

During your early teens you go through **HUGE** changes – in your body, your feelings and in your relationships. This hand-out presents some key information on these topics.

1. **“Me”** – Building healthy self-esteem and body esteem
2. **Life Choices** – 2 tools: 5 As and ‘Right, Good and Wise’
3. **Peers and Friends** – Friendship skills from the start!
4. **Talking about touch** – Affection, romantic and abstinence
5. **Age, Sex and Health Care** – An Overview
6. **Be BRAVE** – 5 ‘Sexy Smarts’

SEXY SMARTS!
LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

Starter Skills for Young South Africans
 by Sr Ruth Loubser RN RM

“Me” – Building healthy self-esteem and body-esteem

(Look at yourself in the mirror)

- **“Self Talk”** – How do you talk to yourself *about yourself*? Do you focus on your weaknesses, judge yourself harshly and compare yourself with others? Be gentle and fair with yourself! Accept the things that you cannot change and focus on your strengths.
- **“Self Growth”** – Everything that happens to us in life can teach us something about ourselves and others. Take time to **reflect** on your experiences then write your thoughts in a journal or plain notebook (keep it in a private place). You may also want to draw, cut out magazine pictures or use some other creative means of self-expression for this exercise. After a difficult time, write down what you have learnt about yourself and others from this experience.
- **Sexual development** is a life process. Develop at your own pace. Write down your beliefs about sex and relationships. What are your personal ‘body boundaries’?

Life Choices: Two Decision-making Tools

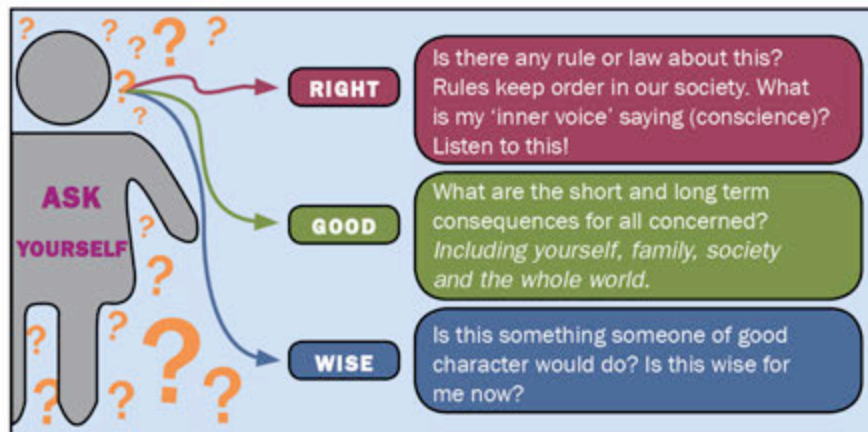
Here are two tools to help check our choices.

- The **‘Right, Good and Wise’** tool will help with difficult choices and promotes positive citizenship in society. This means choosing **not** to do things that will harm or lessen the dignity of someone else. These types of choices can be called ‘ethical’ or ‘moral.’ A mature person will act this way even when their parents or teachers are not around. This behaviour says a lot about someone’s character.
- The **5 A’s for Smart Choices** will help with daily decisions to develop mindful actions.

Practice these skills and share them with others.

‘Right, Good and Wise’. This tool is useful for issues like handling peer pressure, choices about friends, and social situations. It is also helpful with more difficult decisions like ‘is it right for me to have sex now?’, or ‘how should I handle this pregnancy?’ You can evaluate all aspects of a choice and how it affects you and others.*

* Van der Ven, J.A. 1998. *Formation of the Moral Self*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company.



Peers and friends

Why are they important?

- We are not meant to live isolated lives, and as you mature, your peers become very important. Not all your peers become friends! We usually form special bonds of care and support with people who share common interests, values or to whom we are attracted in some way. Our 'friendship skills' are used and tested in romantic relationships too!

Peer Positives – friendship skills from the start!

- **Choose friends carefully.** People of good character will build each other up. *You become like the people you choose to hang out with!* Practice respectful and supportive actions.
- **"Friendship Status."** What kind of friend is this? It is okay to have different types of friends, but take care in what you share and what you expect from these friends. Facebook 'friends' are different from face-to-face friends.
- **What's hot, what's not!** Keep positive relationships and end ones that are negative, disrespectful or abusive. As your interests and life paths change, it is normal for some friendships to weaken and fizzle out. This is not always someone's fault! See this as part of your journey. Problem solving and change are only learnt through life experiences!
- **Teen safety and fun.** Consider how you can stay safe in social spaces and be aware of your surroundings, especially in new places. Look out for yourself and your friends.
- **Getting help.** Have a phone number of a trusted adult you can phone at any time. Getting out of an unsafe or potentially dangerous situation is a sign of maturity.

