

11. INTERVENTION TRAINING WITH FAMILIES: THE FAMILY AS A COMPANION IN AFFECTIVE- SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

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1 - INTRODUCTION

In this topic, we will address the active role of families as guides in affective-sexual education, including respect for diversity, the importance of consent, and the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights for everyone, including people with disabilities. We will also reflect on beliefs, fears, and barriers that may arise, and offer concrete tools for open and effective communication.

We will provide guidelines to help us engage and educate families in this area, with the goal of offering resources, strategies, and support so that families can accompany their sons and daughters with respect, empathy, and accurate information—thereby strengthening their emotional well-being and personal development.

The family plays a fundamental role in the emotional and sexual development of children and adolescents. From the earliest years of life, the family environment provides the first experiences of affection, respect, boundaries, and communication, which form the foundation for building healthy and respectful relationships in the future.

Talking about sexuality is not limited to the physical or biological aspects; it also includes emotions, identity, relationships, values, and rights. For this reason, family involvement in this area is essential—not only to share information but also to create a space of trust, listening, and respect where each person can grow with autonomy and confidence.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfYSpuKq_-8

2. THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN AFFECTIVE-SEXUAL EDUCATION

2.1 THE FAMILY AS THE FIRST SOURCE OF EMOTIONAL AND SEXUAL EDUCATION

Affective-sexual education doesn't begin at school or during adolescence—it begins at home, in early childhood. The way a family shows affection, expresses emotions, sets boundaries, and resolves conflicts teaches children indirectly how to relate to others. That's why the family is often called the first emotional and sexual school. Children and adolescents observe, ask questions, and imitate. If there is openness at home to talk about the body, feelings, respect, and relationships, it lays a strong foundation for them to grow with confidence, self-esteem, and critical thinking.

Often, due to fear or overprotection, these topics are avoided or postponed, creating gaps that may later be filled with misinformation or confusion.

As educators, it is essential to support families in recognizing their role in transmitting sexual education.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT FAMILIES DO NOT COMPLETELY DELEGATE THIS RESPONSIBILITY TO SCHOOLS, TEACHERS, THERAPISTS, ETC., BUT RATHER RECOGNIZE THEMSELVES AS THE PRIMARY GUIDES.



2.2 PROTECTION OF RIGHTS

Accompanying the affective-sexual development of sons and daughters also means protecting their rights to:

- Receive information
- Make decisions about their own bodies
- Express their identity
- Live free from violence and discrimination

Informed and committed families can become key allies in breaking stereotypes, combating prejudice, and building safer and more respectful environments.

3.SEXUALITY AND DISABILITY: BREAKING DOWN PREJUDICES

Talking about sexuality in the context of disability still generates resistance in many families. These hesitations do not come from disinterest but rather from fear, lack of knowledge, insecurity, or overprotection.

As educators, it is key to understand these barriers in order to support families with empathy and without judgment.

COMMON LIMITING BELIEFS:

- INFANTILIZATION
- DENIAL OF DESIRE
- OVERPROTECTION
- LACK OF INFORMATION



OVERPROTECTION DUE TO FEAR OF ABUSE OR SOCIAL REJECTION

Many times, silence becomes a protection mechanism. Although well-intentioned, this silence can leave young people more exposed to abuse, toxic relationships, or confusion. The best prevention is affective-sexual education focused on rights and care.

SHAME OR LACK OF TOOLS TO TALK ABOUT THE TOPIC

Some families don't know how to start, what words to use, or feel embarrassed due to their own experiences. That's why it's crucial to provide them with accessible materials, concrete examples, and spaces for dialogue where they can ask questions without feeling judged.

3.1 MYTHS AND REALITIES ABOUT SEXUALITY IN PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Throughout the units of this syllabus, common myths and prejudices surrounding the sexuality of people with disabilities have been addressed, along with various related topics.

Here, we will present some of the most common ones, but it is recommended to review the content covered in the previous units to work on these myths and prejudices with families.

DENIAL OF DESIRE OR AFFECTIVE-SEXUAL CAPACITY

● MYTH: "People with disabilities have no sexual interest."

✓ REALITY:

All people have sexuality, regardless of their level of ability.

This denial stems from infantilization or the idea that sexuality only exists in couples or in a genital way.

Sexuality is not only about genitality: it includes affection, identity, bonds, pleasure, care, and intimacy.

Young people with disabilities also feel desire, curiosity, love, and need for affection.

