

# Talk to Me

*A personal development manual for women and girls  
with Down syndrome, and their parents.*



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Published by the Down Syndrome Association of NSW Inc., (Sydney, Australia), 1999

*An initiative funded by the NSW Department for Women, Sydney*

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## *Preface*

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Before you begin to read this resource, I would like to reassure you that you are not alone in this pursuit. A group of mothers and their teenage daughters worked together with a facilitator for a year, sharing openly their fears and doubts about their daughters' sexual development. So really, you are just joining us, and we welcome you, and wish you well.

The area of personal development can be very difficult for many parents. We postpone what is probably the most crucial training of our daughter's life, kidding ourselves that she doesn't need it yet, or will never need it, or just stalling, because we don't know where to start.

This resource has been written for you and your daughter, to enable you both to work through this area, taking it at your own pace. We mothers found some areas very difficult to cope with, but as the year went on, and we got used to opening up on sensitive issues, we came to realise just how much we had grown in the acceptance of our daughters' sexuality. The girls also benefited greatly, and showed a marked increase in self-confidence.

The contents of the sexuality training are often confronting, because issues we rarely discuss, with anyone, are explicitly addressed. Please don't be put off by that, but rather keep going. Even read it lots of times, because it gets easier, the more times you "hear" it in this way. Your daughter's sexual development is inevitable. Her understanding of it depends on clear, explicit information, simply given, over time. So do read all of "Talk to Me", to increase your confidence, and then you will be better prepared to share it with your daughter.

Meeting with other parents who have similarly aged daughters, to discuss the issues that arise during adolescence is of great benefit. If you can organise this, make sure that they also have a copy of "Talk to Me". Just talking about things we find difficult to deal with seems to lift the weight. Often, someone else has faced the same dilemma, and can offer their experience. If you don't have someone locally, then ring the Down Syndrome Association of NSW (02 9683 4333), to ask for a contact in your area.

If you need it, you can purchase from the DSA of NSW, a duplicate set of the women and girls' material, for the worksheets to be photocopied so that they can repeat the exercises.

The earlier you start this work with your daughter, the more prepared she will be for the onset of puberty, which is **not** delayed in girls with Down syndrome. We hope you find this resource very helpful, and wish you and your daughter well in your endeavours.

***Prue Maclean***

Project Co-ordinator

**Down Syndrome Association of NSW Inc.**

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*Joan E. Medlen*

#### **Weight Management in Down Syndrome - the Adult Years**

*Joan E. Medlen*

*These articles are available online, from the **Disability Solutions** newsletter website:*

**[www.disabilitysolutions.org](http://www.disabilitysolutions.org)**

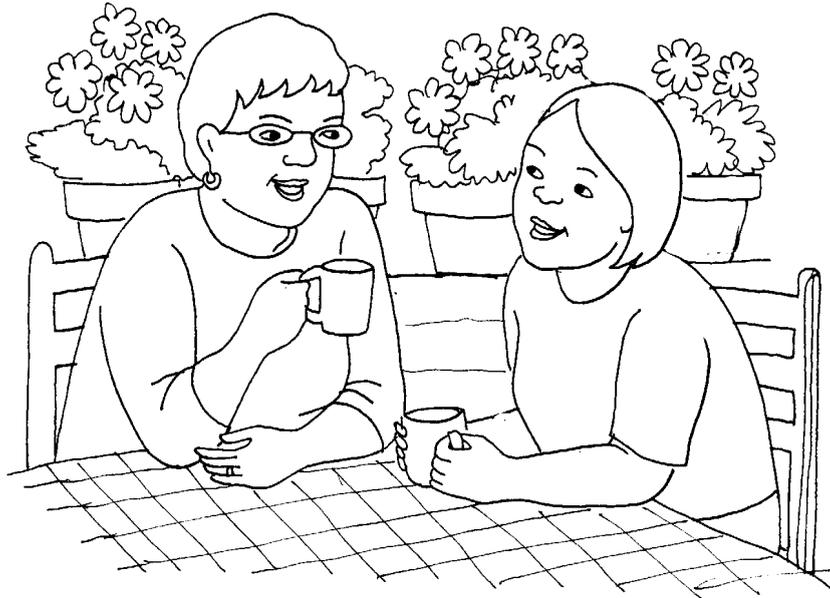
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# TALK TO ME

*A personal development manual for women and girls  
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*Parents' section*

## ADOLESCENCE

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Adolescence can be a very difficult time for parents as well as for the developing young person. Often the child who was very good natured, compliant and full of energy, becomes moody, uncooperative, weepy and angry for no apparent reason.

If your daughter with Down syndrome is your first child, the temptation may be to blame the disability for the behaviour. If you have already experienced adolescence with another son or daughter you will probably be more confident that the changes are a normal part of growing up.

A young person with a disability will experience the same development process as those without a disability. They will develop secondary sexual characteristics as their hormonal changes occur. This will not only mean a physical response to hormonal development, but an emotional one as well. It can often be quite difficult to come to terms with, as in many ways your daughter may seem so childlike and immature. Her social and conversational skills may not be aligned with her physical development.

Because of this, it is easy to believe that mood changes are to do with her disability. Also, as she cannot articulate easily nor understand, without support, what is happening to her, she may behave in ways previously out of character. This is why accurate information and patience, in helping her to integrate this information, is so important.

Unlike your other adolescents, your daughter will not readily be able to access information from peers, books or magazines. This is why you become, in this area, the most important resource your daughter has. Most parents have not had very good role modelling in this area. The thought of having to give explicit information in an area which you may never have discussed before, may seem too difficult. You are not alone in this. Parents of adolescents without a disability can often get away with doing nothing. This will not work for your daughter. She needs all the education and support you can provide to eventually make decisions appropriate for a maturing young woman.

It is also as an adolescent that she may grieve for the first time at having Down syndrome. If she is in mainstream school she will be very aware of those activities and peer experiences that she is missing out on. This can be a very difficult time for parents who are struggling to find ways to reassure their daughter of her self worth. If her self esteem is generally high it may take a battering but will stay intact. However, if her self esteem is low she will need now, more than ever before, a lot more input to her sense of self.

Education is a very powerful tool for enhancing self esteem. The more knowledge we have, the more control we have in our life. This enhances our self awareness as we realise that our decisions matter and are respected. This does not come without repercussions in families. As for your other children, a sense of self leads to independence of thought and action, which may cause dissension from time to time. You need to remind yourself that it is all part of the maturing process.

By encouraging independence of thought and decision making from a young age, you are supporting your son or daughter to cope with life as an adult.

## **FEELINGS, SELF ESTEEM, FRIENDS**

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Because of the wide range of abilities of people with Down Syndrome, and the varying ages of those using this guide, the sections on feelings, self esteem and friends, are progressively more difficult from beginning to end so everyone is given the chance to have a go.

There is information to read and activities for your daughter to complete. It will be up to you and your daughter to decide when you are ready to expand on her current knowledge and tackle a new section. The time in which you take to cover each topic will also vary greatly.

As feelings are the basis for both self esteem and friendships, this is the logical place to start with your daughter, later progressing to self esteem and friendships. Alternatively you may like to select the beginning of all three sections to start, and move through each section simultaneously.

Your daughter will better retain the information in this guide each time it is repeated.

Feelings, self esteem and friendships are important concepts in your daughter's emotional development. Friendships, self esteem and feelings are an integral component of later topics, including sexuality and protective behaviours.

### ***Feelings***

For all people, part of every day life and successful interaction with others requires that we are able to identify, react and cope with our own feelings and the feelings of others. Being able to do this allows you to openly communicate with others and make choices about your life. It is important for your daughter to learn to express the feelings she may experience in an appropriate manner.

Often young people with Down syndrome are not taught to express their feelings effectively or to only express a limited range of emotions, usually those of a positive nature. They are often discouraged from displaying negative emotions due to the inappropriate ways they can be exhibited. This inappropriate display can occur due to a lack of skills or means to express these emotions, thus teaching appropriate ways of exhibiting these emotions can lead to a decrease in inappropriate behaviours.

The means by which parents can do so are as individualised as each family. Some ways this may be done include:

- *Stop and listen to what your daughter is attempting to communicate..*
- *Enhance your understanding by watching her body language as well as by listening to what she says.*
- *Encourage your daughter to show affection towards others in an appropriate manner. Try and encourage hand shaking or another acceptable means of meeting new people. An example of what you might say could be “ You don’t know Joe, you can say hello by shaking his hand”. Teach your daughter that hugging and kissing are for people she knows well including close friends, family and boyfriends or girlfriends.*
- *If emotions are being expressed in inappropriate ways, set aside some time to talk about this and better ways for your daughter to express her feelings. Try giving her examples of how she might have acted instead and role play these together.*
- *Also an immediate reminder of a possible alternative is useful e.g. “ I can see you are frustrated. Instead of yelling, can you tell me or show me what is upsetting you in a calm voice so we can make it better.”*
- *Conversely if your daughter displays a feeling in an appropriate way you should socially praise them for doing so e.g. “ Thank you for talking to me calmly about why you are upset. How can I help you to feel better?”*
- *Natural settings provide the most effective environment for teaching appropriate ways of expressing emotions.*

Remember that all attempts to express emotions are valid and that it will take time for your daughter to learn appropriate ways to express her feelings. Best practice is for you and your family to model the way you want your daughter to show her feelings, as your family will be the most influential force in your daughter’s formative years.

Appropriate expression of emotion should be related to:

- *Your daughter’s age*
- *The activity or situation*
- *The extent of the feeling being experienced*
- *Your daughter’s personality*

- *The way in which your family as a whole expresses emotions.*

The section on feelings is written simply, and has been structured repetitively so that your daughter has a standard phrase she can use to express emotions, and includes a vocabulary section of alternative words she can use to express an emotion. Her recognition of the range of emotions can be built up over time as can the complexity of her expression. Your daughter's ability to move past the use of the standard phrases will occur as her skills in expression increase.

## ***Self Esteem***

Self esteem is how you feel about yourself. It is the perception of your self as an individual that includes how you feel about your physical and internal characteristics and your strengths and weaknesses. A healthy self esteem is essential for a happy and useful life. If we remember the traumatic adolescent development of our own self esteem it is not too difficult to acknowledge that our daughters may well have very real problems in developing a healthy view of themselves as a valued and valuable part of our society. Certainly they need help to do so.

The quality of life a person experiences, the choices they make and the lifestyle they live is based on their perception of themselves, as developed from their self-esteem. The extent to which a person has a healthy self-esteem affects their abilities on all levels and their willingness to try new things.

Healthy or positive self-esteem is developed gradually over time as people grow up. Whilst our self esteem is a reflection of how we feel about ourselves, our interpretation of how others view us also has a strong impact on our perception of ourselves. Accordingly it is important to nurture, guide, demonstrate and teach coping skills to your daughter.

Ways this may be done include:

- *Appropriately reinforcing your daughter's abilities and strengths. Ensure you use precise language that is age appropriate.*
- *Provide your daughter with opportunities to try new things, this will extend her existing strengths or highlight strengths she or you were not aware of. Over protection of your daughter may have a negative effect on her self esteem.*
- *Provide your daughter with new and stimulating environments in which she can interact with a mix of people. This will assist her to develop a sense of self and provide models of behaviour that she can try out for herself and discard if they are not appropriate or comfortable for her.*

- *When providing your daughter with new opportunities, environments and introducing her to others, reinforce that it is OK if she tries and does not succeed. It is the attempt that has helped her as much as the outcome, sometimes more. Be ready to support her to work through the sense of failure by pointing out the good aspects of her attempt.*
- *Similarly try not to limit the people, environments or activities open to your daughter due to a prejudgement as to her ability to succeed, cope or learn. Often she will surprise you.*
- *Talk openly with your daughter after she has had a new experience, met new people or has attempted something. Just by listening to how she is feeling, her thoughts and choices you are valuing her and hence increasing her self-esteem.*
- *Encourage her to take on responsibilities in the home environment. This encourages independence but also the opportunity to earn praise and self respect.*

The section on self-esteem is aimed at assisting your daughter to become aware of the concept of self-esteem and who she is. Self esteem is a complex concept, so an attempt has been made to start with the base idea of how we see our selves via our physical characteristics and personality.

This section involves more complex concepts when discussing ***Things I Can Do*** and ***Would Like To Do*** and ***Dreams for the Future***. Again another step is built on in the ***People Special to Me*** and ***I'm Proud*** sections. These latter sections involve identifying ideas, reflecting on them and then internalising them. Your daughter may be ready to do this or not. If not, cover the first section and with time, as your daughter's awareness of herself as an individual develops, work together on the rest of the section.

Remember that the content here is a guide and that healthy, positive self esteem is developed with love, care and support from the people special to us, as we face life's experiences together.

## ***Friends***

Having friends is important for the development of social and communication skills and an integral part of the development of self-identity, which in turn plays an important role in a person's self esteem. Additionally friendship provides the opportunity to share a bond with others outside the family unit through which can be developed a sense of caring, trust and respect towards others.

Your daughter may be limited in the chances she has to make friendships with her peer group. She may have a small social network, which may consist of staff in support services, immediate family members and family friends. These people are likely to have an intimate knowledge of her and consequently, over support her in a bid to help her. Such actions can lead to a person with a disability developing an over reliance on others for prompting in conversations and interactions in general.

***Editor's note** - Self-talking in people with Down syndrome has recently been more widely observed. It appears to have some very positive functional aspects such as working things out, planning and having conversations (either new or a rehash) really just a reflection of the sort of activities we have in our head! Current opinion is that it is best not to discourage self-talking but to make it more socially acceptable. This process may not be very easy but it needs to start by making your daughter aware that she is talking to herself in company. Then she can learn that the other person/persons find it embarrassing because they don't know how to respond. The next step is to learn to talk to herself silently in her head (apparently hard to learn), or to teach her to make sure she is alone before she starts. Self-talking could also come about in place of a friend, out of loneliness or poor self esteem. For this reason it is important to acknowledge self-talk but attempt to assist your daughter to internalise this talking.*

It is important that your daughter is provided with opportunities to interact with a wide range of people with whom she can develop relationships. Having a larger social network will increase the likelihood that she may find someone with whom to be friends and will provide practice in interacting with others.

While your daughter, like anyone, will want to make friends it is important that she has an understanding of her responsibilities and rights as a friend, how to act around other people and how to maintain friendships.

Your daughter may not acquire the skills required to meet, make and maintain friendships through incidental learning. Active teaching, modelling and guided practice is the best way to assist your daughter to develop the above skills.

Ways this may be done include:

- *Verbally prompting or modelling for your daughter how to act when meeting people and how to start conversations. This will assist in the development of appropriate behaviours.*
- *Assist your daughter to distinguish between behaviours that are appropriate in real situations as opposed to those shown in the media.*

- *Encourage and support your daughter to invite some one out who she is interested in. Your enthusiasm will encourage her to be willing to do this if she is nervous or shy about doing so.*
- *Assist your daughter through discussion to identify age appropriate friends and places to go.*
- *Teach your daughter and remind her of her rights and responsibilities in friendships. This can be done through discussing her rights and responsibilities when problems are being experienced.*

Friendships by their very nature are complex and involve an unspoken set of rules that are followed. Because your daughter may not be able to discriminate these rules and guidelines herself, she may need to acquire them via guided learning. Therefore the aim of this section of the manual is to outline the basic elements of friendship that are needed in order to successfully build relationships.

The opening paragraphs of the section outlines the basic concepts in friendships that includes a definition of friends, why you need friends and who they are. This introduction is appropriate for all ages and is the foundation for the concepts in the rest of the section. The section on common interests and where to meet friends encourages your daughter to begin to think about why she has chosen certain people to be her friends.

***How To Act*** and ***How To Ask People Out*** provide your daughter with an easy to follow set of steps to assist her. They can initially be implemented as a standard guide but over time as skills develop, the steps will be learnt and internalised and may be modified by her to suit her personality and various situations.