Something to think about?

DIVERSITY: Diversity means being 'different' from each other – we all are different in some way from each other. Sometimes people treat 'different people' in a disrespectful way because of the way that they differ from the rest of society. *Do you know someone who has a unique 'difference', e.g. cultural, religious, disability, sexual orientation? Listen to their story.* It is important to remember that each person has a right to their own opinions and values. How can you show respect, tolerance, justice (love in action) and kindness to these people? How do you think society can change towards some groups of people?

Friendship skills are used in romantic relationships too!

The 5 A's for "Smart Choices"

Use the following questions to guide you in making your general or sexual health choices and to build self-awareness



AWARENESS

- What do you need to make a choice about?
- Be aware of what is going on around you?
- What do you feel in your body and about this situation? If something doesn't 'feel' right, it probably isn't!



ASSESSMENT

- Do you have all the correct information to make an informed choice?
- What would the short and long term consequences be?
- Are you being pressured or do you need more time to make this choice?



ACTION

- How do you feel about this choice?
- How would someone you trust or respect feel about this choice?
- Decide on an action and follow through with it, even if it is difficult.



ADJUSTMENT

- Adjusting behaviour for something better is a sign of maturity.
- What can you do differently that would be more helpful? e.g. Stop spending time with negative people, say 'no' to drugs, or other harmful behaviour.
- What help do you need to change when this is difficult? e.g. A friend, parent, trusted adult or a professional counsellor.



ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

- This is a legal right for children and youth.
- Medical staff must do routine tests and counselling.
- Adults must always report sexual abuse, illegal sex or rape so it can be stopped.

Talk about **Touch:** Affection, Romantic & Abstinence

CONSENT and First Conversations

- Sexual consent is giving someone permission to touch us in a sexual way. Consent is a clear 'yes'!
- At the start of a new relationship, you may want to ease in a short line or conversation that affirms the need for honesty about touch and consent. This will open up the topic for discussion in a safe, gentle way. For example, "I care about you, and never want to touch you in a way that you find uncomfortable. Can we talk about touch and boundaries?"

FEELING SAFE: First Rule of Touch: "WHOEVER SAYS 'NO', RULES!"

- Our foundational principle – 'know, own, protect your body', has this guiding rule about touch. This rule is laid down in law and part of your human and sexual rights. This means you may refuse any touch that is uncomfortable or that you find distasteful. This should promote a feeling of safety with your partner.*
- Don't forget to ask for consent too. 'No' isn't always said 'out loud' and can sometimes be shown in body language, feeling uncomfortable or scared.

* Hickling, Meg, RN. *Speaking of Sex: What your children need to know and when they need to know it.* 1999. Northstone Publishing.

NOTE: SEXUAL ABUSE AND SEXUAL DECISION-MAKING

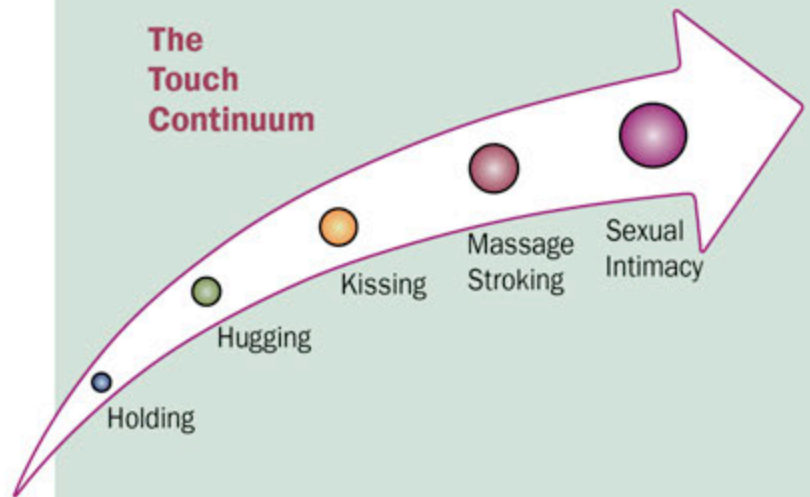
Childline South Africa:
08 000 555 55
www.childline.org.za

When a child has been sexually abused, they are 'taught' sexual touch before they are physically and emotionally ready for it. Their ability to give and receive touch in appropriate ways can become confused. It may be more difficult for them to make appropriate sexual health choices.

If you have been sexually abused or molested, it is not your fault! Get support from a counsellor or social worker.

Sexual Abstinence includes not touching in the genital area, or allowing a person's sex organs to enter openings of another person's body.
- Sr Ruth

The Touch Continuum



Types of Touch (Formal, Affection, Erotic/"Sexy")

The diagram above divides touch into different kinds. Not all touch is 'sexy'! This is useful for talking about touch and setting boundaries. Holding, hugging, kissing and massage/ stroking refer to outer body touching and 'sexual intimacy' refers to touch in the genital/private parts. The arrow indicates how sexual energy increases in a 'sexy situation' as touch intensifies.

