

HAVING TOUGH CHATS WITH YOUR CHILDREN

A NWAC Fact Sheet For Parents and Caregivers of Indigenous Youth

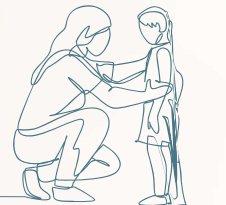


CHILDREN AND YOUTH are constantly learning and exploring. They learn from a variety of different environments. As a parent or caregiver, it's important to be **non-judgmental, compassionate, and open-minded**. Children and youth are forming ideas about themselves and how they fit into the world around them. **They look to their parents or caregivers for acceptance and love**. Who they are consists of many different pieces. Tough conversations can be about topics like **gender, sexuality, relationships, culture, school, work, mental health, sports, arts, body boundaries, body image, social media, consent, self harm**—or anything else that your child or youth may be experiencing or find important.

When your child comes to you to talk about something that's important to them, they are coming from a place of LOVE AND TRUST.

When they do:

1. Let them lead the conversation.
2. Let them know that you care for them **no matter what** they have to say.
3. Let them take the time they need to speak.
4. Do not use judgmental and critical words like "don't say that!"; "ew!"; "that's weird!"
5. Give your **full** attention to the conversation. Listen more and speak less.
6. If you do not understand what they mean (which is ok), ask them to explain more. Parents and caregivers have to unlearn what they know sometimes in order to create a more open space for youth and their knowledge.
7. Use open-ended questions like "how do you feel about that?"; "why do you think that?"; "what does that mean for you?"
8. Share your values.
9. Silence is ok. Take a moment to process and think.
10. Let them know that **whatever** they are feeling matters.



"It is widely believed that a child will reveal who they are to the parents. The parents do not need to impose a specific identity onto their child."

(National Aboriginal Council of Midwives, 2017)

Some conversations will always be easier than others and some conversations might not have the same meaning or importance to you as it does to your child or youth. **Listening with compassion and empathy is important in creating a strong relationship** with your child and youth. If your child or youth is coming to you to have a conversation that makes them feel anxious, worried, or scared, they are coming to you because **they trust you**. It is ok to not give solutions to a conversation. Your child may just want to feel heard and validated that it's ok for them to feel that way. **Remember that your child may still be hesitant to share some things with you—and that's ok. It might take some more time.**

By having these **tough conversations with your child or youth, you are strengthening your relationship**. Staying connected can be hard with everyone's schedules and interests but these conversations **will** happen and are necessary. View any conflict as an **opportunity to learn** more about each other and resume a calmer conversation another time. **We are all learning.**

Check out www.stbbi.nwac.ca for additional fact sheets and more!

Native Women's Association of Canada
L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada

