



As a parent, what type of sex educator are you?

Here is a questionnaire that will help you get the ball rolling.

1. At what point do you want to start talking to your children about sex?

- a) When they start asking me questions.
- b) I don't think I will talk to my child about this.
- c) At important milestones: puberty, first love, etc.
- d) I've talked about it since they were young.

2. Sex is a topic that you and your children talk about:

- a) Regularly.
- b) Occasionally, only when they talk to me about it first.
- c) Once or twice a year, either when I bring it up or they bring it up.
- d) Never. We avoid the topic.

3. One evening, you are watching TV as a family. During the news hour, a journalist reports that a teen was the victim of bullying because other students thought he was gay. The journalist talks about homophobia and ways to eliminate this discrimination. How do you react?

- a) I take the opportunity to ask my child if he has ever witnessed acts of discrimination at school.
- b) I talked to him about this at the start of the school year by explaining that bullying has to be reported.
- c) I keep watching TV without commenting.
- d) I observe how my child reacts to see if he is upset by the report.

4. Since starting high school, your child has been developing hair (face, legs, underarms, pubic hair).

As a parent, what do you do?

- a) I avoid the subject so that my child doesn't feel awkward.
- b) I talked to my child about this puberty-related change before it started: we went shopping together for products like razors, wax and hair removal cream.
- c) I noticed hair growth on my child, and I'm waiting for him to talk to me about it before I suggest shaving/hair removal.
- d) My child asked me about shaving/hair removal. I bought the necessary supplies (razor, wax, hair removal cream).

5. During dinner, your 14-year-old tells you that she has had a girlfriend/boyfriend for a while now. What is your reaction?

- a) I ask about this new relationship. Depending on the response, I share my thoughts.
- b) I say that I suspected, but that I didn't dare ask about it.
- c) I say that it's maybe time to have a conversation about relationships.
- d) I say nothing so that my child doesn't think that I approve of this relationship.

CALCULATE YOUR SCORE!

Find the shape for each of your answers. Determine which shape came up most often: each one is associated with a specific type of sex educator.

	a)	b)	c)	d)
1.	◆	■	✱	●
2.	●	◆	✱	■
3.	●	✱	■	◆
4.	■	●	◆	✱
5.	●	◆	✱	■

RESULTS*

The active parent (mostly ●)

- I establish a positive dialogue with my child. This makes it easier to discuss difficult topics. I have talked about sex since my child was young. I take many opportunities to talk to my child about different aspects of sex and sexuality.
- Tips: It's important to keep talking to your child, even if this can get difficult during adolescence. Creating a relationship of openness will help you. Keep at it!

The intermittent parent/The windshield wiper (mostly ✱)

- I talk to my child, particularly during important periods of development (start of a relationship, friends of the opposite sex, etc.). I sometimes put off discussions about sexuality. Like a windshield wiper, I can be on-again, off-again: sometimes I bring up the subject, sometimes I wait for my child to ask.
- Tips: You can try having short discussions with your child on a regular basis. For example, you can talk about something you experienced or a situation encountered by one of your child's friends. Sex shouldn't be a rare topic of conversation. It's better to talk about it a little, but often!

The "standby" parent (mostly ◆)

- I'm open to talking about sex. However, I prefer waiting for my child to ask about the subject before giving information. I don't want to start the conversation. My child often has a hard time knowing when it's a good time to talk to me about sex.
- Tips: You can figure out a few ways to start the discussion with your child, who may be embarrassed to ask you questions. Why not break the ice by buying a book on the subject?

The ostrich (mostly ■)

- When it comes to sex, I often stick my head in the sand. I find it difficult to talk about sex with my child, who may also find it difficult to ask me questions. She may be afraid of my judgement or reaction. I don't like talking to her about sex.
- Tips: Remember that it's never too late to start talking about sex. It's true that some subjects can be touchy. To help you, start with subjects you find easier to talk about. Why not ask other parents how they talk about sex with their children?

A GREAT IDEA!

Invite your partner and even your child to fill out the questionnaire. This can be a good opportunity to talk about your involvement as parents in your child's sex education. You can share your feelings of discomfort and find ways to overcome them together. It's important for the messages that parents send to be consistent.

* WALKER, J.L. «A qualitative study of parents' experiences of providing sex education for their children: the implications for health education», *Health Education Journal*, vol. 60, n° 2, 2001, p. 132-146.

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