● MYTH: "They are like children; they don't understand these topics."

✓ REALITY: Having a disability doesn't mean one can't learn about the body, emotions, or relationships.

What is needed is an adapted way of teaching: clear language, pictograms, concrete examples, patience, and respect.

● MYTH: "They won't have a partner, so they don't need to learn this."

✓ REALITY: Having a partner is only one part of sexuality.

What matters is that each person can live their affectivity with autonomy, self-esteem, and respect—whether alone or with someone.

Additionally, many people with disabilities do desire and are able to have affective or sexual relationships.

FEAR THAT THE TOPIC WILL "AWAKEN" BEHAVIORS

● MYTH: "Talking about sexuality can encourage inappropriate behavior."

✓ REALITY: Providing information does not provoke; it informs and protects.

When a person knows what is intimate and what is not, what can be done in public or in private, and what is right and wrong, they can better protect themselves and avoid abuse or mistreatment.

● MYTH: "Their sexuality must be controlled so they don't get into trouble."

✓ REALITY: Excessive control does not protect; it generates fear, shame, or hidden behaviors.

What really helps is education about boundaries, consent, body care, and mutual respect.

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OR INSECURITY TO ADDRESS THE TOPIC

● MYTH: "It's better if only specialists handle these topics."

✓ REALITY: Families play a fundamental role in affective-sexual development.

You don't need to be an expert to speak honestly, listen, set boundaries, and provide respectful support.

Sexual education is a shared responsibility among families, schools, and professionals.

HOW TO ADDRESS THESE FEARS AND PREJUDICES?



- **Listen Without Judgment:** Validating their fears as legitimate and showing understanding helps open the dialogue.
- **Provide Clear and Accessible Information:** Explain that talking about sexuality is not just about sex, but also about emotions, care, respect, and rights.
- **Use Real and Adapted Examples:** Showing everyday cases or situations helps make the topic concrete and reduces fear.
- **Invite to Build Together:** Instead of imposing, it is better to build with families through support, offering them step-by-step tools.
- **Include Support Professionals:** Working in a network with psychologists, counselors, occupational therapists, social workers, etc., provides backing and builds greater trust.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EDUCATORS

- **Use a card activity:** read each myth aloud and ask if they think it is true or false, then discuss and present the reality.
- **Invite participants to share experiences or questions they may have had.**
- **Distribute a printed summary in easy-to-read format or with pictograms if there are families with comprehension barriers.**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2K4mjvg2Xw>

4. OPEN, RESPECTFUL, AND ADAPTED COMMUNICATION.

To properly support the affective-sexual development of young people, families must adopt an active, open, and respectful attitude.

As Daniel Santa Cruz points out in his Comprehensive Sexual Education Guide for Families:

"... Sexual education is inevitable; we cannot avoid educating sexually. We educate with what we do, what we say, and what we keep silent. [...] When our children see it's always their mothers who take the day off to go to the doctor, we are educating sexually." (Santacruz, 2017, p. 5)

One of the most common difficulties is knowing how to talk about these topics. Here are some guidelines.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

OPEN COMMUNICATION: THAT IS, CREATING A SPACE WHERE THERE ARE NO TABOOS OR JUDGMENTS.

LISTEN ATTENTIVELY, RESPOND WITHOUT MOCKERY OR PUNISHMENT.

VALIDATE EMOTIONS

ADAPT LANGUAGE AND CONTENT ACCORDING TO AGE, LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING, AND COGNITIVE ABILITY.

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR PROFESSIONALS TO SUPPORT FAMILIES SO THEY LOSE THE FEAR OF "SAYING SOMETHING THEY SHOULDN'T" OR "AWAKENING CURIOSITY."

4.1 IMPORTANT CONCEPTS FOR FAMILIES TO CONVEY

- Transmission of positive values such as respect, equality, responsibility, and consent.
- Promote the affective-sexual autonomy of young people.
- Boundaries and care: consent and mutual respect.
- Differences between care and control: when to intervene and when to support.
- Education on abuse prevention and unhealthy relationships.

4.2 AFFECTIVE AND OPEN COMMUNICATION ABOUT SEXUALITY

One of the key roles of the family in this area is to promote open and non-judgmental communication about affective and sexual topics. To achieve this communication, it is necessary to:

- Be available to answer questions naturally, without evasion.
- Adapt the information to the child's age and maturity.
- Avoid judgment or censorship regarding doubts, concerns, or behaviors related to sexuality.
- Show a receptive attitude that encourages ongoing dialogue.

