

When they are around or think about the person they like:

- They get nervous, feel uncomfortable, feel their pulse quicken.
- They can feel sick or get butterflies in their stomachs.
- They can feel shy.
- They may want to have physical contact with this person (caress them, hold hands, say nice things to them or hug them and kiss them, etc.).

It could also be that your child is not yet interested in love.



Things that kids might be wondering

- What things do girls look for in boys?
- My girlfriends are always talking about boys. Is it normal that I'm not interested in them?
- At what age am I supposed to have a boyfriend?
- Why do my parents always tease me when I talk to a girl?
- I'm a boy and I'm attracted to another boy. Is this normal?

Kids' Space

Write down a question you would like to ask your parents or write what you learned about this topic at school:

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT?

Is your child curious about love and interested in romantic relationships?

Why not talk about someone you were in love with at their age? What did you like about this person? How did you feel when you were around this person? What were your doubts and fears, if you had any?

Is your child showing interest in someone?

Show an interest in what they are experiencing and feeling. Without pushing, ask: What do you like about this person? How do you feel when you are around this person? What do you do together? You'll see that this interest is based on an attraction that is different from what teens and adults feel (your child may think the person is good-looking, popular, funny, has a nice style, etc.). Young people need to feel that adults understand what they are experiencing and how they feel. It's therefore important to respect their feelings without ridiculing or exaggerating them.

Does your child have a boyfriend or girlfriend?

Talk to them about the importance of respecting the other person in a relationship: "It's important to make sure that the other person wants to be with you and wants to do activities with you. You can't force someone to love you and be with you if they don't want to."

Perhaps your child has no opinion on the subject?

Talk to your child about relationships between boys and girls when you were his age. Ask whether things are still like that today.

WHAT CAN HELP YOU?

Family movie

Little Manhattan (2005, 20th Century Fox) "A romantic comedy about life and love through the eyes of a fifth grader."

Book for parents

COPPER-ROYER, Béatrice. *Premiers émois, premières amours. Quelle place pour les parents?*, Éditions Albin Michel, 2007.

Books for young people

MERCIER, Johanne, Reynald CANTIN and Hélène VACHON. *Mon premier baiser*, Les éditions Foulire inc., 2005.

MOUCHET, Nadine, and Valérie COMBES. *Parle-moi d'amour 9-11 ans. L'amour, les copains et moi*, Éditions amaterre, 2008.

Do you need a professional resource?

Call Info-Santé at 811 or the parent help line at 1-800-361-5085.

Tips

Avoid continually asking your child: Do you have a boyfriend? Do you have a girlfriend? This may send the message that they absolutely have to have one. The might not be interested love (they are curious about other things) or they may simply not want to talk about it. Let them go at their own pace.

Take an interest in the relationships your child has with people at school and from their sports or leisure activities. Ask: What do you like about the girls? What do you like about the boys?

Are there people your age who are in love?

What do you think about that?

Are there people your age who are "going out"?

What do you think about that?

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