The concepts of responsibilities and rights that are introduced involve a complex set of factors that underpin friendships. As your daughter grows and experiences friendships she will become more aware of what she expects from her friends.

## LANGUAGE

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A difficult area for parents to negotiate is that of the appropriate language to use when discussing sexuality. As most parents have had very little experience in talking about sex, they are often confused as to how to explain quite intangible concepts to their adolescents. The biological terms to which parents have been exposed are inappropriate for young people with learning difficulties.

Also, modern language amongst adolescents is very different with each generation. The language which your daughter is familiar with may seem inappropriate or offensive to you, however only by familiarising yourself with it, can you relate to her effectively. Young people more easily understand slang than technical language because this is the language they use with their peers and also what they hear in the media. Regardless of our discomfort with slang words, it is important to move outside of our comfort zone at times to benefit the girls' education. We need, in fact, to educate ourselves at the same time.

To share our fears, anxieties and concerns with other parents is especially helpful. It can be very daunting to face these fears alone. As parents the onus is constantly on us to do the right thing by our children. But what is the right thing? The rules are constantly changing, especially in the area of sexuality.

A useful way to find out where your daughter's knowledge of language lies, is to get her to name her own words for private parts of the body, and to ask her if she knows what these parts are for. You can then decide with her which names you will use in your education together. This not only helps with language but also gives you an idea of how accurate her knowledge is.

A fun exercise to do together is to put a large sheet of butchers paper on the floor and one of you lie down while the other person traces around the body. You can then fill in names of the body parts (both public and private) and write on each part all the words you have ever heard for that part of the body. You can do it with all your children to make it more fun and less intimidating. It opens up the topic plus gives your children permission to talk about the subject with you.

Hopefully any initial discomfort will evaporate as you become more confident in discussing sexuality. However, it is also important to acknowledge your limitations. If you are unable to become more comfortable with the area, find someone who may be able to fulfil this role – it is far better to do this than to leave the education out altogether.

## ATTITUDES AND VALUES

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There exist in the community many attitudes and values which impact in a negative way on the experiences of people with disabilities. It is worth exploring these in some detail, as parents may unwittingly subscribe to some of these myths.

### **Myth 1**

*People with disabilities do not have sexual thoughts, needs and desires as other people do.*

### **Myth 2**

*People with disabilities are not capable of having relationships.*

### **Myth 3**

*People with disabilities have impaired sexuality and are therefore a sexual threat to the community.*

### **Myth 4**

*People with disabilities cannot learn appropriate behaviour.*

These are just some of the many myths which impact on people's lives. Some of the fears and concerns expressed by parents are directly linked to their adherence to these myths. If you do not believe that your child or adolescent has a natural, healthy sexuality then the need for education does not exist. If you do not believe that your son or daughter can learn appropriate behaviour then you will not address their inappropriate masturbation. If you believe that your adolescent is a sexual threat in the community then you will restrict their access to healthy social experiences.

These myths can be so entrenched in our thinking that we take them to be fact. The facts are that people with disabilities have sexual desires just like everyone else. They undergo the same changes at puberty as does everyone else. Some people may however, have difficulty in expressing what is happening to them and without support, difficulty in understanding how to handle these complex feelings.

Before we educate our daughters and sons it is important for us to have an honest look at the attitudes and values which we ourselves hold. This can be difficult, as it is often easier to only identify our attitudes and values in a very general way. They may be very different when they apply to our own children.

It is not very challenging to believe that everyone has the right to his or her own sexual preference until it applies to whether or not our own son or daughter is homosexual. It may be OK for us to accept masturbation as a normal, healthy activity until it is our adolescent who is masturbating in public. We also tend to adhere to the attitudes and values that were held within our family of origin. These

may not be appropriate within the context of current social norms. These norms will have an impact on your son or daughter through peers and media exposure.

Discussing our attitudes and values with others can help us to sort out what we actually believe in a safe environment before they impact on the education we present. The issue here is not about changing our attitudes but examining whether or not they are still relevant to our situation or are having a positive or negative impact on others. It is also useful to look at whether we hold the same values as our parents. In many cases we have outgrown these. This helps us to understand that our children may grow to adulthood with very different attitudes and values to our own. It is an important part of the maturing process and search for independence.

When it comes to our adolescents without disabilities we are forced to accept this. When our adolescent has a disability they are so much more dependent upon us and our responsibility to support them to become as true to themselves as they can be becomes much more challenging.

## **PARENTS' CONCERNS ABOUT SEXUALITY EDUCATION**

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### ***When is the best time to begin sex education?***

Sex education is most effective when it begins at a young age and continues throughout adolescence. Teaching the correct names for body parts, including private parts, prepares your child for understanding more complex areas later on.

Not only does it give them the language for discussing sexuality with you, but also permission to do so. You empower your child to make informed decisions about their body and their ownership of it.

Children's natural curiosity develops at a young age, particularly in regards to body parts and differences between male and female. If this curiosity can be satisfied, adolescents may not need to experiment as much in order to satisfy their curiosity for themselves.

### ***How much information is appropriate?***

This is a very common anxiety for many parents.

Children only tend to take in as much information as they can handle at the time. In fact, that is not only true for children but for most of us. Think of a time when you have had to take in new information that you retained. Most likely it was information that you were curious about and was relevant to your interest at the time. This is very common with children as well. If your child can ask you questions as they arise, it is much easier to respond to the question in simple language.

However, if your child has a learning difficulty or has no verbal communication it is much more difficult. This does not mean they do not have a need to know. It can be difficult to believe that your child with little or no speech can learn and retain the information, but with appropriate visual aids and an understanding of the way people learn, it can be done. There are some telephone numbers of places that can help you at the end of this resource.

It is useful to think back on your own sex education and take some time to think about what you really needed to know to make growing up easier and safer. Very few of us have had adequate preparation in this area.

If young people are given an understanding that they own their body and can decide when and to whom they can give permission to touch it, that will help to protect

them throughout their lives. If they do not have that understanding they will always remain vulnerable to abuse.

### ***Why open up the area of sexuality if my daughter shows no interest in the topic?***

People with disabilities are very vulnerable to abuse. They are often very compliant, as they have been given very little opportunity to make decisions in their own lives (with the best of intentions). They may not have the knowledge or the language to report abuse if it does occur; therefore perpetrators of abuse feel safe. People with disabilities are often not believed or are considered unreliable if they do attempt to report abuse.

Regardless of whether or not your daughter has shown interest in the area there are still some skills she must acquire in order to help protect herself. You cannot necessarily prevent abuse occurring, but with education she has some chance of avoiding it and/or letting you know and seeking help if something does occur.

### ***Teaching my daughter about sex may encourage her to seek it out!***

Young people with disabilities experience the same hormonal maturing process as everyone else. This means they will experience sexual feelings and desires. Many parents wish this were not the case. They do not wish to deny their daughters a healthy fulfilled life, but they want to protect them from hurt, exploitation and abuse. Unfortunately, in order to protect their daughters, many parents inadvertently do the opposite.

By acknowledging your daughter, through sex education, as a sexual being, you are giving permission for her to experience her feelings. However, she can now do it in such a way that she is less likely to be exploited. This, of course, does not mean that she will not be hurt at some time. But only by having the opportunity to understand the whole range of human experience, can she mature, understand consequences, and become more self-aware. All these experiences will increase her independence and reassure you that she may be able to make her own decisions if you are no longer able to support her.

### ***What if I feel I cannot talk to my daughter about sex?***

Many parents have had very inadequate education regarding sexuality. Therefore, they have not had any practice talking about sex. In fact many adults have a difficult time even talking about it with their intimate partners. Hence, you are not alone with these fears.

In the beginning you may have to step outside your comfort zone; this resource may help you to open up the area with your daughter as you go through the sections together.

Parents really need to be the primary sex educators of their children, especially if they have a learning difficulty. You cannot rely on schools to provide all the education your child or adolescent needs.

Sex education in school is only as informed as the teacher who runs it. Teachers are often struggling with the same discomfort and lack of experience as the parents. Also the information needs to be revised, reviewed and repeated often in order for your daughter to assimilate and retain it. This is only possible if the education is being supported at home.

We can avoid giving explicit information to our children and adolescents without disabilities; they can usually access the information through books, magazines, discussion with peers etc. This is not the case with your daughter with Down syndrome. Only by building strong foundations of education can she acquire all the information she needs.

If you feel this is all still beyond you, its important to find someone who may be able to take on this role; perhaps the child's older sibling, an aunt, one of your close friends. Don't believe you can ignore it and it will go away – it won't.

## HOW TO SUPPORT SEXUALITY EDUCATION

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- Remember you are the most appropriate person to teach your daughter. Education is an ongoing process throughout life and needs reinforcement, consistency and support which you can best supply.
- Accept your daughter as a sexual person. Whether you like it or not, she will develop secondary sexual characteristics and sexual feelings and desires as do other people.
- Examine your attitudes and values in regard to sexuality. It is easy to pass on our own hang-ups to our children who then carry the same burden.
- Educate yourself about sexuality, and sexuality and disability. Don't expect yourself to have all the information you need. It increases your confidence in imparting information to your daughter if you know that information is accurate and appropriate.
- Consider what knowledge is necessary for your daughter's safety. Your daughter cannot protect herself unless she knows what it is she is protecting. Your denying that she is vulnerable can increase her inability to seek assistance if she needs it.
- Consider what knowledge is necessary for your daughter to have positive sexual experiences. If you acknowledge and support your daughter as a sexual person, then you need to also accept the fact that she may be interested in some form of sexual expression. She needs information in areas such as contraception, appropriate touch, safe sex, abuse.
- Liaise with your daughter's personal development teacher and support the school program at home. The most effective education is that which involves all aspects of a person's life. Be clear about topics covered at school or in other places so you can reinforce the information at home.
- Involve your other children in sexuality education. It is an excellent opportunity to put this education on the agenda for all your children as they also are in need of information to enable them to make informed choices throughout their lives. But always include one to one education for your daughter with Down syndrome, as some of her learning needs will be different.
- Be consistent in the messages you give regarding appropriate behaviour. It is often difficult for people with learning difficulties to integrate the information they are given if the information keeps changing. It is important that people in your daughter's life communicate with each other to enable consistency of information or direction. It is particularly important that if both parents are living together with their daughter, they discuss any differences in values or attitudes before the education begins.

- Use repetition often. It is unrealistic to expect your daughter to be able to internalise information immediately. This is especially true in the area of sexuality where so much of the content is abstract. You can support her best by integrating the education into your everyday life. A “once off” chat may work for your adolescent son, or you believe it will, but not so for your daughter. Just keep in mind the numerous things you have already taught her and the methods used. You are already experienced in this.
- Utilise different teaching methods. Particularly useful are teachable moments. This is responding with information as things arise. An example is modelling changing your menstrual pad when you are menstruating, or talking about appropriate behaviour when you witness something together in public. Modelling, audio visual aids, role-play and utilising other family members in discussion are all valuable at different times.
- Talk to other parents in your situation to share ideas and test out your attitudes and values. One of the greatest supports we have is sharing with others in the same situation as our own. It provides us with ideas as to how other people respond, it instils confidence in our decisions and it provides a forum for us to verbalise our anxieties and fears with those who understand.
- Don't be afraid of making mistakes. The fear of making mistakes can stop us from taking any action. We do not harm our children irreversibly by making the occasional mistake. In the area of education, mistakes can be corrected. If we believe we have to get it right all the time we may never begin, which is the greatest mistake of all.
- Remember young people have a natural resistance to talking to their parents regarding sexuality. Think back to your own adolescence. It is unlikely that you initiated a dialogue about sex with your parents, and probably if they tried to talk to you, you shrank with embarrassment. Do not feel that because there is a hesitancy to discuss sexuality with you that it is not relevant for your daughter or will never get any easier. With practice it will get easier for both of you.
- Expect some behavioural changes during the process of sex education. One of the greatest concerns of parents is that if they tell their daughter about sex she will behave in a more sexual way. Sometimes it does seem to a parent that their daughter is exhibiting more sexual behaviours. This may be true; as a consequence of being given permission to learn about and discuss sexual issues some people test the boundaries of this new knowledge. This is much less likely to occur if your daughter is taught about her responsibilities as well as her rights when expressing her sexuality.
- See adolescent behaviour as a natural part of maturing and not a consequence of your daughter's disability. Many behaviours of typical adolescents are distressing

to parents. Because your daughter has Down syndrome does not mean that she is less affected by adolescence than anyone else. It is very easy however, to believe that it is her disability causing the behaviour rather than her hormones. Like everyone else she needs to understand boundaries and consequences for her behaviour. As a parent it is very natural to want to protect your daughter from consequences. This is especially so when you see that she already has a disability to contend with. However, in the long term she will be disadvantaged by this.

- Remember that after your daughter, you are the expert on her personality, needs and wants. Having spent their lifetime living with our children, we obviously have an insight into their personality which greatly exceeds that of anyone else. You have already experienced many professionals telling you what they believe is best for your daughter. You **DO** have insight unavailable to others. This will greatly support you in terms of educating your daughter. The danger, however, is that we may make assumptions about our children and not allow them to develop their individuality during adolescence. We need to strike the balance between our concerns and fears and their right to self determination.
- Be a positive role model for your daughter, it is the best education she will have. How you perceive yourself in the world will have a great impact on your daughter. She will learn most about the world from observing others, and you are the closest person to her. So taking care of your own needs and how you interact with others will be her main guide for her own behaviour.
- Accept masturbation as a healthy form of sexual expression. If you try to stop the behaviour you are taking away a natural outlet for your daughter's sexual needs. Doing so can lead to other challenging behaviours due to her frustration and distress. It is the inappropriateness of masturbation in terms of time and place which needs to be addressed, not the activity itself.
- Find a substitute for yourself if you cannot overcome your discomfort at discussing sexuality issues. Some parents do find it extremely difficult to overcome their resistance when discussing sexuality issues. No matter how hard they try, the explicit nature of the topic is too confronting for them to relax into the process. This is often due to a strong religious background. Sometimes this parent can do more harm than good by, imparting unintentionally, very negative attitudes to sex. It would then be valuable to find someone more appropriate to do the educating; preferably someone in the family.
- Practice talking about sexuality issues with your partner and/or friends. Most people are unfamiliar with talking about sex. Many of us do not easily discuss sex explicitly even with our sexual partners. Therefore we may need to practise this new skill. Enlist the help of others by discussing attitudes and values to sexuality. You will be amazed at how interested people really are in the topic.

- Increase your daughter's opportunities for social interaction with her peers so she can practice her social skills. Whenever possible give your daughter the opportunity to improve her social interaction. It is an important aspect of gaining maturity and independence during adolescence.
- Give your daughter as much opportunity as possible to make decisions over her own life. Only by doing so can she perceive herself as an independent, valuable participant in life. It will greatly enhance her self esteem. Start with small, less relevant decisions while she is practising these skills.
- Create an environment where it is safe to ask questions regarding sexuality issues. If you are teaching sexuality education at home you are already providing a safe environment for discussion. It is inevitable that all sorts of questions will arise once you begin to open up the topic. By addressing these questions no matter what their content you are then able to correct any misinformation your daughter may have, at the same time getting a better idea of how the education is being integrated and also enhancing your communication with her.
- Allow your daughter to learn from her mistakes by helping her work through what went wrong. Rather than laying blame and recrimination if your daughter has some mishaps, try to support her to understand the consequences of what went wrong and how to avoid the same mistake in the future. It is the only way we learn and grow. One of the main difficulties for a person with a disability is that they are constantly under scrutiny in a way that we are not. They do not easily cover their tracks as we did as adolescents. Thus, there is a gap in their experience of growth and maturity.
- Accept that your daughter desires the same things as everyone else- companionship, affection, intimacy. By accepting this you can encourage those experiences which support her to reach her potential for achieving a fulfilling adulthood. This can be a very difficult process as a parent because it requires a leap of faith we may not wish to take. A natural desire of parents is to protect their children however possible. It helps to reflect on your own life and learning experiences. An important part of maturing is to have the opportunity to do things differently next time around, and this only comes from having experiences in the first place.