This type of communication fosters trust, prevents seeking information from unreliable sources, and helps prevent risks such as abuse, unhealthy relationships, or misinformation.

TIPS FOR FAMILY COMMUNICATION

- **CREATE EVERYDAY MOMENTS:**

where conversations can happen without rush or tension (for example, during a meal, a walk, or a shared activity).

- **USE CLEAR, DIRECT LANGUAGE APPROPRIATE TO THE AGE AND ABILITY**

Avoid unnecessary technical terms or confusing euphemisms (for example, talking about "private parts" without using real names can cause confusion).

You can say: "Touching your penis is something private you do in private, not in public."

- **CONVEY INFORMATION WITHOUT DRAMATIZING OR EXAGGERATING:**

The more natural the tone, the more confidence it will convey.

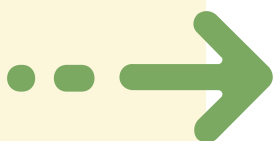
- **SHOW OPENNESS TO DIVERSITY**
(bodies, genders, orientations, emotions).

- **DEMONSTRATE WITH GESTURES AND WORDS THAT ANYTHING CAN BE TALKED ABOUT WITHIN THE FAMILY.**

Validate emotions.

Do not ridicule or minimize the feelings of young people or adolescents.

HOW TO ANSWER DIFFICULT QUESTIONS



- Accept that it is normal not to have all the answers. If you don't know something, it's okay to say, "I don't know, but we can find out together."
- Always respond with respect, avoiding censoring or punishing curiosity.
- Make sure that no question is "stupid" or "embarrassing."
- Look for truthful and reliable information.
- Seek professional support if necessary.

RECOMENDATION



Santacruz, D. (2017). Simple answers to difficult questions: A comprehensive sexuality education guide for families (E. Tort Bodro & P. García Berrocal, Eds.). Save the Children Spain.

4.3 EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND BUILDING HEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM

Affective-sexual development is closely linked to self-esteem and body perception. It is important that families can:

- Validate their children's emotions and feelings.
- Reinforce a positive body image without promoting harmful stereotypes.
- Support processes of self-discovery (sexual orientation, gender identity, emotional expression).
- Encourage autonomy and respect for their own boundaries and those of others.

A family environment that offers affirmation, acceptance, and affection allows young people to feel safe to explore their identity in a healthy and guilt-free way.

4.4. FAMILY DIVERSITY AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH

It is important to recognize that there are many types of families (single-parent, same-sex parents, blended families, etc.) and that all have the capacity to positively support the affective-sexual development of young people and adolescents.

Families should receive training to be able to support and convey this, always keeping in mind key aspects such as:

- Respect for sexual and gender diversity.
- The gender perspective: focusing on female sexuality, as sometimes the sexual rights and needs of women—especially women with disabilities—are overlooked.
- Adapting support in cases of disability or special educational needs.

5. SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Supporting adolescents and young people in their comprehensive development requires guidance, emotional support, and clear tools. Below are some resources that can help families in this process:

5.1 Network of Professionals: When and Whom to Turn To?

It is important for families to know they are not alone and that they can count on support if needed. They can rely on a network of professionals when:

- They have questions about the emotional, sexual, or social development of the child or adolescent.
- Sudden or concerning changes in behavior are observed.
- They need tools to approach complex conversations, such as sexual education, consent, or gender identity.

Whom to turn to?

- Psychologists and therapists
- Social workers
- Pediatricians trained in comprehensive health
- Teachers and counselors
- Specialized organizations

It is IMPORTANT to communicate and show families where they can go for help, according to local resources adapted to each country and territory.

5.2 SUPPORT GROUPS FOR FAMILIES: SHARING EXPERIENCES AND STRATEGIES

Support groups are safe spaces where parents, guardians, and caregivers can:

- Share experiences without judgment.
- Receive guidance from others who have gone through similar situations.
- Access talks and workshops led by professionals.
- Build networks of emotional and practical support.

These groups are often organized by schools, NGOs, health and social service institutions, organizations serving people with disabilities, and others.

5.3 INCLUSIVE SEXUALITY: A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES. (ISAWP)

The ISAWP project (Inclusive Sexuality: A World of Possibilities) is a European initiative funded by the European Union, carried out by the Asociación Malagueña Síndrome de Asperger y TEA - A.M.S.A (Spain), FAJUB - Federação das Associações Juvenis de Braga (Portugal), and Gençlik Fırsatları Derneği (Turkey).

