

10th July, 2024

THIRD QUARTERLY MEETING

Global Coalition to Promote Comprehensive Sexuality and Personal Safety Education



OVERVIEW

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION (CSE) AND PERSONAL SAFETY EDUCATION (PSE) FOR CHILDREN UNDER 7

The 3rd Quarterly Meeting of the Global Coalition was held on 10th July, 2024. An international panel drawn from Australia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and South Africa discussed:

1. The importance of talking about personal safety and sexuality with young children (under 7 years old).
2. What to talk about, how much, and how? The vocabulary, language, and approach. How to be respectful, factual, and at ease when answering their questions?
3. How to adapt the discussions to our sociocultural and religious contexts and uphold children's right to safety and dignity?

KEY

TAKEAWAYS

1 Comprehensive Sexuality Core Principles and Concepts

There's a need for respectful discussions using age-appropriate language around certain core principles of protective behaviours including:

- **Respect for All Parts of the Body:** Emphasize the importance of all body parts and their functions. Avoid associating shame or labelling body parts and functions as dirty or bad.
- **Boundaries and consent:** Explain personal boundaries and that it's okay to say "no" to unsafe and unwanted touches. Encourage respect for their own and others' boundaries.

- **Providing authentic, factual answers:** Give honest and age-appropriate answers to children's questions about their bodies, using simple language and analogies.
- **Gender Equity:** All people, regardless of gender or sex, are equally human and deserving of dignity and safety. They possess fundamental rights that must be upheld without infringing upon the rights of others.
- **Personal Safety Rules:** Explain social rules about clothing, touching, and talking to support children in identifying unsafe behaviour of others and behaving in a safe manner themselves. (Exception to these rules is socio-sexual play amongst 3–7 year olds. Refer to [ppt](#) for details)
- **Personal Safety Guide:** Say No (if you can) –Go (away as and when you can) –Tell (safe adult/adults until you get the help you need).
- **Responsibility and Accountability:** Support children in taking responsibility for their actions and words, apologising genuinely for mistakes, and making positive choices.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

2 Strategies and Approaches

Situational Learning

- Utilize everyday moments, such as during bath time or while caring for the child, to reinforce concepts and reiterate personal safety rules.
- Engage in frequent, value-based, and consistent conversations rather than isolated discussions.

Responsive Answering

- Address children's questions promptly or as soon as possible to ensure they receive timely and accurate information.

Localise, not just translate"

- Beyond translating the PSE material into the child's

language, also adapt relevant examples and scenarios to reflect the child's cultural and social environment, deepening their understanding as well as making the information more relatable.

- Use stories, analogies, books, illustrations, and videos to support your explanations.
- Engage in discussions with the child (rather than a Q&A), asking what they know and think, and then address any gaps or misconceptions.

Engage with School/ Preschool/ Play home

- Inquire if CSE and PSE are included in the school's programs or curriculum.
- Enquire if the school/ preschool/ play home has a Child Protection Policy, if not, encourage/ recommend that they adopt one
- Advocate for integration of CSE and PSE with current educational priorities and standards to maximize their effectiveness and acceptance.

KEY

TAKEAWAYS

3 Adapting Information in a Conservative Socio-cultural and Religious Milieu

Use Appropriate Vocabulary

Communicate using the words and language spoken at home to support clarity and comfort. Communicating in one's native language normalises talking about sexuality and enhances understanding. Depending on the comfort and age of the child, the following hierarchy of ideal approaches to the vocabulary used to talk about sexuality can be used:

- Using anatomical terms in the native language (for eg: Yoni/ Ling for vagina/ penis in Hindi)
- Using anatomical terms in the second language (for eg: vagina, penis, genitals)
- Using unambiguous terms in the native language (for eg: susu-place, kaka-place for urethra/vulva and anus in Hindi)

- Using unambiguous terms in the second language (for eg: peepee-place, potty-place in English)

Expand on Helpful Cultural Beliefs

- Emphasize cultural values like respect, extending it beyond respect for elders to include all individuals.

Incorporate Cultural Stories/References

- Draw upon your cultural heritage and stories from your religion/ culture/ tribe to teach concepts of boundaries, consent, personal safety, taking responsibility, being accountable, etc.
- Use references to God/Nature/ Spirituality/Philosophy when talking about how bodies are made if that is an important part of one's culture

Navigating through Contradictory Messages

- Encourage a rights-based, scientific, empathetic, and logical approach to thinking. This equips children to analyze conflicting messages, laws, and beliefs critically.
- Support children in aligning their beliefs with their actions. This fosters personal integrity and reduces cognitive dissonance.
- Emphasize that our freedom to act extends as long as it doesn't infringe upon the rights of others. This establishes a foundation for respectful and responsible decision-making.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

4 Diversity in Sexuality and Gender Identities

“Should diversity in sexuality and gender identities be included in discussions with children under 7? Will they understand it?”

- The answer is YES, and we can make it understandable for them.
- Children are not too young to understand about diversity in sexuality and gender identities.

Diversity is the Norm in Nature

- It is understandable that some adults may feel uncomfortable or unsure about talking about diversity in gender and sexuality. We cannot ignore the discomfort but we can acknowledge the discomfort and think about the best ways to address it.
- Accept that diversity is the norm in nature.
- Educate yourself about the topic to build your capacity to talk about it with ease and conviction.

Introduce Early and Build Over Time:
Just as we introduce basic concepts in subjects like mathematics and build on them as the child grows, we can talk about diversity in sexuality and gender identities early on and continue to develop their understanding over time.

Use language that is inclusive of diversity in sexual and gender identities

- Acknowledge that there are many sexes, typically listed as female and male on birth certificates. Avoid using terms like "two" or "opposite" when referring to sex.
- Refrain from gender stereotyping in areas such as clothing, games, toys, and other activities that the child engages in.
- Avoid stigmatizing or ridiculing behaviours, identities, and expressions that deviate from social norms.
- Do not use derogatory terms or make "jokes" that can harm or belittle others.

Use analogies and simple words to make it relatable to the child

For example, a 3-year-old child asked her relative, “Are you a girl or a boy?” Her relative answered “In my brain and my heart, I am a girl. In my body I am a man.” The girl replied, “Oh, then you are a girl. Because two – head and heart – is more than one (body)!” She went on to insist that all family members refer to the relative by the name they had chosen otherwise she wont play with them!

Thank you!

Find more information [here](#)

or

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