## MASTURBATION ISSUES

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Masturbation is a normal, healthy activity for both females and males. It releases sexual tension and teaches us about our sexual responses in a non-threatening way.

It has, however, historically been shrouded in myth and misrepresentation. Every one has been exposed to the superstitious beliefs surrounding it e.g. you will get hairy palms, go blind etc. It is now more commonly accepted as a valid form of sexual expression.

One of the difficulties of accepting the masturbation of young people with learning difficulties is that they often touch themselves publicly. This draws a much more emotive response from parents than if they masturbated privately like their non-disabled adolescents.

It is important not to see the masturbation as a deviant behaviour due to the disability. Most human beings masturbate at some time in their lives. It is commonly discovered in adolescence or earlier. There are a number of reasons it is such a popular activity: it feels good; you can do it alone; you can control it yourself.

However, young people with disabilities may need to be taught explicitly, and with much repetition, where is an appropriate time and place. Some people may not be able to interpret what is appropriate and inappropriate purely by the observation of those around them. They can, however, learn these skills; by helping a young person to understand what is happening to their body, by directing them to a private place every time they are masturbating publicly, and by reinforcing and reviewing this education regularly.

Often parents ignore the behaviour and hope it will go away of its own accord. It probably will not, as sexual needs and desires are present throughout life. It is also important to remember that for some people masturbation may be the only sexual outlet they will have.

## SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

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For a parent, discussing sexual intercourse in the context of their daughter's life can be very challenging. This is especially so if your daughter has a learning difficulty. It may be an area that you try to avoid thinking about, but it is worth giving it some attention. If you see your daughter as having sexual needs and desires this aspect of her sexuality must be examined.

It is also important to think about its relevance in regard to sexual assault. If your daughter is not aware of sexual intercourse and what its implications are, she cannot respond appropriately if she does not wish to have sex. She may not understand what is being offered to her.

Sexual intercourse is a natural activity that can be a valued expression of sexuality between consenting adults. The age of consent for having sex is 16. This is an age requirement and does not include issues around education or maturity. When your daughter is 16 she has the same legal rights as others in the law. However she may lack the judgement or information at this stage to make an informed decision. Often young women are consenting to the kisses and cuddles offered to them but are unaware that the other person may have a different agenda. Therefore accurate and comprehensive information about physical and emotional feelings and desires should be available.

Many parents do not want to deal with this area of sexuality at all and draw the line here. The risk in that approach is that you are only giving part of the information necessary for decision making. Some parents do not wish to believe that their daughter will ever engage in a full sexual relationship with another person. She may not. But believing that you will have control over this aspect of her life for all of her life is not accurate either.

Also many parents believe that their daughters will not be able to "handle" this information. If this education is given in the context of a program of information, designed to be imparted over the course of a young person's adolescence, it will be received more confidently and without drama.

When educating your daughter in the area of sexual intercourse it is important to include other topics relevant to the area i.e. safe sex, contraception, pregnancy.

Before you begin this education spend some time considering all the things you would have liked to know when you were younger. It is no different for your daughter. She may need a lot of support, time, repetition and modelling that you did not need, but the relevant knowledge will be the same. When you teach her about body parts you can in a very simple way talk about what the private parts of the body are for.

You may think if you don't talk about sexual intercourse your daughter need never find out that this is an activity people can do. This attitude fosters her ignorance and therefore her vulnerability to exploitation. It also undermines her ability to mature in a responsible way, having access to all the information that she needs.

It is important to access information about sexually transmitted diseases, safe sex practices and contraception, as these are areas unable to be covered within the scope of these resources. **Family Planning NSW** is a reliable source of information (phone 02 9716 6099).

We have included a sheet on sexual intercourse for your daughters. You may be able to go through it with her or it will assist you with language you can use when imparting this information.

## PROTECTIVE BEHAVIORS

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Protective behaviours are a number of strategies taught to people in order to minimise the possibility of them being abused. There are some very sophisticated skills required to be able to practice protective behaviours. These are worth looking at in greater detail.

One of the most significant skills is the ability to make decisions for ourselves. Is what is happening to me OK or not? Should I stay or should I go? What can I do? Who do I tell?

It is unrealistic to expect a person who has never had the opportunity to make a decision for themselves to make one at such a crucial time.

Hence, the importance of encouraging children to develop this skill from a young age must be stressed. If you encourage your daughter to decide on even the simplest choices, you are already enhancing these skills e.g. *do you want the cake with the green icing or the yellow? Would you like to wear a dress or your jeans?* As children mature during adolescence, they will then be able to participate in more informed decision- making.

The desire to protect our children from negative experience is strong for all parents whether or not the child has a disability. The difference is that adolescents without disabilities will force us to let go whether we like it or not. Young people with learning difficulties rely on their parents to be proactive in letting go of them – to present opportunities for them to make informed decisions and gain independence even when they want to hang on.

In order to make a decision at a vulnerable time, the person needs the self esteem necessary to believe they have the right to get what is fair or just. They then need the assertiveness to be able to stand up for these rights. These attributes need to be developed and enhanced with constant feedback and practice in a non-threatening environment.

Some assaults can be avoided if we can say **NO!** This may sound like a simple task, but many adult women, when confronted with a potential assault are unable to utter it or are not listened to. It is important to actually let your daughter know that she has the right to say **NO**. Understandably many parents avoid this, seeing it as opening up assertive behaviour at home and upsetting family dynamics. All adolescents rebel at some things. It is an important part of the maturing process. It brings with it self awareness, a knowledge of “I” as a separate being, it encourages self -discipline by testing the limits to which we can go.

## DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL ABUSE

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Research shows that sexual abuse of women and girls with an intellectual disability is common (70 - 80% of women with an intellectual disability have been sexually assaulted), and the perpetrator is most commonly someone from within their circle of friends, family or support workers, not a stranger. A recent study showed that strangers only accounted for 8% of assaults on persons with an intellectual disability.

These horrendous statistics are no doubt effected by the lack of accountability of service providers to monitor the safety of their clients. The same study suggests that people with an intellectual disability are at the highest risk not because of the severity of their disability but because they have not received adequate education in protective behaviours. For us, as mothers, these statistics are horrifying, but they must be faced so that we can begin effectively to reduce the incidence by improving the safety of our children.

To begin with, a definition of the terms “abuse” and “assault” is necessary. “Abuse” is used to describe an infringement of a person’s rights including a breach of civil law, examples of which might be pornographic display, or sexual harassment. “Assault” implies a breach of criminal law, and covers all sexual acts performed without the consent of the recipient/victim.

If anyone discloses sexual assault to you it is very important to know how to respond, and what to do for them. Sexual assault may occur at any time and in any place, it may be perpetrated repeatedly over time by a someone known to the victim, or as a possibly more violent attack by a stranger. Whatever the circumstances, hearing about it from the victim is a very traumatic event, which is best prepared for, so that proper care can be given to the person. Also, in the case of a child, that care and support for the parents (the mother, especially) is available.

- Remain calm
- Ensure the safety of the person at that time.
- Find a quiet, safe, private place where it is easy to speak. Often a person with an intellectual disability will blurt out that they have been abused in a place which is too public to listen to what they have to say. Suggest moving to another place to talk about it **NOW**.
- Reassure the person that you are concerned for them. Do not judge or prompt but **listen** and support.

- Whatever has happened let them know that it is not their fault.
- Wherever possible, make sure that the perpetrator does not have any contact with them. This may be a police matter to enforce.
- Let them know that you are proud of them for telling you, because most people are too afraid to do so.
- Work out **together** what you are going to do next. The person needs to have some control over the decision making, because while being abused they had no control or choice.
- Medical examination is only necessary if the assault was recent and some injury has occurred. A rapist does not usually ejaculate. It may be necessary to check for Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD).
- Ensure confidentiality, and discuss who needs to know about this and who does not. Remember that the person assaulted has to cope with the reactions of each person who is told, as well as to cope with her own reactions.
- The parents should be able to debrief too, separately from their child. If the parents need to tell a friend or relative the victim should be asked if it is all right to do so. Explain that her parents also need support at this time.
- For professional help the sexual assault unit for your area should be contacted (see attached list), or the local hospital if there has been injury requiring attention. Most hospital staff are not trained to cope with sexual assault, especially not of a girl or women with Down syndrome, so unless medical attention is necessary it might be better to avoid further trauma.
- Notification to DOCS is only compulsory for people who come across the assault in the course of their practice as a doctor, school teacher, counsellor, social worker, principal or deputy principal. For all others it is optional.
- The sexual assault counsellor will be best able to assist in deciding whether or not the police should be notified. Under the **Crimes Act** it is an offence for anyone who reasonably believes or suspects that a serious offence has been committed not to report the matter to the police. Thus, in a serious case, parents or counsellors do not have a discretion not to report the matter to the police, even if the person assaulted does not wish them to do so.
- A person who has survived a violent crime may apply to the Victims Compensation Tribunal for financial compensation. Specific legal advice should be obtained if a person wants to pursue this option.

**The physical indicators of sexual abuse are :**

- Bruising, bleeding in the genital area
- Bruising to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen, inner thighs or mouth
- Vaginal infection, inflammation
- Abdominal pain
- Pregnancy
- Recurrent headaches or migraines
- Foreign objects in the genital, rectal or urethral openings
- Other injuries

**The effects of sexual abuse are :**

- Shame - profound shame and guilt which will often prevent the person from telling anyone
- Anger and/ or sorrow
- Disturbed sleep, bed wetting, nightmares
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Acting out sexually in a young child; showing inappropriate sexual knowledge.
- Behaviour changes - attention seeking, withdrawal from usual activities
- Self injury or hurting others
- Unexplained accumulation of money or gifts
- Fear of being left alone with a particular person
- It is very common for a person, especially a child, to disclose the abuse then recant either because they have been threatened with an awful consequence or because they feel guilty themselves. If this happens continue to believe the disclosure without trying to verify, just believe the original statements unwaveringly.
- If you are concerned but not sure, have doubts or worries about your child's safety then ring the Sexual Assault Service for your local area. They will be happy to discuss your concerns.

**Northern Sydney Sexual Assault Help Centre** . (02) 9926 7580  
(9am-5pm, Mon - Fri), (02) 9926 7111 (a.h.)

**Dympna House**, Child Sexual Assault Counselling and Resource Centre.  
(02) 9797 6733; Freecall 1800 654 119; email: [dympna@rainbow.net.au](mailto:dympna@rainbow.net.au)

**Mallee Sexual Assault Unit Inc** has published a recommended training manual “*Personal Safety Success Training for People with an Intellectual Disability*” which you can recommend to your daughter's high school or centre.  
Ph. (03) 5022 3444 Cost \$100

## RESOURCE LIST FOR PARENTS

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### **FAMILY PLANNING NSW**

**02 9716 6099**

The *Sexuality and Human Rights Training Service* is part of the Education Unit and can assist you with further education and training. They have a part-time counsellor available. **Family Planning** also offers clinical services for sexual health, contraception and advice.

### **INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY RIGHTS SERVICE**

**02 9318 0144**

Provide community education and resources, advocating for the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. They also have a legal service that can respond to legal questions and concerns.

### **NSW COUNCIL ON INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY**

**02 9211 1611**

Information available regarding statewide disability services, and some resources including the video, *Talk About It*, for young women with learning difficulties, on sexual assault issues.

### **DISABILITY COMPLAINTS SERVICE**

**02 9310 6549 within NSW**

**1800 424 007 outside Sydney Metropolitan Area**

An advocacy service for people with intellectual disabilities to seek support for issues arising in disability services and to lodge complaints when necessary.

### **NORTHERN SYDNEY SEXUAL ASSAULT HELP CENTRE**

**02 9926 7580**

(9am-5pm, Mon - Fri), 02 9926 7111 (a.h.)

## **FURTHER READING**

### **About Masturbation**

*Family Planning NSW*

2 new books on masturbation, one for males, one for females, designed to be used when working with people with learning difficulties.

### **Girls Talk**

*Family Planning NSW*

This booklet provides vital information on menstrual self-care for young women with learning difficulties.

### **All About Sex**

*Family Planning NSW*

Includes information for parents, teachers and workers. Provides accurate, easy to read material. Illustrated with line drawings. Contains an updated resource section of places to go for assistance.

### **Sexuality And People With Intellectual Disability**

**Lydia Fegan and Anne Rauch**

Equips parents and caregivers with candid, accurate information about all aspects of sexual development.

### **Rights And Recognition**

*Family Planning NSW*

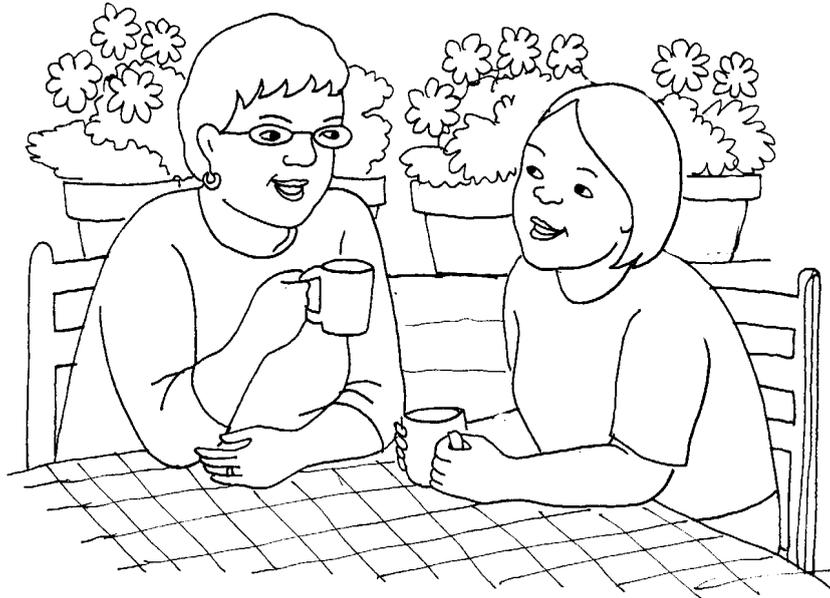
A guide to sexuality policy and education for people with learning disabilities.

Family Planning resources available from **Healthrites Bookshop**

**02 9916 8307**

# TALK TO ME

*A personal development manual for women and girls  
with Down syndrome, and their parents*



*Women and girls' section*

# INTRODUCTION

This book is to help you to learn more about growing from a girl into a woman.

It talks about the changes that happen in your body and also some of the feelings you might get.

If you cannot read very well you might like to get somebody to help you read it. Your mother may help or a friend that cares about you.

If you have any questions, ask your mother, a person in your family, a support worker or a friend.

There are some telephone numbers at the end so you can talk to someone if you need to know more.

It is important that you understand what you are reading so please ask if you need help.

We hope you enjoy the book.

# FEELINGS

HAPPY

EXCITED

PROUD

SAD

ANGRY

SCARED

CONFUSED

EMBARRASSED

REVIEW

# FEELINGS

We are going to talk about feelings.

Everyone has feelings. Our body often tells you how you are feeling both on the outside and on the inside.

It is important to listen to these feelings. Some times people can see how you are feeling from your face and your body but you still need be able to tell others yourself.

Telling or sharing your feelings can help you feel better. Keeping your feelings to yourself can make you feel alone.

We are going to talk about:

- some of the different kinds of feelings you can have
- knowing what you are feeling
- how to tell others how you are feeling
- how to make yourself feel better

In this section, there will be parts to read and activities for you to do.