The purpose of the project is to improve the quality of life and social inclusion of young people with disabilities through training on healthy affective-sexual relationships and the prevention of violent behaviors.

This project has developed resources that can be useful for families and professionals:

- Investigation and diagnosis on affective-sexual education

This document contains various resources from different organizations and regions.

- Didactic materials & Good Practices Guide
- Didactic units of Training for trainers
- Educational resources for workshops with young people with disabilities

Project: Inclusive Sexuality: A World of Possibilities (ISAWP). [ISAWP Project. https://isawp-project.com/about/](https://isawp-project.com/about/)

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATORS: FAMILY INTERVENTION.

6.1 TIPS FOR PROFESSIONALS



MAINTAIN ONGOING TRAINING

- Stay up to date on topics such as sexuality, rights, pedagogy, family intervention, and other areas relevant to your field.
- Take part in professional supervision sessions.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS

- Work in a network with teachers, psychologists, therapists, social workers, and health services.
- Share relevant information (while respecting confidentiality) to support comprehensive interventions.

BE PATIENT AND FLEXIBLE

- Recognize that each family has its own pace for processing and applying information.
- Adapt interventions to their needs and contexts.
- Maintain an open attitude and be willing to learn from families as well.

PROMOTE FAMILY AUTONOMY

- Accompany—don't direct or impose solutions.
- Help families develop skills to communicate with their children.
- Refer to specialized services when necessary.



6.2 SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

TRAINING AND AWARENESS-RAISING

Workshops, talks, informational materials.

DIALOGUE SPACES

- Parent groups
- Family tutoring and individual support
- Inclusion of adolescent and youth voices, when appropriate, to promote intergenerational dialogue.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

- Guidance from the educational or social sector:
- Coordinated interventions involving education, social work, psychology, and health services.

PROMOTING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

- Encouraging communication skills: active listening, respect, and clarity.
- Providing tools to answer difficult questions with honesty and sensitivity.
- Promoting emotional expression and the building of secure relationships.

6.3 SUGGESTED METHODOLOGY FOR THE SESSION WITH FAMILIES

It is important to create a space where families feel safe, heard, and their fears validated, while also promoting active participation and mutual learning.

A SPACE FOR LISTENING AND OPEN DIALOGUE

- Foster a safe, judgment-free environment.
- Ensure turn-taking and mutual respect.
- Validate all questions and shared experiences.
- Respect each person's confidentiality and privacy.
- Encourage mutual respect among participants.



Preparation of the Space

- Ensure a comfortable, accessible, and distraction-free environment.
- Arrange the seating in a circle or semi-circle to encourage participation and equality.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION + ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY: "WHO I AM AND WHAT I EXPECT" (15 MINUTES)

- Warm greeting and facilitator introductions.
- Present the session's objectives and ground rules (respect, confidentiality, voluntary participation, etc.).
- Each participant briefly shares their name, something about their family, and what they hope to gain from the session.
- A playful dynamic using cards or drawings can be used as an icebreaker.

ENCOURAGE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

- Invite families to share their experiences and questions.
- Use participatory activities and practical cases to facilitate dialogue.
- Respect each person's pace and time to express themselves.

PROMOTE RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

- Acknowledge and value cultural, social, and family diversity.
- Avoid imposing models or biases.

Activities to Explore Pre-Existing Beliefs

- Activities like "myths and truths," role-plays, or brainstorming help reveal prejudices or doubts.
- Invite families to share how they learned about sexuality and what they wish to pass on to their children.

PRACTICAL CASES AND ADDRESSING COMMON QUESTIONS

- Present real or simulated situations (e.g., a child asking about their body, a teenager talking about a relationship, or a young person masturbating in front of the family).
- Guide reflection on how to respond while respecting rights and emotional well-being.
- Use games and routines to teach respect for privacy—such as differentiating between private and public spaces in daily activities.

PROVIDE EVIDENCE-BASED INFORMATION

- Share reliable, up-to-date information without moral judgment.
- Point to trustworthy sources for families to explore further on their own.
- Debunk common myths and stereotypes.

DISTRIBUTION OF ADAPTED MATERIALS

- Offer brochures, infographics, or guides in various formats (easy-to-read, pictograms, inclusive and clear language) and explain how to use them.
- Promote the use of these materials as dialogue tools at home.
- Inform families about where to find reliable information and available resources for families and young people with disabilities

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