1. **Formal Touch:** This includes various types of greetings, e.g. shaking hands, hugging and kissing. These differ within cultural groups or families. Tell someone if you are not comfortable with a particular form of greeting. This may happen, especially in a very culturally diverse country like South Africa.
2. **Affectionate Touch:** We show affection in different ways. This 'bonding touch' gives comfort, care and a sense of belonging. The energy described here is non-erotic ("sexy") but an affectionate situation could become 'sexy' quite quickly. Communicate about what types of affection are okay for you in various relationships.
3. **Romantic/Erotic ('Sexy') Touch:** This touch includes all types that result in sexual arousal in the body – alone (with personal masturbation) or when we are with a partner. If sexy touch continues, sexual energy builds rapidly and can lead to 'sexual intimacy'. Couples wishing to delay this can agree on 'sexy' outer body touch within agreed limits. This reduces the risk of diseases and / or pregnancy.
4. **Sexual Intimacy:** This is touch that includes touching and/or penetration that involves the genitals (private parts). Know what your 'terms and conditions' are when it comes to 'sex'! Same-sex and other-sex partners will decide what types of intimacy they prefer.

Age, Sex and Health Care: An Overview

This table is a brief summary of information from the Children's Act and the Sexual offences legislation that relates to health care and sexual behaviour.

AGE IN YEARS	SEX AND HEALTH CARE	SPECIAL NOTES
HEALTH CARE		
<p>Termination of Pregnancy: The Choice on Termination of Pregnancy (CTOP) Act defines a woman as: 'any female person of any age'. Only her consent is needed but she will be encouraged to consult with her parents or guardians. Unlawful sex must be reported.</p>		
Over 12	HIV testing and condoms are available on request. Contraceptives may be given subject to proper medical advice and a medical examination	Counselling and education should be provided.
Over 16	<p>Virginity testing can only be done if the girl gives consent. Certain procedures need to be followed.</p> <p>Circumcision can be done if the boy gives consent. (Certain religious/cultural groups may do infant circumcision if done in the prescribed manner.)</p>	<p>A child may refuse to give consent for these procedures.</p> <p>Circumcision & HIV: Circumcision does <i>not</i> completely prevent HIV infection. Condoms must still be used.</p>
SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR and LAW		
Under 12	This child is incapable of consenting to sexual activity.	Molestation and rape must be reported so it can be stopped.
Over 12 but under 16	Child is able to agree to sexual activity but may not be mature enough to handle the consequences . Sexual activities between children in this age group are not criminalised . The law recognises the need to discourage early sexual activity of adolescents. Children must be educated about age appropriate sexual activities and safety .	Sexual activity between adults and children is illegal, even if they agree (consent). This law protects children from abuse of power by older people.
16 and 17 year olds	Sexual activity is not criminal if the age between the children is 2 years or less , e.g. Ash is 17 and Kim is 15. Both must give their full consent and take the consequences of their actions.	These crimes are called Statutory rape or violation
Over 16	Age when someone can legally give consent to sexual activity in South Africa. Example: Karla has a boyfriend who is 19 years old. She is 16 years old. This is not illegal , because she is over 16, but she must be aware that he may have more power over her because he is much older.	They must take responsibility for ALL the consequences.
18+	Unless the person has a mental disability, they are fully responsible for all their choices. They may consent to marriage or civil union without parental consent.	If they choose to buy alcohol or access adult pornography, they must take the consequences.

(Adapted from: *Legal guide to age thresholds for children and young people.* *) The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act Amendment Act, 2015 (No. 38977 GOVERNMENT GAZETTE, 7 July 2015)

.....

* Accessed from: <http://www.ci.org.za/depts/ci/pubs/pdf/resources/guides/Ages%20Guide%20April%202011%20e-version.pdf> (Accessed 27/3/2014)

BE BRAVE: 5 "Sexy Smarts"

- B** – *Boundaries:* Know your personal 'body space' boundaries and be able to discuss them clearly.
- R** – *Respect:* Know what it means to treat yourself and others with respect.
- A** – *Age Appropriate:* Decide clearly what kinds of activities are age appropriate for you now.
- V** – *Values:* Know what your sexual values are and why they are important to you.
- E** – *Express yourself clearly:* Express your thoughts and feelings clearly, both online and face-to-face. Communication is the most important skill in human relationships!

SOURCE: This pamphlet includes excerpts from: *Sexy Smarts! Let's Talk about It! A Supportive Guide for Young South Africans*, by Sr. Ruth Loubser RN RM. © 2015