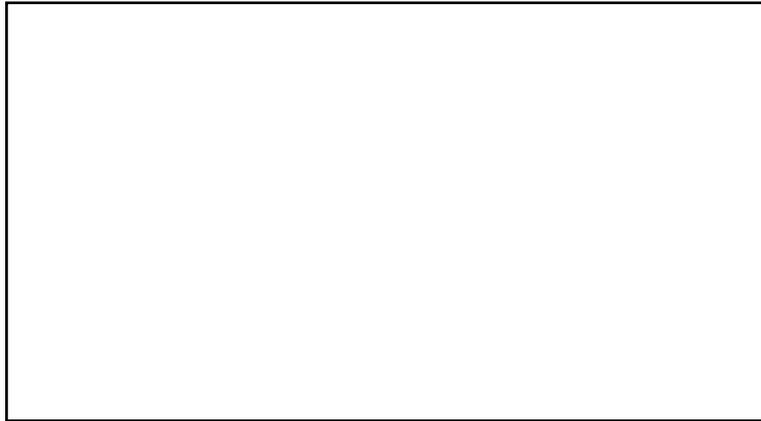
## FEELINGS

1. I feel happy when:

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2. Draw a picture of when you are sad:



3. When I feel angry I:

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4. Who makes you feel happy?

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# HAPPY

Lots of things can make us feel **happy** like

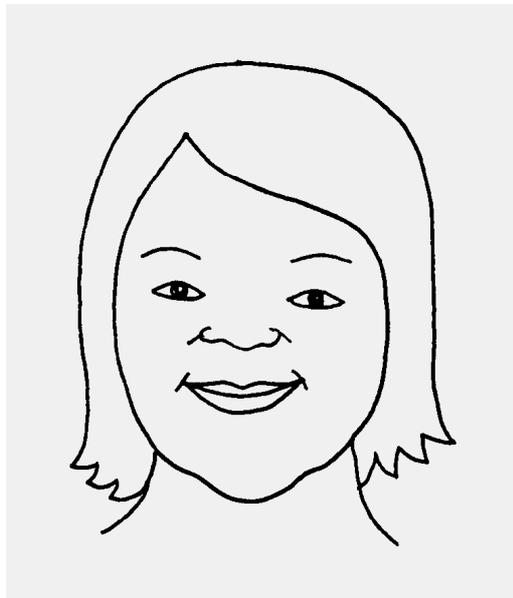
- seeing friends
- special occasions
- doing things you like.

Can you think of some things that make you feel happy ?

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Look at the picture below. You may feel like this when you are happy.



You could say,

“ I am happy today because I saw my friend.”

How do you let others know you are feeling happy ?

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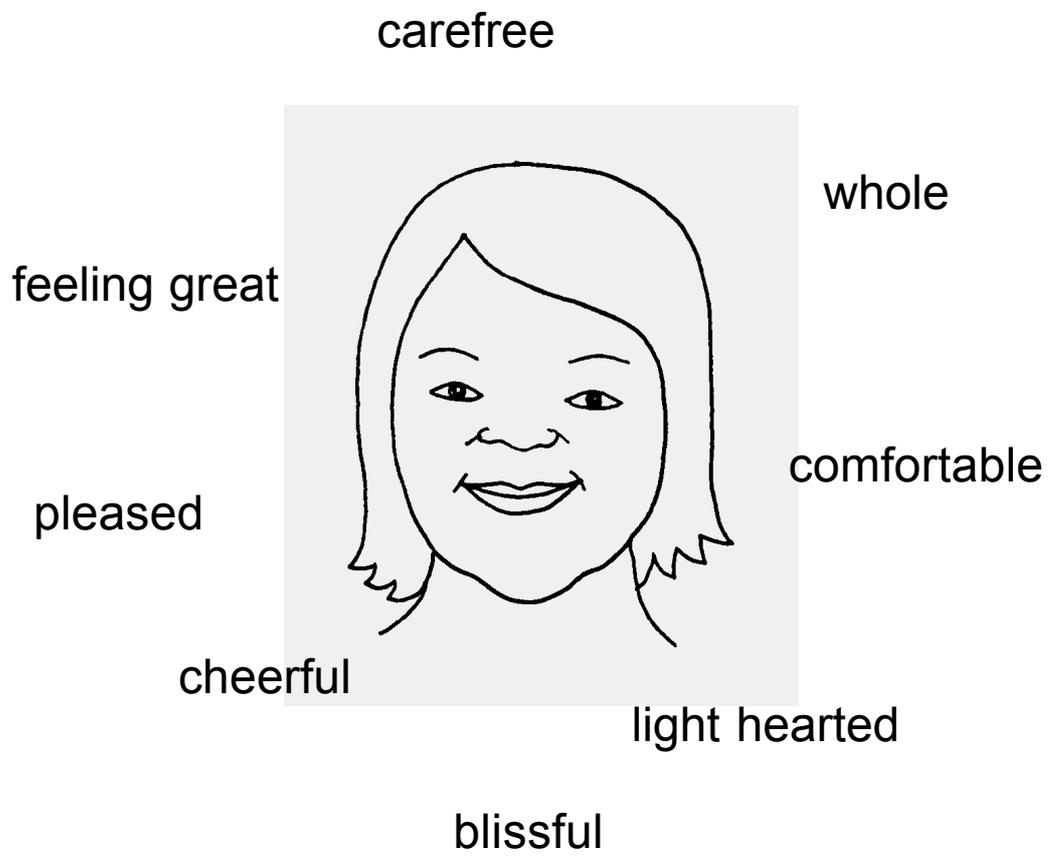
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When you are happy you should think about others too. It would be nice to make other people feel happy like you.

## Other words for happy feelings



# EXCITED

Lots of things can make us feel excited, like

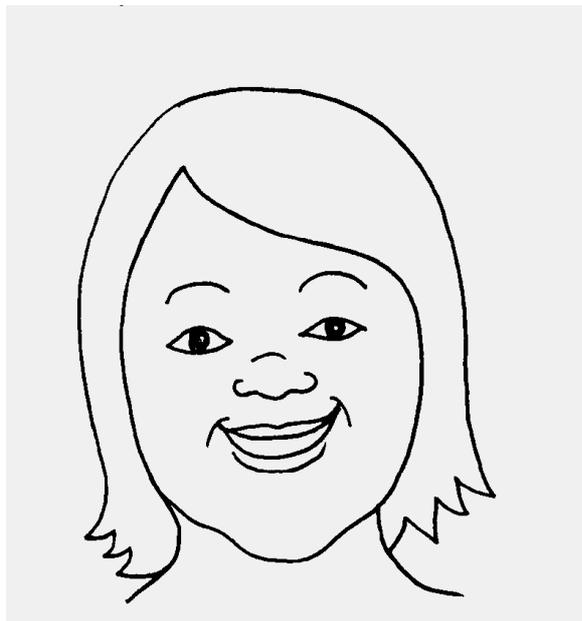
- a party
- a present
- good news
- special occasions
- a surprise
- looking forward to something.

Can you think of some times when you have felt excited ?

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Look at the picture. Your face shows what you are feeling.  
You can let others know you are feeling excited by:



- telling them your news
- the way you are acting
- talking in a voice that is fast,  
louder,  
higher than normal.

You could say,

“ I am really excited about going to the party tonight.”

What do you do to let others know you are feeling excited ?

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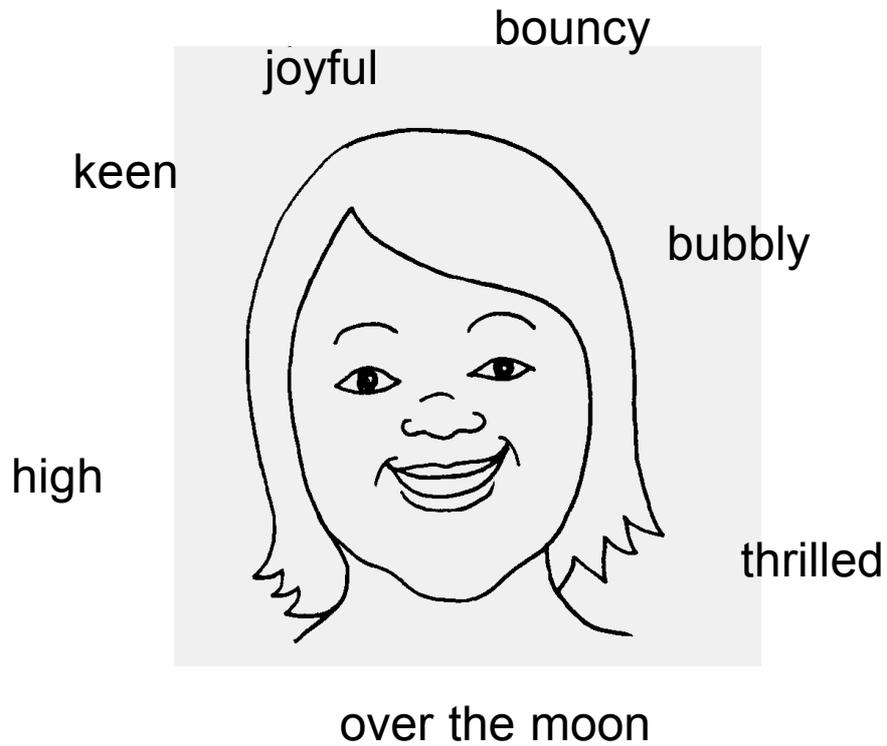
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When you are excited it is important to think of others and share your feelings with someone you are close to.

## Other words for excited feelings



# PROUD

Lots of things can make us feel proud

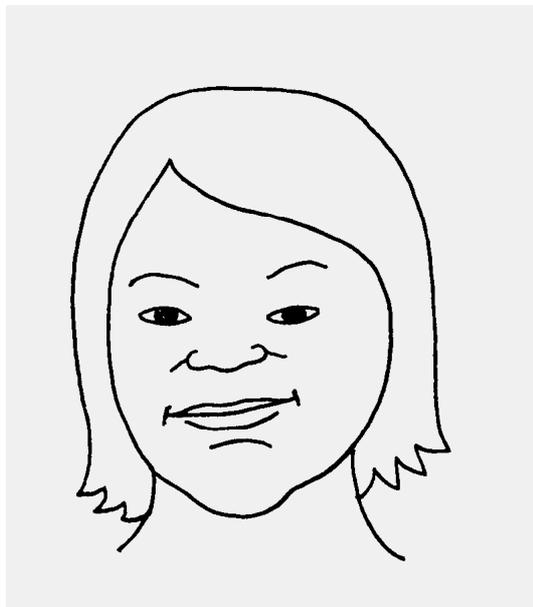
- like doing something well
- achieving a goal
- doing something you thought was too hard
- when people tell you that you have done a good job or have been a nice person
- helping others

Can you think of a time when you felt proud ?

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Look at the picture. Your face shows what you are feeling.



You can let others know you are feeling proud by

- holding your head high
- speaking in a voice that is confident and clear
- telling others that you are feeling proud and why

You could say “ I did that really well and it made me feel good about myself.”

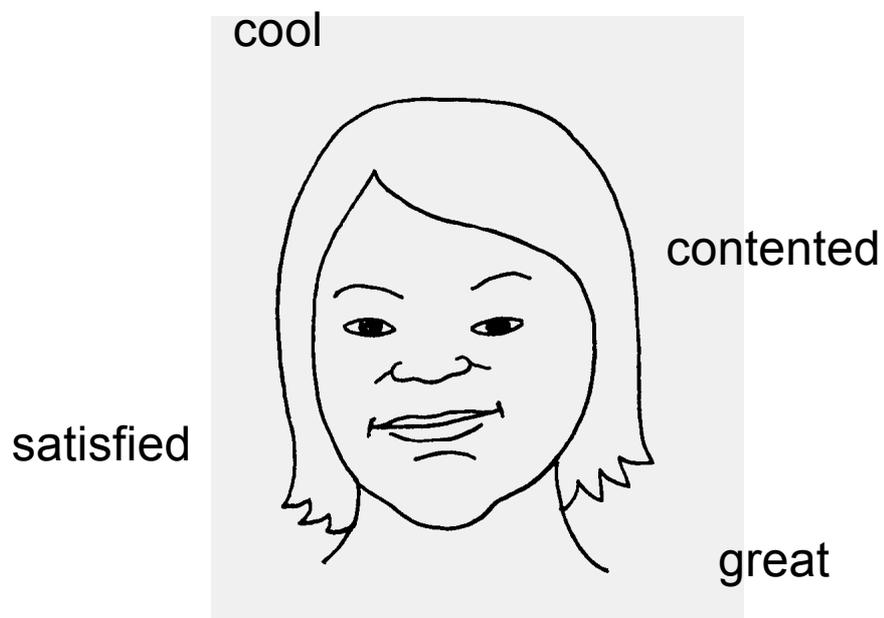
What do you do to let others know you are feeling proud ?

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When you are proud it is important to think of others, listen to them and not talk too much about your achievement.

## Other words for proud feelings



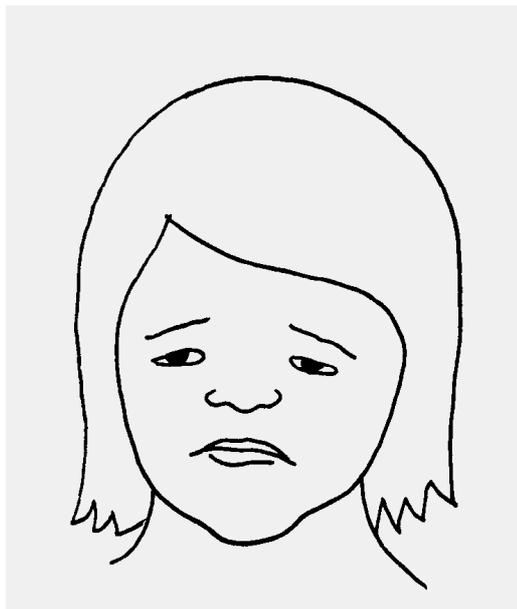
# SAD

Lots of things can make us feel sad, like when

- someone hurts our feelings by saying something hurtful to us
- we miss out on doing something we wanted to do
- a friendship ends
- someone dies

Look at the picture below. You may feel like this when you are sad.

Can you think of some things that make you feel sad ?



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Others can tell you are feeling sad when you are

- being quiet
- when you are looking towards the ground
- you are crying

You can also tell the people important to you why you are feeling sad.

You could say

“My friend let me down and it really upset me.”

What do you do to let others know you are feeling sad ?

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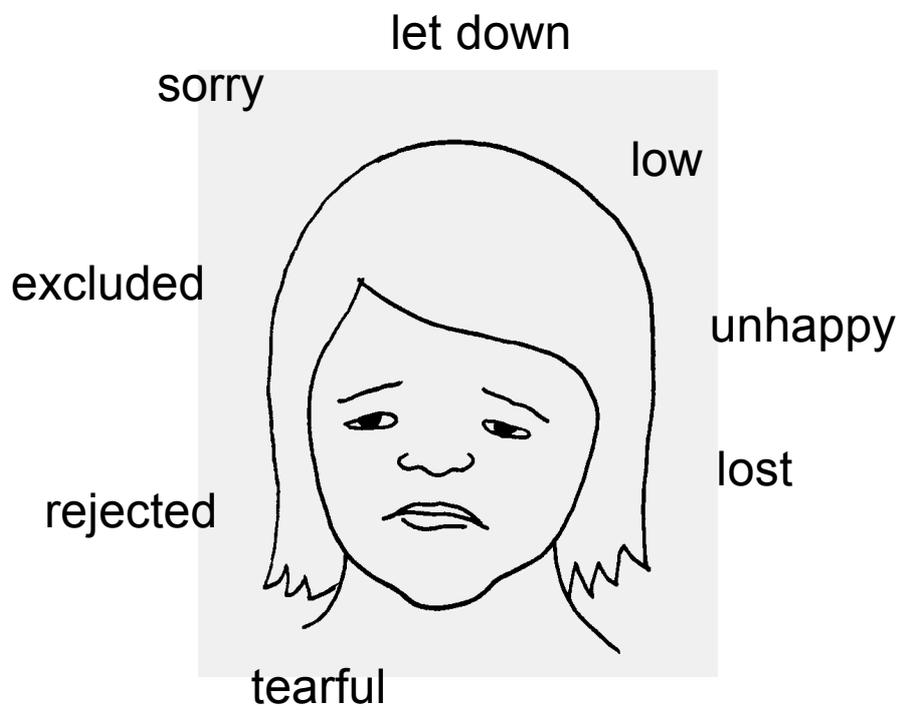
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When you are sad it is important to talk to someone you are close to so

you can share

## Other words for sad feelings



# ANGRY

Lots of things can make us feel angry, like when

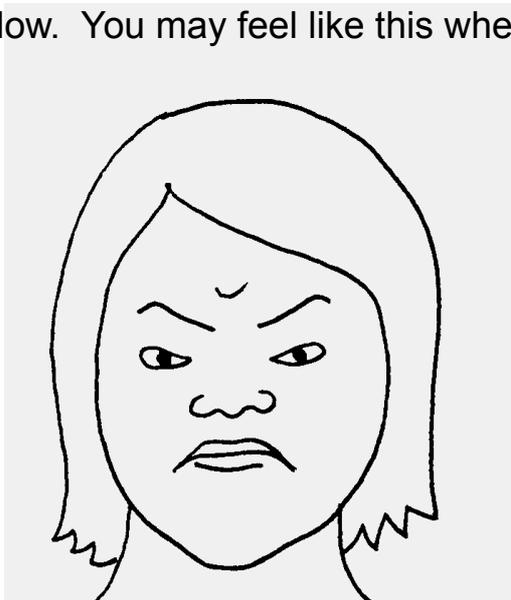
- we don't do as well as we want to
- we aren't given a choice about what we want
- people don't listen to us
- our friends hurt our feelings or let us down

Can you think of a time when something or someone has made you feel angry ?

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Look at the picture below. You may feel like this when you are angry.



You can let others know you are feeling angry by

- frowning
- telling the person who has made you angry in a firm voice what they have done to make you angry

You could say,

“ When you shouted at me in front of my friends it made me feel really angry and I don’t like feeling this way.”

What do you do to let others know you are feeling angry ?

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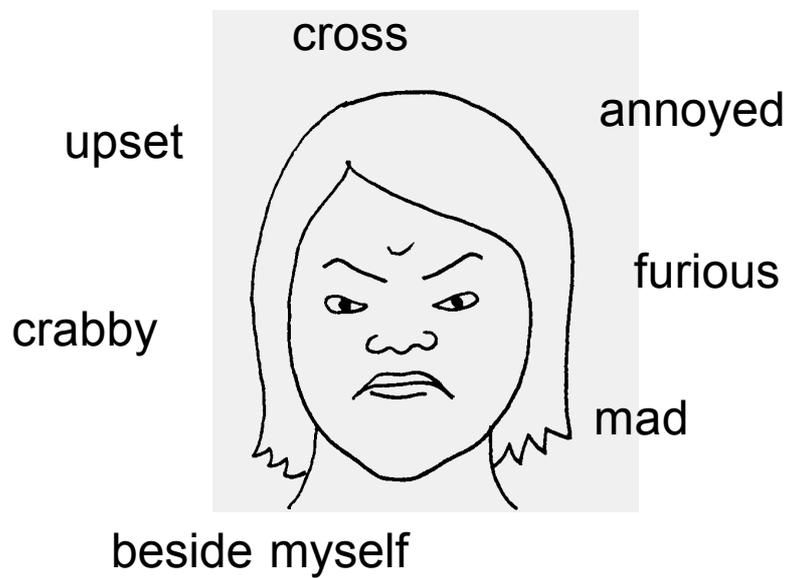
When you are angry it is important to tell the person firmly and calmly and not to scream and shout.

Before you talk to them you may need some time alone to calm down.

## 5 tips to try when you are angry

- relaxation: deep breathing or listen to calming music
- count to 10 before you speak to the person who has made you angry
- before you speak to the person who has made you angry think through what you are going to say
- talk to someone who is not involved
- do some exercise

## Other words for angry feelings



# SCARED

Lots of things can make us feel scared, like

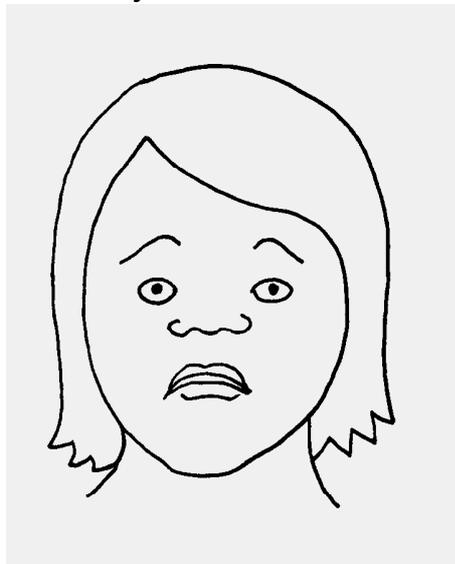
- trying something for the first time
- visiting the Dentist
- seeing something we don't like
- when someone hurts us or makes us do something that we feel uncomfortable with
- not being helped when we need it.

Can you think of some things that make you feel scared ?

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Look at the picture. You may feel like this when you are scared.



Others may know you are feeling scared when

- you are quiet
- talk with a shaky voice
- you are pale

If a person is making you scared, you should tell them to stop and that you don't like what they are doing.

You could say,

“What you are doing makes me scared, Please stop.”

You should tell someone you trust when someone scares you. Tell them why you are scared and ask them for help.

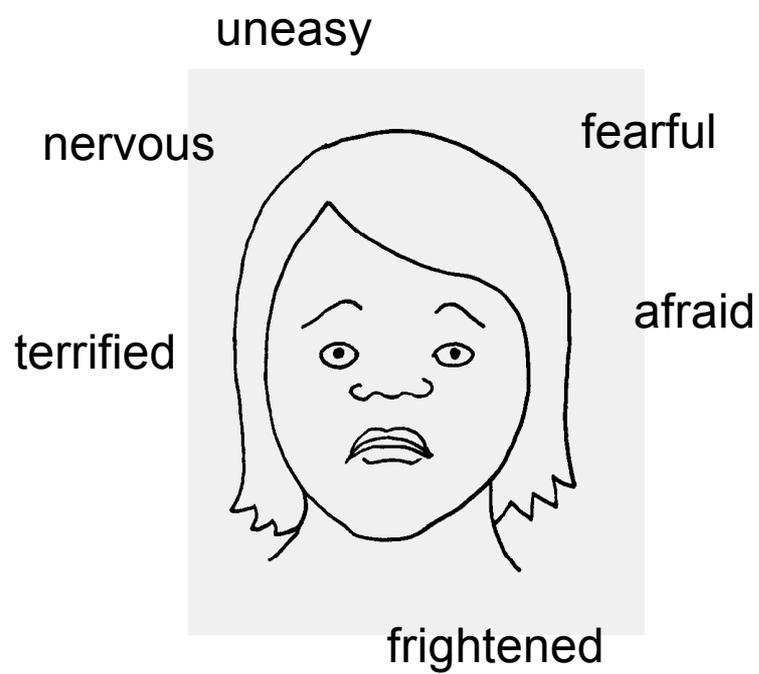
What do you do to let others know you are feeling scared ?

When you are scared it is important to tell someone and share that feeling.

If you are feeling scared because you are trying something new or you are unsure of your choice, tell someone and get help so you can achieve what you wanted. When you have achieved this goal you will feel proud.

If you are feeling scared because you know what someone is doing is wrong, or makes you feel uncomfortable, it is important you tell that person, or someone else, straight away.

## Other words for scared feelings



# CONFUSED

Sometimes we feel confused. It may be when

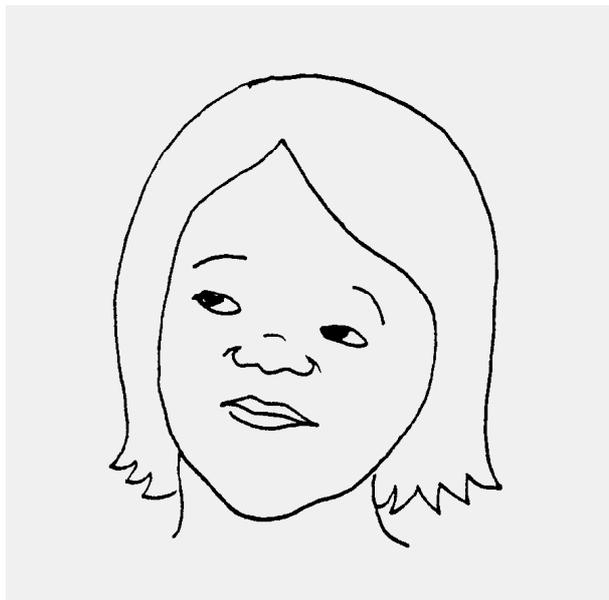
- we have a decision to make
- people are giving us different advice
- we are feeling lots of different feelings at the same time

Can you think of a time when you have felt confused ?

---

---

Look at the picture. You may feel like this when you are confused.



You can let others know you are feeling confused by

- telling them you do not understand or
- telling them you are having trouble making a decision.

You can say,

“ I do not understand what you said could you please explain”

or

“ I am still thinking about it, I will let you know”.

What do you do to let others know you are feeling confused ?

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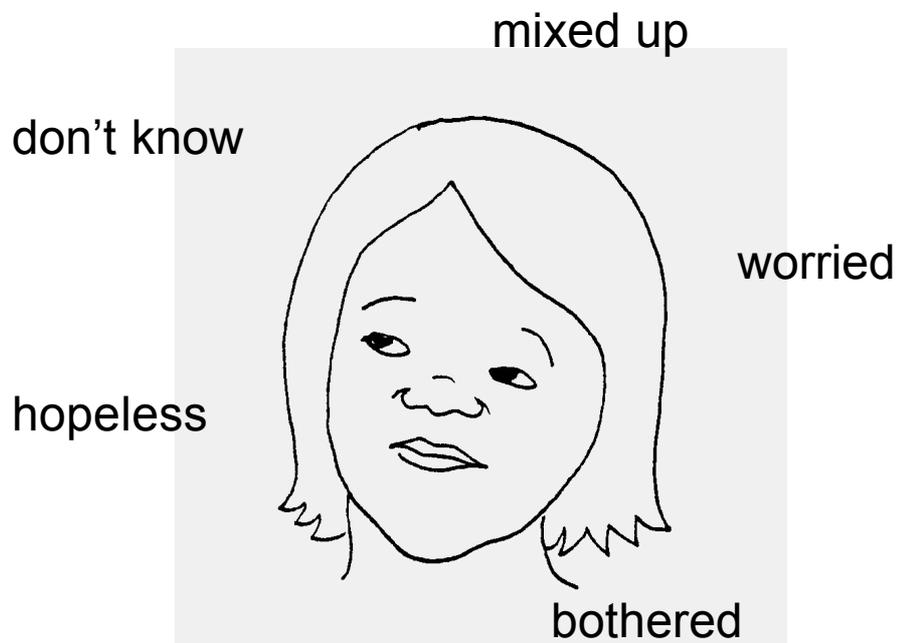
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When you are confused it is important to have some time alone to think about what you really want, and then to talk about the decision you have made with someone you trust. You can also ask someone to explain what you don't understand.

## Other words for confused feelings



# EMBARRASSED

We feel embarrassed when

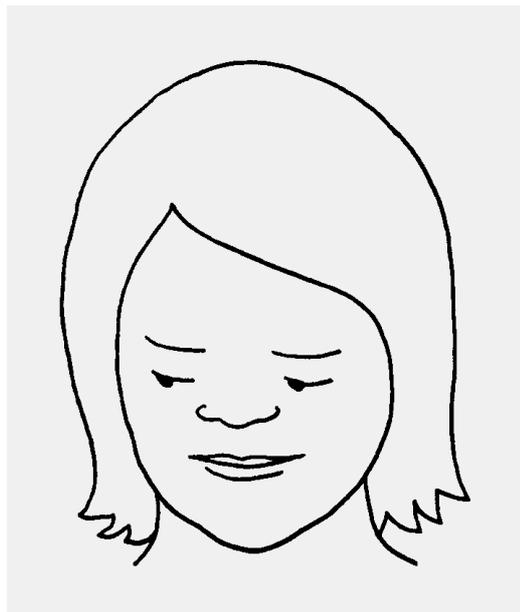
- we do things others think are silly and they laugh
- we don't like being looked at
- we don't know what to say to someone.

Can you think of some things that make you feel embarrassed ?

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Look at the picture. You may feel like this when you are confused.



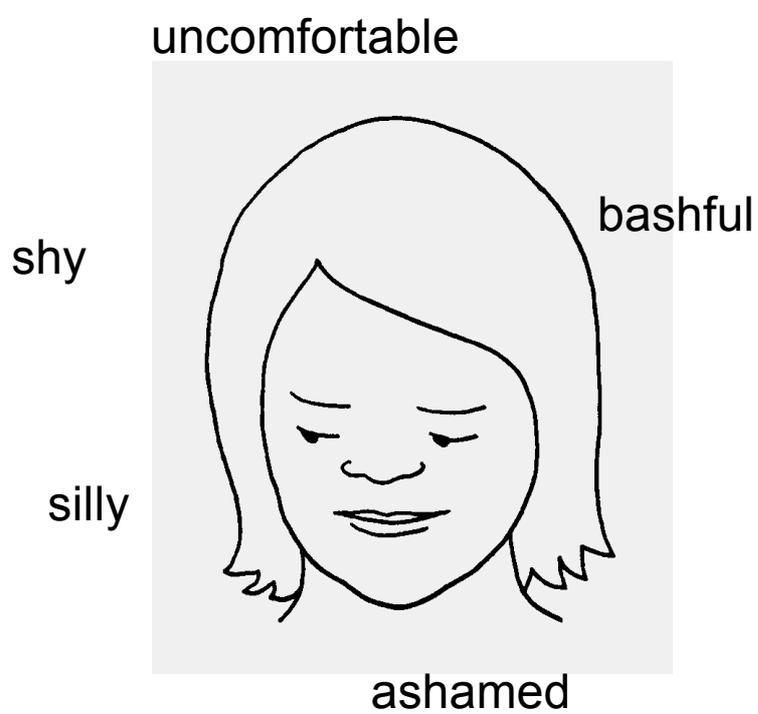
Others will know you are feeling embarrassed when your face and ears are red.

You can cover your embarrassment by laughing at yourself or changing the subject or moving away from the attention.

5 tips to try when you are embarrassed

- laugh it away
- admit your are embarrassed
- breath deeply to calm yourself down
- make a joke
- don't hold on to it.

## Other words for embarrassed feelings



# REVIEW

1. Can you find the face that matches each of these feelings:

Happy, angry, embarrassed, excited, confused, proud, sad, scared?

2. How does your body feel when you are:

Happy, angry, embarrassed, excited, confused, proud, sad, scared?

3. Role-play each of the feelings, showing how your body would look, and what you would say.

4. Here are some words to express happiness:

*I am feeling*

pleased, cheerful, blissful, comfortable, content, whole,

Here are some words to express unhappiness:

*I am feeling*

uneasy, lost, sorry, tearful, annoyed, bored, tired, worn out,  
hopeless, shy

Here are some words to express fear:

*I am feeling*

frightened, scared, afraid, worried,

Here are some words to express anger:

*I am feeling*

cross, mad, furious, annoyed, pushed

# SELF ESTEEM

WHO AM I ?

I AM ...

THINGS I CAN AND CANNOT DO

THINGS I WOULD LIKE TO DO

PEOPLE SPECIAL TO ME

I FEEL PROUD

REVIEW

## SELF ESTEEM

Self-esteem is how you feel about yourself. How you feel about yourself is always changing. Your self-esteem may change when you are with different people or doing different things.

Self esteem can be about: the way you look and what you think about yourself, the things you can do, the things you can not do and how **you** feel others think about you.

Everyone is good at different things. Self-esteem is about liking yourself for who you are. This means being happy with what you can do, your strengths and the things you do not do as well, your weaknesses.

We are going to talk about:

- who you are
- what you like about your looks
- what you like about your personality
- your strengths and weaknesses
- the people important to you and what they think about you
- what makes you proud

There will be facts to read and activities for you to do. You can get Mum, Dad or a friend to help.

SELF ESTEEM

1. I am good at:

---

---

2. I try my best at:

---

---

3. My friends like me because I am:

*pretty smart nice funny caring loud*

4. I am proud of my:

*work school family achievements*

## WHO AM I ?

*The way you look may be about:*

- how tall you are
- the size and shape of your body
- your face: its shape, your eyes, nose and mouth
- the colour of your skin and hair
- your grooming and how you dress
- your voice
- the way you hold your body
- how your body moves

*Your personality may be:*

- friendly, shy, bossy
- funny, serious
- quiet, always talking
- easy going, nervous, stubborn
- a person who likes to be with others or alone
- willing to share and learn
- willing to help others
- honest

How you feel about yourself is always changing.

Complete the next two work sheets about yourself as you are **NOW**. Circle the words that are most like you.

THE WAY I LOOK
----------------

I am: *tall short medium.*

My body is: *fit unfit slim average big*

My face is: *round square heart triangular*

My eyes are: *blue brown grey green hazel*

My nose is: *small big thin wide pointy rounded*

My mouth is: *small big smiling frowning*

My skin is: *fair tanned freckled dark*

My hair is: *blonde brown red black.*

My hair is: *long short straight curly thick fine*

The way I dress is: *neat messy cool*

I like to look: *pretty cool nice*

My voice is: *loud soft high low husky*

What I like about the way I look:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## MY PERSONALITY

I am: *friendly shy bossy*

I am mostly: *funny serious sad happy quiet loud*

I can be: *easy going nervous stubborn*

Some people I like are:

*friendly shy bossy*  
*funny serious sad*  
*happy quiet loud*  
*easy going nervous stubborn*

I am: *generous helpful selfish*

Sometimes I like to be alone: *Yes No*

I think it is good to tell the truth: *Yes No*

I like:

---

---

I do not like:

---

---

I feel (circle):    *sad*        *OK*        *happy*        *great*

I AM ...

Write down two things about yourself that make you feel great

I \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_

These are some of the facts that make up your self-esteem. You can change them if you want to.

## THINGS I CAN AND CANNOT DO

### *Things I can do:*

- The things you can do are another part of your self-esteem.
- The things you can do make you feel good about who you are.

### *Things I cannot do:*

- Everyone has things they can not do very well or at all. As part of your self-esteem it is good to try to learn to do these things or learn to do them better.
- Sometimes you are not happy about parts of your personality. To make you feel better you can work on your weaknesses and the way you act and try to become the person you want to.

**On the next page** draw or stick a picture of yourself in box 1.

In box 2 write or draw things you can do, like: *I can run fast*

In box 3 write or draw the activities you can do when you are alone like: *I listen to music*

In box 4 write or draw things you can do with your friends like: *I like to go out dancing with my friends*

In box 5 write or draw the things you would like to learn to do better like: *I would like to be nicer to my brother*

# I CAN DO

2) Things I can do	3) Things I can do when I am alone
4) Things I can do with friends	5) Things I can do better

1) Me

## THINGS I WOULD LIKE TO DO

Everyone has different dreams for the future.

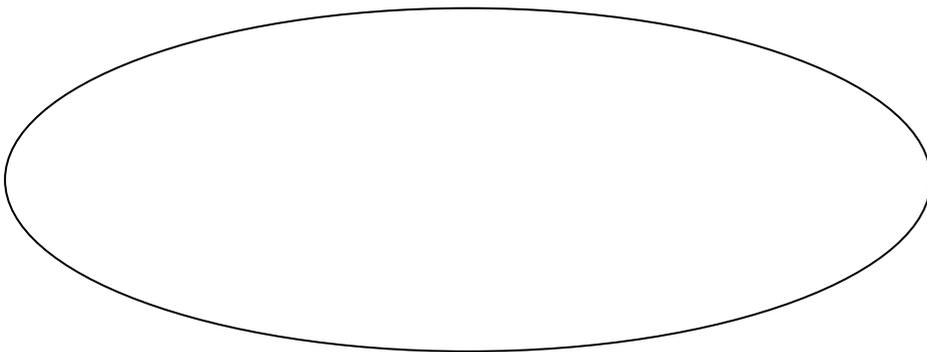
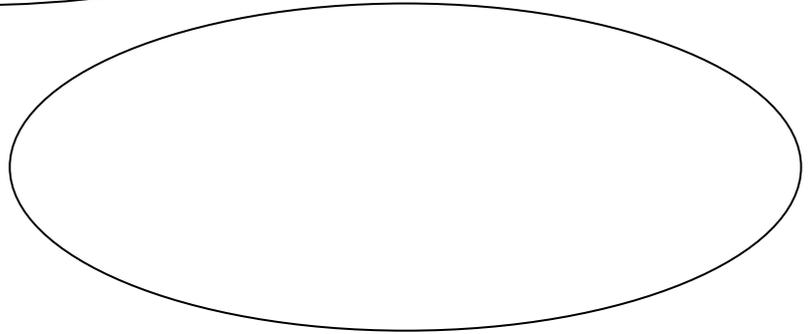
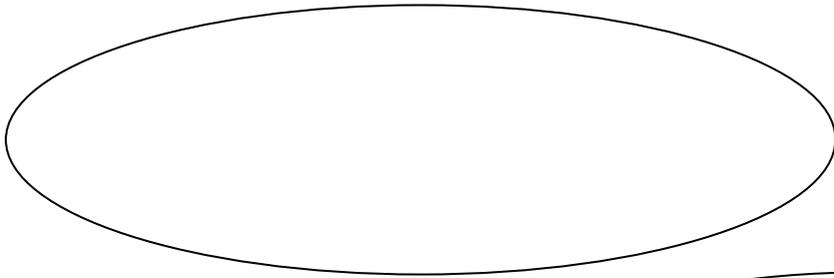
- Dreams are important because they give us something to aim for, they help us work out what we want and who we are.
- Making your dreams come true make you feel good about yourself.

Write in the dream clouds below the things you dream of doing in the future, like:

*going on a holiday, meeting new people, joining a club,*

*starting a TAFE class, learning to use a computer*

*or getting better at reading and writing*



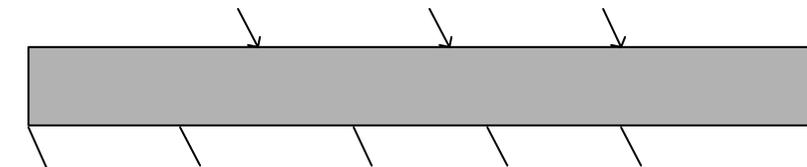
## PERSONAL TIME LINE

Get Mum, Dad or a friend to help you with this timeline.

On the dark part of the time line write important events of your life like: *starting or finishing school, learning to do something you found difficult, birthdays, your first date or a special time. You can stick on photos or draw pictures.*

On the light part of the time line write the things you would like to do in the future (you can use the dream clouds to help).

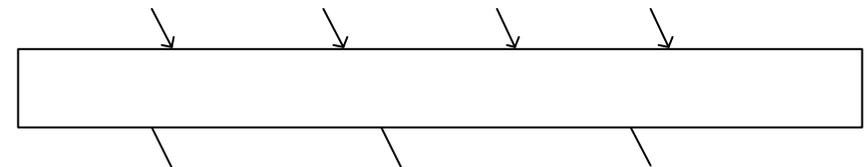
What I have done



Born

NOW

What I would like to do



## PEOPLE SPECIAL TO ME

- The people special to you can change how you feel.
- You can share what you are proud of with the people special to you.
- Sharing the things you are proud of makes you feel happy
- If the people special to you, are not happy about the things you share, this can make you feel unsure.
- It is important to listen to the people special to you but to make the choice that is best for you.

It is important to know the people who help your self esteem.

Write down the people special to you and how they make you feel good, *like*:

Rachael makes me feel good because she calls me on the phone.

John makes me feel good because he tells me when I've done things well.

• \_\_\_\_\_ makes me feel good because \_\_\_\_\_

---

• \_\_\_\_\_ makes me feel good because \_\_\_\_\_

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• \_\_\_\_\_ makes me feel good because \_\_\_\_\_

---

• \_\_\_\_\_ makes me feel good because \_\_\_\_\_

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• \_\_\_\_\_ makes me feel good because \_\_\_\_\_

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• \_\_\_\_\_ makes me feel good because \_\_\_\_\_

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• \_\_\_\_\_ makes me feel good because \_\_\_\_\_

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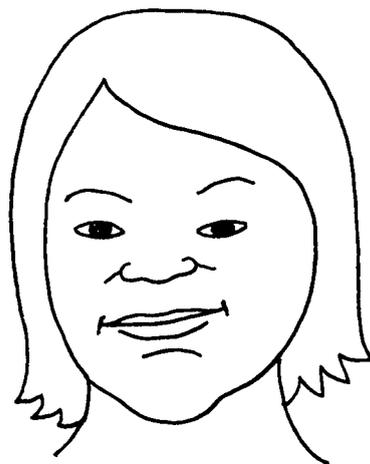
• \_\_\_\_\_ makes me feel good because \_\_\_\_\_

---

## I FEEL PROUD

- You have lots of things you can be proud of.
- It is good to feel proud of yourself and know you are a great person without others telling you.
- This happens when you are happy with yourself and the things you can do and not worry about the things you are not so good at.

Write or stick pictures around the face below, of things that have made you feel proud. Show your Mum, Dad or a friend.



## REVIEW

1. Tell the person you are working with what self esteem is?

2. Write down three things about your personality and the way you look that you like the most.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

3. Write down three things you can do that make you feel great

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. Tell a special person about the dream clouds and make a plan how to make your dream come true.

5. Finish these lines:

I am

---

I am

---

6. I would like to be better at:

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# FRIENDS

FRIENDSHIPS

WHAT IS A FRIEND?

WHY DO WE NEED FRIENDS?

MAKING NEW FRIENDS

RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS IN FRIENDSHIPS

WORKING AT FRIENDSHIP

ENDING A FRIENDSHIP

REVIEW

# FRIENDSHIPS

Friendships are very important to all of us. Friends are the people you like to be with, the people who support you and are proud of you when you do something good.

You can share your feelings with your friends and they make you feel good about yourself. Some people find it easy to make friends, some find it hard.

Being friends with someone means that you both have responsibilities and rights. You need to work at friendships to get them started and to keep them going.

We are going to talk about:

- what a friend is
- why you need friends
- who your friends are
- common interests that friends have
- where to make new friends
- how to act when meeting people for the first time
- how to ask someone out
- responsibilities and rights in friendships
- keeping friendships going
- problem solving in friendships
- ending friendships

# FRIENDS

If you need help to work on this you can ask your Mum, Dad or a friend .

1. My best friends name is: \_\_\_\_\_

2. I like my friend because:



3. Draw a picture of what you like to do together



## WHAT IS A FRIEND ?

A friend is a person:

- you like
- you can have fun with
- who listens to you
- who will stick by you
- who knows you well
- who will tell you the truth

Write down the name of one of your friends: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle some of the reasons why this person is your friend:

They are -

*nice funny truthful loving helpful pretty handsome*

We have friends to

- share
- care for
- stand by
- go places with
- to talk to
- to do things with

What do you share with your friends ?

---

How do you care for your friend ?

---

Circle the right answers below:

*Friends should -*

Listen to you	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
Tell other people your secrets	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
Care about your feelings	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
Keep things private	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
Trust each other	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
Tell you lies	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
Share with you	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>

## WHY DO WE NEED FRIENDS ?

It is important to have friends so that you are not lonely and can learn to understand and respect others.

Some people have many friends they like to spend time with. Other people may have one or two very close friends.

If you do not have a friend to talk to you may feel lonely. Lots of people feel lonely at some time.

When you feel lonely you might talk to yourself out loud. Make sure you are really by yourself then, because other people may think this is strange. Or they may feel sad because you are not talking to them.

Instead of talking to yourself you could try talking to someone else or try talking to yourself silently (in your head) without talking out loud.

Write the names or stick a photo of some of your close friends below. Write down why you have these people as your friends.

My friend's name is: \_\_\_\_\_

This person is my friend because:

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---

---

My friend's name is: \_\_\_\_\_

This person is my friend because:

---

---

---

## SHARING

Friends like going to the same places and doing the same things.  
They have lots to talk about.

Sharing your ideas and thoughts is important in a friendship.  
Sharing friends is important too. You can be friends with lots of  
people in a group.

Write a list below of some activities you and your friends like to do  
together. *An example is:*

My friend Jo likes going to the movies and so  
do I.

My friend \_\_\_\_\_ likes \_\_\_\_\_  
and so do I.

My friend \_\_\_\_\_ likes \_\_\_\_\_  
and so do I.

My friend \_\_\_\_\_ likes \_\_\_\_\_  
and so do I.

My friend \_\_\_\_\_ likes \_\_\_\_\_  
and so do I.

# MAKING NEW FRIENDS

## *WHERE TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS*

You can meet friends in many places.

You might meet new friends at:

- School
- Work
- TAFE
- Sport
- Social clubs
- Parties

Where have you met your friends?

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## *ASKING A FRIEND OUT*

You might like to ask someone out because you like them and enjoy doing things with them. Asking a new friend out can make you feel nervous. You can use these steps to ask a friend out.

They are:

- Smile and make eye contact
- Say “Hello”
- Ask them if they would like to go out
- Listen to their answer
- If they want to go out, talk about where you would like to go
- If they do not want to go out say “ that is okay, maybe another time”

If a person does not want to go out with you, they could be busy.

Try asking the person out again, if they keep saying “No”, maybe they don’t want to be your friend.

This is okay. Try again with another person you like.

It is good to use a planner and practice what you are going to say when you ask a friend out.

If you are asking a friend out in person, you can role play with someone what you will say.

If asking a friend out over the phone, you can role play or write down on paper what you are going to say and then read it out loud.

Planner: Asking a friend out

Who will you ask out? \_\_\_\_\_

What common interests do you share? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Where will you go ? \_\_\_\_\_

When will you go ? \_\_\_\_\_

How much will it cost ? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you get there?

*car bus taxi ferry train walk*

Where will you meet ? \_\_\_\_\_

What time will you meet ? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you ask them out ? *by phone or in person*

When will you ask them out ? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will help you if you need it ? \_\_\_\_\_

## RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS IN FRIENDSHIP

As a friend you have responsibilities. Having a responsibility means that there are some things that you **must** do to be a friend.

*Some responsibilities of being a friend are :*

- Keeping in touch
- Not being selfish
- Keeping things private if you have been asked to
- Standing by your friends when they are in trouble or are sad
- Saying sorry if you have done the wrong thing or if you have been hurtful
- Doing what you say you will do
- Working out any problems
- Listening to your friend
- Being truthful

As a friend you also have rights. This means you should be treated in a good way.

*Some of your rights as a friend are :*

- To be treated fairly and nicely
- To be liked for who you are
- That you both work at your friendship
- That you are respected
- That you can be truthful and talk about your problems
- To be listened to
- To end a friendship

You need to work hard at being a good friend.

Friendships need both people to respect each other's rights and responsibilities.

Be honest with your friend.

## WORKING AT FRIENDSHIPS

You have a responsibility to try and sort out problems together. If you have tried to work out your problems and are still not happy you can think about ending the friendship.

### *STAYING FRIENDS*

There are many things you need to do to stay friends

If someone is important to you, you need to work hard at being a good friend by :

- Caring about them
- Knowing about things that are important to them
- Talk about it when you do not think the same way

Can you think of other ways of being a good friend ? Write them down.

---

---

### *PROBLEM SOLVING IN FRIENDSHIPS*

Sometimes you will have problems. You might fight or feel angry with your friend. This is natural. Try and fix the problem quickly. Saying sorry is a good start.

*Problems may be:*

- Not spending enough time together
- Liking different things
- Your friend becomes close to someone you wanted to be your boyfriend or girlfriend
- You or your friend makes new friends
- You or your friend are mean to each other
- You or your friend are being selfish
- You or your friend are changing

When you have problems with a friend it is important to talk to them, share their feelings and try to solve the problem together. Get Mum, Dad or a friend to help you.

Think of a time, you had a problem with a friend.

What was the problem?

---

Did you talk about it?    *yes*    *no*

Did you talk about how the problem made you feel ?

---

What did you say?

---

---

---

How did you fix the problem?

---

---

---

Could you have done anything else ?

---

---

---

Were you happy with how you worked out the problem ?

---

---

---

## ENDING A FRIENDSHIP

Sometimes you do not stay friends with people.

*Friendships may end if:*

- You do not work at them
- You can not solve your problems
- You grow apart
- Your interests change
- Your friend moves far away
- Your friend dies

When a friendship ends you may feel sad, lonely, angry, relieved, happy, or guilty. The feelings you have will be based on why your friendship ended and how it ended.

If you are feeling down about a friendship ending, your self-esteem may be low and you should do something to cheer yourself up.

Think of some ways you could make yourself feel better, and write them down. Like: *have a bath*

---

---

## REVIEW

1. **Read** the story below and **talk** about the questions with your Mum, Dad or a friend.

Alice loved to play basketball. She played every Saturday with Special Olympics. After basketball Alice would always go out for lunch, and then get the bus to the shops.

At a party on Friday night Alice saw a girl who she had seen before. Alice wanted to talk to her.

She walked up to the girl and smiled and said, “ Hi, my name is Alice, where do I know you from?”

Alice listened while the girl replied “ I am Fiona, do you play basketball?”

Alice told Fiona that she played basketball with Special Olympics on Saturday. They agreed that they must have seen each other at the courts.

Alice asked Fiona what else she liked to do.

Fiona said “I love to go to BBQs and I love to shop”. As Fiona and Alice talked they found they had many common interests. During the next week Alice thought a lot about Fiona and how nice it might be to have her as a friend. Alice thought she would ask her out.

Alice decided to write down and practice what she was going to say to Fiona and where they were going, as she sometimes got nervous asking out new friends.

On Saturday at basketball, Alice told Fiona she was going shopping that afternoon at about 2.00 pm and would Fiona like to come. Fiona was delighted and said she would love to. They had a great time shopping and planned to go out together again.

## QUESTIONS

Where did Alice and Fiona meet?

What common interests did they share?

Did Alice follow the five steps in how to act when she met Fiona?

Did Fiona want to talk to Alice?

How do you know she wanted to talk to Alice?

Can you complete the planner for Alice to ask Fiona out?

2. Read the problems below and work out the responsibilities the friends have and the solution.

Kate really likes bowling and she called her friend Sue to ask her to go with her. Sue would really like to go out with Kate, but she does not like bowling.

Responsibilities:

---

---

Solutions:

---

---

Ted has invited Sarah on a date for dinner, they have agreed to meet each other at the restaurant at 7.00 pm. Ted is there at 7.00 pm but Sarah is not and still has not arrived at 7.30 pm.

Responsibilities:

---

---

Solutions:

---

---

Bill is going out to the movies with Greg. Before he leaves to meet Greg, Angela, a girl he really likes, calls and invites him to a party. Bill would really like to go to the party with Angela.

Responsibilities:

---

---

Solutions:

---

---

## ANSWERS:

Responsibilities for Sue:

- *to be honest with Kate that she does not like bowling*

Solution:

- *to go to a place they both like*

Responsibilities :

- *Sarah – to call if she is going to be late or is not coming*
- *Ted – to call his home or Sarah’s home and see if she has left a message and is okay*

Solution:

- *For Sarah to make sure she gets places on time, or is honest if she does not want to go*

Responsibilities:

- *For Bill to stick to the plans he made with Greg, because he made them first*

Solution:

- *For Bill to organise another time to go out with Angela*

# SEXUALITY

BODY PARTS

GROWING UP - GIRL TO WOMAN

SEXY FEELINGS

MASTURBATION

RELATIONSHIPS

HAVING SEX

SEXUAL ASSAULT

# BODY PARTS

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## ***PUBLIC PARTS***

*Do you know the **public** parts of the body?*

Think of all the ones you know.

It is OK for people to see the **public** parts of the body.

Some **public** body parts are:

- arms
- face
- feet
- hands



## PRIVATE PARTS

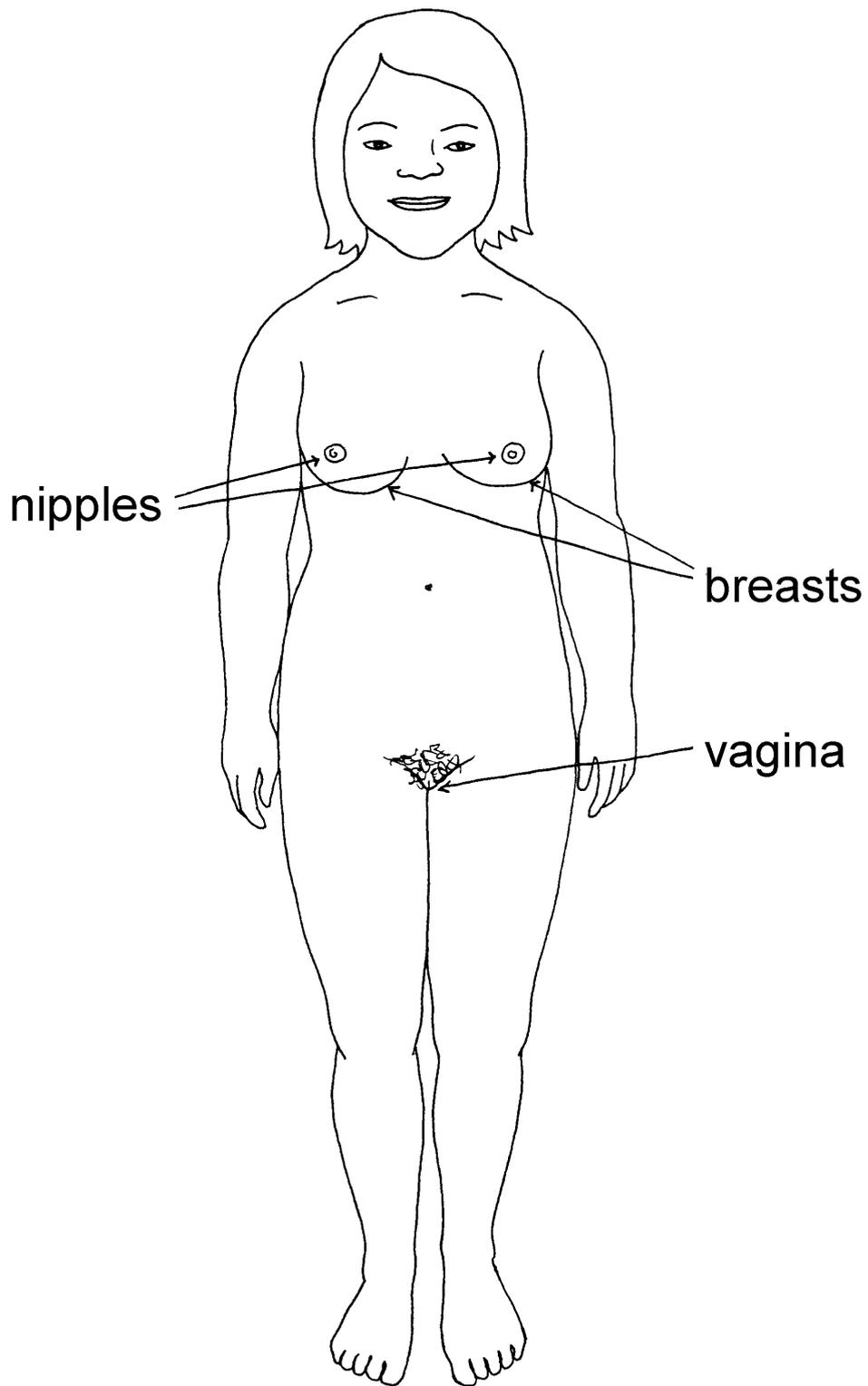
*Do you know the **private** parts of your body?*

Think of all the ones you know.

The **private** parts of the body are usually covered by underwear.

The **private** parts of a woman's body are her

- breasts
- vagina
- bottom



Private parts of a woman's body

*Do you know what these parts are for?*

***Breasts***

Come in all different shapes and sizes.

Can feel good when they are touched.

Have nipples at the end of each one.

***Nipples***

Can feel good when they are touched.

When a baby is born it sucks milk from its mother's nipples.

## ***Vagina***

Is the hole between your legs.

Is where the blood comes out when you get your period.

Is where a girl and woman feels sexy feelings.

Is where a man's penis goes when he has sex with a woman.

Is where the baby comes out of its mother when it is being born.

When you wee it comes from a tiny hole just near your vagina.

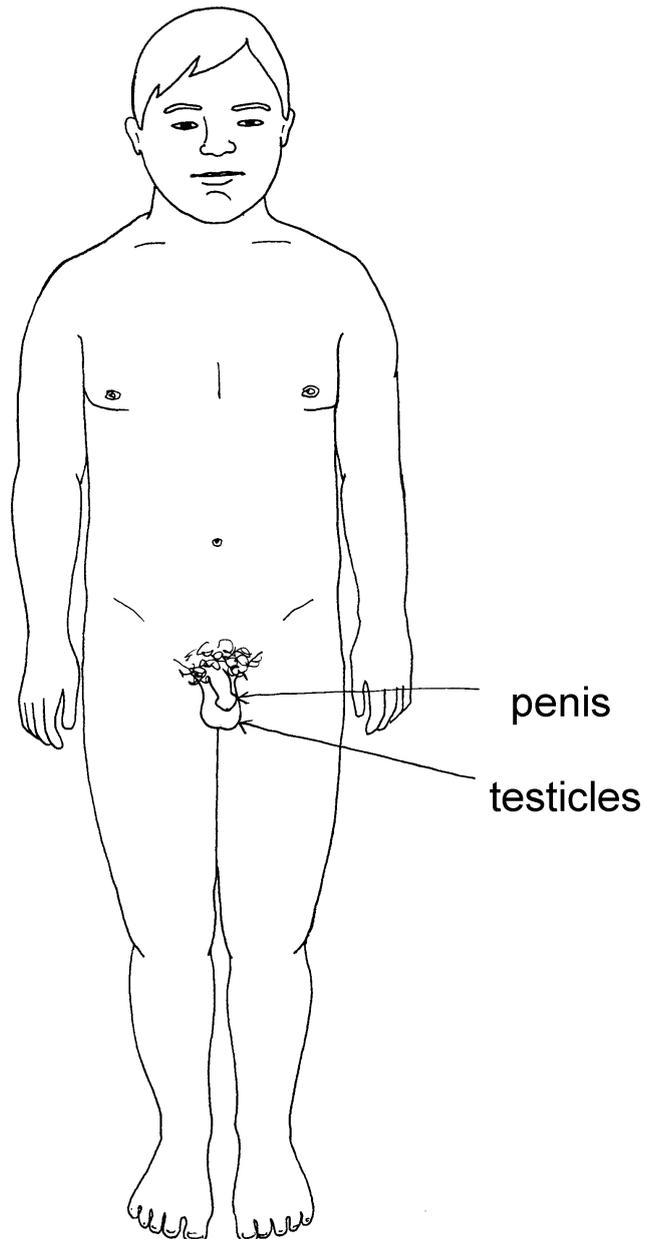
## ***Bottom***

Is where the poo comes from when you go to the toilet.

The **private** parts of a man's body are his

- penis
- testicles
- bottom

*Do you know what these parts are for ?*



### *Penis*

Hangs between a man's legs.

Has a hole at the end where the wee comes out.

Gets hard when a man has sexy feelings.

It goes into the woman's vagina when they have sex.

### *Testicles*

Are little bags of skin hanging under the penis.

Make the seeds for making babies.

### *Bottom*

Is where the poo comes from when a man goes to the toilet.

It is wrong for someone to touch **your private** parts unless **you** say it is OK.

It is wrong for someone to make **you** touch their **private** parts or look at their **private** parts.

It is wrong for **you** to touch someone on their **private** parts if they **don't** want you to.

## PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PLACES

Some places are **private**.

*Can you think of some **private** places?*

Your bedroom is a **private** place, unless you share it with another person. The bathroom or toilet is a **private** place.

If you are in a **private** place **you** are the only person who can decide who comes in there. It is wrong to go into a person's **private** place unless you are invited.

Some places are **public**.

*Can you think of some **public** places?*

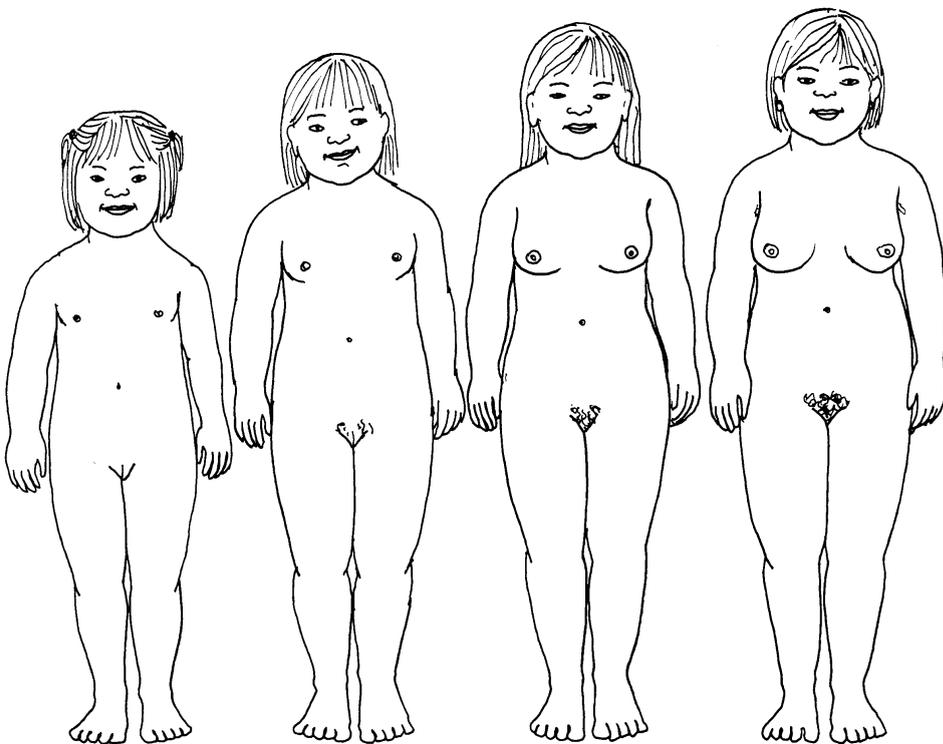
A place is **public** if other people can go there. A shop, park, bus, train or lounge room are **public** places.

It is OK to touch **public** parts of the body if you are in a **public** place. You can hold hands with a friend on the train if you want to.

It is OK to touch **private** parts of the body if you are in a **private** place. You can masturbate in your bedroom or bathroom if you want to and you are by yourself.

# GROWING UP GIRL TO WOMAN

When a girl is growing into a woman, changes happen in her body.  
This occurs between the ages of about 10 and 16.



*Do you know what these changes are ?*

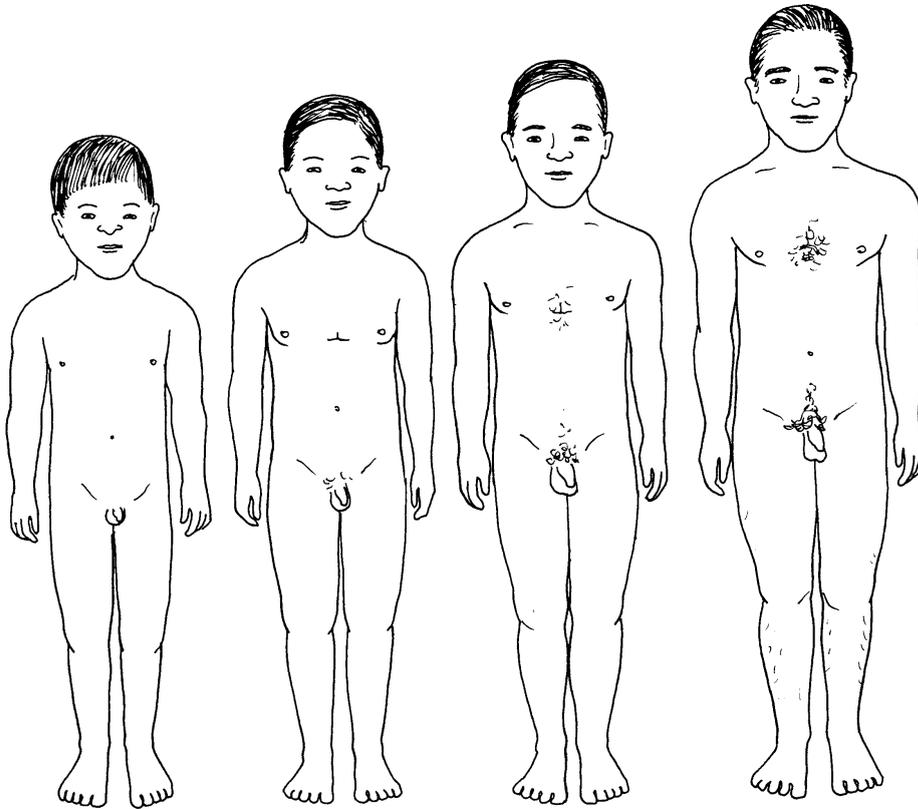
- Hair grows under her arms
- Hair grow around her vagina  
(this is called pubic hair)
- Her breasts grow bigger
- Her body grows wider and taller
- She gets her periods

With all these things happening, a girl's feelings also go through lots of changes.

Sometimes she feels very happy but in a little while, she can feel very down or sad. Its hard to understand what is happening at that time, but it helps to know that it is all a part of growing up.

Sometimes a girl can feel very embarrassed by the changes in her body. Sometimes she can think about boys a lot and think of kissing them or touching them. This is all a normal part of changing from a girl into a woman.

Boys also go through changes when they are growing from a boy into a man.



*Do you know what these changes are ?*

He grows hair under his arms, on his face and around his penis.

Some boys get hair on their chest and back also.

His voice gets deeper.

His body grows bigger in his chest. He grows taller.

His penis grows larger. White sticky stuff, called semen, can now come out of his penis.

With all these things happening, a boy's feelings also go through lots of changes.

## PERIODS

When a girl is changing into a woman she gets her periods. This means that blood comes out of her vagina each month. It lasts for about 2 – 7 days and then it stops until the next month.

Sometimes just before a girl gets her period she can feel miserable. Sometimes she can feel a little bit sad or tired or cranky. These things go away, usually when she starts to bleed.

Some girls and women get pain in their stomach or sore breasts when they are bleeding.

If this happens to you, tell someone so they can help you.

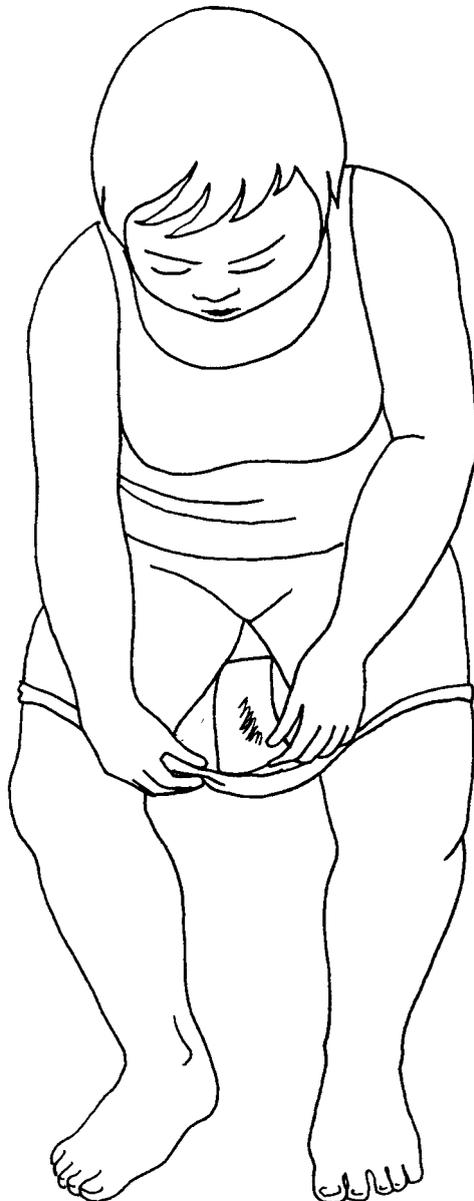
Maybe you can tell your mum or someone else you know will help you. Sometimes a hot water bottle on your stomach takes the pain away.

Also there are special tablets that you can buy to help you.

Starting your period means that you are changing into a woman. You are not sick. It happens to most girls when they are growing up.

When you have your period you wear something inside your underpants, next to your vagina, so the blood will not get on your clothes. This is called a pad.

You should change your pad during the day. Some girls have a lot of blood and others only bleed a little. If you bleed a lot you will need to change your pad more often during the day.



When you take off your pad you should wrap it up in toilet paper or a brown paper bag and put it in the bin. If you get a little blood on your clothes don't worry, it will wash out.

You can do all the things you usually do when you have your period. You can have a bath, dance, go to school or work, swim. You can't wear a pad when you swim - then you can wear a tampon.

A tampon is a little tube of cotton that you can wear inside your vagina to catch the blood. They can be a little difficult to learn to use. Your mum or your sister might show you how to use a tampon if you want to, or you could ask another woman you trust to help you.

You can buy pads and tampons at the supermarket or the chemist.

## SEXY FEELINGS

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One of the things that happens to us when we are changing and growing, is that we may get some new feelings that we have never felt before.

These new feelings sometimes happen in our bodies.

We might get new feelings in our private parts that make us feel like touching ourselves there.

These feelings might make us want to touch other people on their private parts. Or we might think about kissing or cuddling other people.

These are called sexy feelings and most people have them.

It is OK to have these feelings, but we need to know what to do about them so we don't hurt or upset ourselves or anyone else.

It is OK to touch your private parts, but you can only do this in a private place like your bedroom or bathroom.

It is OK to kiss or cuddle but you can only do this when the other person wants you to and only in a private place.

You may think a lot about having a boyfriend or girlfriend. It can feel very exciting to think about kissing or touching them.

These feelings are all a part of growing up.

These new feelings can be very big sometimes and you may feel cranky or angry with other people. It gets easier as you get older and you have grown to be an adult.

# MASTURBATION

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Sometimes people touch their private parts themselves. This is called “playing with yourself”, “wanking”, or masturbation. It can feel very good to touch yourself this way. It cannot hurt you to masturbate.

Some people say it is bad but this is not true because you own your body.

Not everyone masturbates. It is up to you.

When you masturbate it is important that you only do it in a private place where you can be alone. Your bedroom or the bathroom is a private place.

It is also important to remember that you can't always masturbate when you feel like it.

Sometimes you might be eating dinner with your family or friends might be visiting. Then you need to wait until you have finished whatever it is you are doing and you can have time to yourself.

When girls and women masturbate they usually touch themselves on their vagina and clitoris. This can make their vagina wet and slippery. Sometimes they touch their nipples too. The good feeling can get very big and grow bigger. Some people have an orgasm and their body feels very relaxed afterwards.

You must only touch your private parts in a private place and it is important to fix your clothes up and to wash your hands afterwards.

If you do it in front of other people they will get very angry. They may be upset or embarrassed.

It is not OK to touch your private parts in a public place, like in the lounge room or at the shops.

# RELATIONSHIPS

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We have many different relationships in our lives. Having a relationship means getting to know another person.

Think of all the people that you know. You have a different kind of relationship with each of them.

Some people are very special. These people are often our parents and grandparents and our best friends. Sometimes we might have a special boyfriend or girlfriend.

As we grow up we become more interested in having a boyfriend or girlfriend of our own.

It is not always easy to meet that person, but it is usually the most special relationship that we have.

Not everyone has these special people in their lives; it is different for everyone.

Our hearts are big and we can love many people. When we have a boyfriend or girlfriend we can have feelings for him or her that we may not have for anyone else.

You may feel like hugging or kissing that special person. You may get very excited when they are around and feel like you want to touch them in a sexy way. These feelings happen when you are becoming a woman. They are natural and healthy.

It is OK to hug and kiss people close to us if they want to hug and kiss as well.

Sometimes relationships are very confusing because we may have big feelings for someone but they do not have the same feelings for us. This can hurt us, but it is also part of growing up and learning about life.

This is an important time in your life when you are learning about your feelings and having different experiences. It can be hard, but it may help to know that these feelings happen to most of us when we are growing up.

Some people get these special sexy feelings for someone the same as them – a woman feels this about another woman or a man about another man.

This is OK as long as both people feel good about it. Not everyone understands that it is OK to feel this way. If you feel like this, it is good to talk to someone who understands.

# HAVING SEX

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Sometimes when people care about each other they want to have sex. Some people call this making love, bonking, screwing or fucking.

There are lots of different things people do together when they have sexy feelings for each other.

They can hold hands.

They can kiss and cuddle each other.

They can touch the other person's body and touch them or kiss and suck them on their vagina, breasts or penis.

All these things can feel very good but only if both people are happy to do it.

Sometimes people have such big feelings to be close to each other that they want to have sex. Having sex can feel very good but only if both people want to do it.

When the woman has sexy feelings her vagina gets wet and slippery. When a man has sexy feelings his penis gets hard.

The man can put his penis into the woman's wet vagina. Then he moves it gently in and out. This is called having sex.

Some white sticky wet stuff might come from his penis and go into her vagina. The woman could become pregnant. It is a good idea to talk to someone who can help you learn how to have sex without making a baby.

Every time you have sex, a man needs to wear a condom on his penis. This will keep you healthy. You need to talk to someone to teach you how to use a condom.

Here is a telephone number so you can talk to someone about this if you need to. You can ring Family Planning on 02 9716 6099.

# SEXUAL ASSAULT

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Sexual assault is if someone touches you on your private parts and you do not want them to.

Sexual assault is also when someone makes you touch them on their private parts or look at their private parts and you don't want to.

It can make you feel very afraid, it can hurt you. You may try to say "**NO**" or "**STOP**" loudly, but the person might not stop.

You might feel bad or worried because you think you have done something wrong.

If this happens to you - **you have not done anything wrong.**

The person should not have done this to you. It is not your fault.

Sometimes the person who hurts you is someone you know and care about. Sometimes the person is a stranger.

Some people feel very afraid to tell anyone that it happened to them because they think they will get into trouble. That is not true. It was wrong for a person to touch someone's private parts unless they say it is OK.

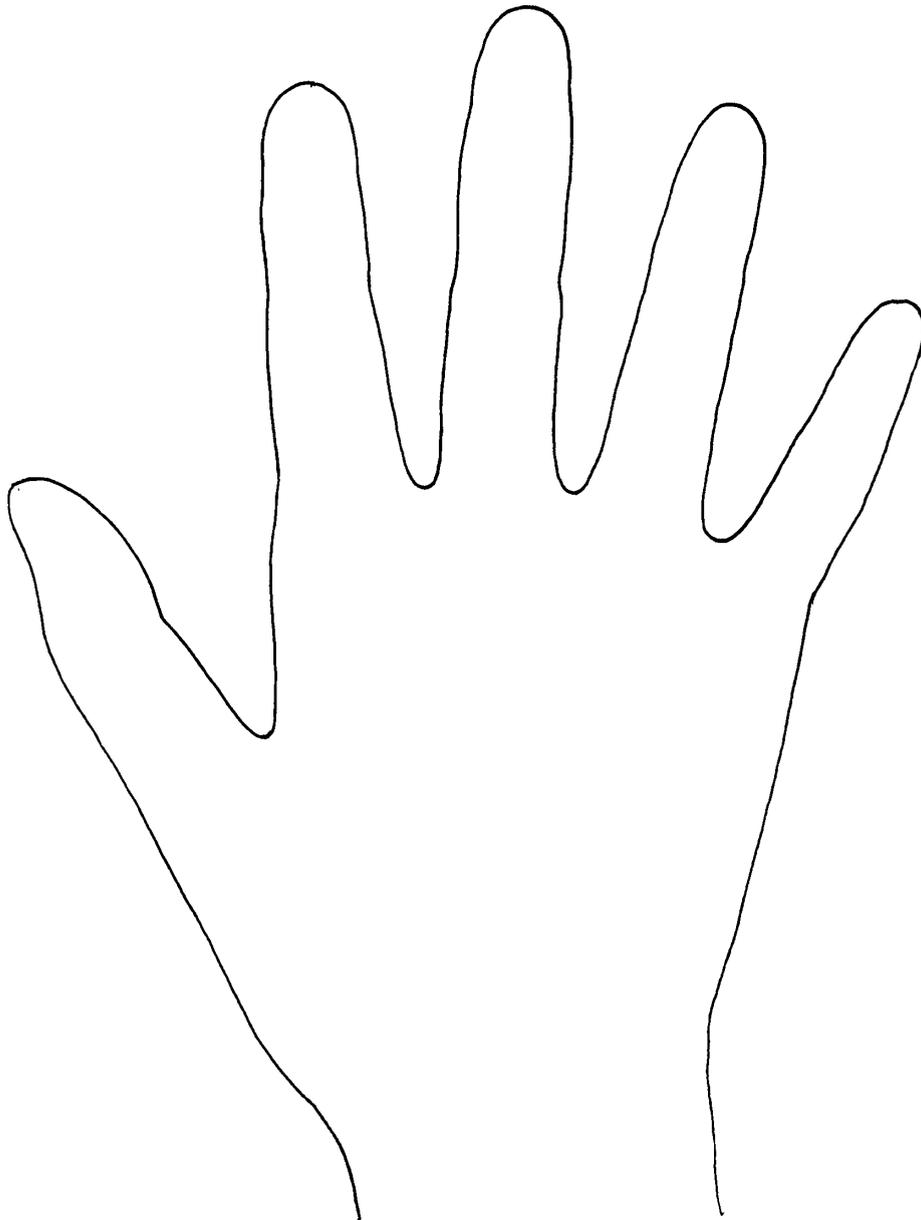
You own your body. It belongs to you. You are the only person who can say who touches you.



**“NO, STOP!”**

If this happens to you, you need to tell someone about it so they can help you.

**Can you think of who to tell ?**



This is your helping hand.

Think of 5 people who can help you if this happens to you. Now write one name on each finger of the hand.

You might need help to do this. Make sure you have someone from each place where you spend time.

Have

- someone in your family
- someone at school
- someone who lives in your street
- and a friend

If someone tries to touch you on your private parts you can try to say:

**NO, GO AWAY !**

They should stop. If they do not stop you need to get help as soon as you can.

You need to tell someone on your helping hand.

If the person you go to cannot help you, go to another person on your hand until you get help.

Remember- it is **not** your fault.

You need help.

You need someone to look after you.

Even if it happened a long time ago there are people you can talk to.

Telephone numbers of people you can talk to:

**Northern Sydney Sexual Assault Help Centre.**

02 9926 7580 9am-5pm, Mon - Fri, 02 9926 7111 (a.h.)

**Disability Counsellor, Family Planning NSW**

02 9716 6099