

Communication and Social Skills



As your child grows up communication and social skills become more important.

Good communication and social skills help:

- your child to understand the changes that happen during puberty
- your child to feel more in control
- your child to have good relationships
- your child to make new relationships
- you to understand how your child is feeling about puberty.



There are lots of different ways to communicate.

Your child might communicate using words, body language, signing or pictures.

This is OK.

There are lots of ways to help your child practice their communication and social skills.



What is on this page?

This page has information on how to support your child to improve their communication and social skills as they go through puberty.

It has easy read information on:

- where to start
- what to teach your child



- different ways you can teach your child about communication and social skills
- talking about puberty changes
- resources

Your child might be seeing a professional to help them with their communication and social skills.

This is OK.

It can be good to get help from a professional.

This page has information you can use to help your child learn at home.



Where to start

There are some important skills that can help your child to communicate with other people.

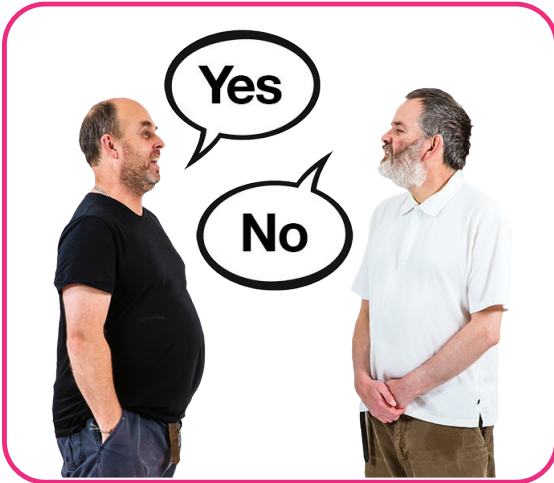
These skills help your child to understand social rules.

Social rules are things we need to do to help people feel comfortable and respected when we talk to or spend time with them.

These include social rules about:

- **private and public:**

being able to tell the difference between behaviours that can be done in public and behaviours that must be done in private



- **consent:**

being able to ask for consent and give consent. This includes consent to touch other people and their belongings

- **hygiene:**

good hygiene is important when you want to communicate or socialise with other people

This does not mean your child needs to be able to do this on their own.

Children learn these skills over time.

Some children will learn quickly.

Some children will take a little longer to learn these skills.

This is OK.

Everyone learns differently.





What communication skills and social skills should I teach my child?

There are lots of different parts to communicating and being with other people.

Some skills are easier to learn than others.

Your child will learn these different skills as they grow up.

They might learn them by themselves or they might need help.

How to start a conversation

- Go up to a person
- Say hello
- Ask a question. For example, 'Hi, how are you?'





How to maintain a conversation

- Ask questions
- Answer questions
- Take turns and share the conversation
- Pay attention to the speaker
- Find things you are both interested in
- Be polite if you disagree with someone

How to end a conversation

- Give signals that you want to leave a conversation
- Make a statement to end a conversation . For example 'I've got to go now. Bye'



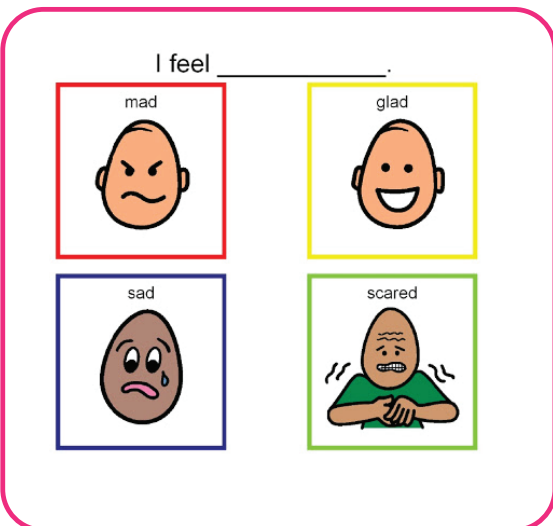
- Watch for signals that a person wants to leave a conversation

Use and understand non-verbal communication and body language, like:

- eye contact
- body position
- gestures
- facial expressions

Below are some important skills that will help your child to communicate about puberty:

- Use and understand the proper names for private body parts
- Use and understand words that describe the things that happen during puberty. For example;





periods, growing, pubic hair, voice breaking

- Express feelings, including pain, discomfort and itching

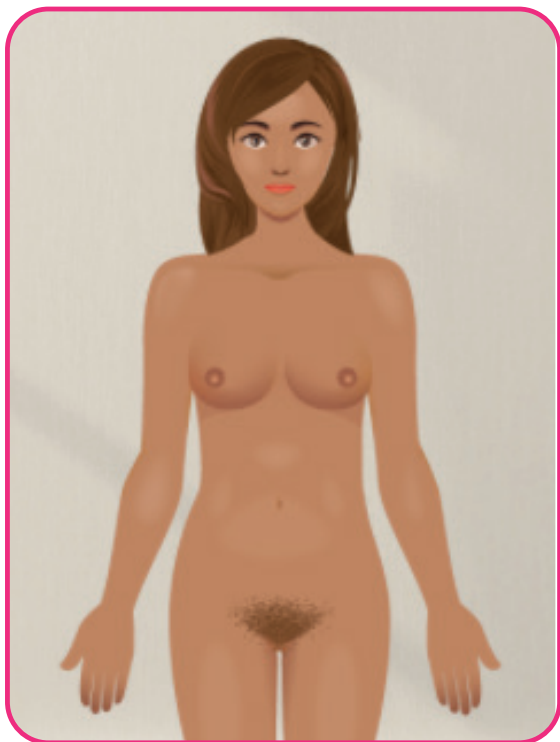
If your child:

- has a hearing impairment
- uses sign language
- uses a device to communicate
- uses non-verbal communication

these skills are still important for them to learn.

Each child is different.

It is important to find what works for your child and your family.



Strategies for you to try

Getting comfortable talking about puberty

It is good to feel comfortable to talk about puberty with your child.

This makes it easier to help them learn more about puberty.

It is good to use the proper names for private body parts and behaviours.

For example:

- penis
- breasts
- vagina
- masturbation

This can sometimes feel uncomfortable.

That's OK.

Practicing to say the words will help you feel more comfortable.

If you are comfortable talking about puberty it will help your child to feel comfortable too.

It is important to talk to your child about puberty in a private place.

This helps your child to understand that talking about puberty is private.

Showing good communication and social skills in your conversations

Showing your child how you communicate with other people is a good way for them to learn good communication and social skills.

This is called modelling.





You can model things like:

- sharing
- turn taking in conversation
- asking for consent. For example, consent to go to a friend's home or touch their belongings
- how to respectfully disagree with someone

You can model this in your conversations with your child, or in your conversations with other people.

You could also record a video of yourself or your child modelling good communication and social skills.

Your child can then watch the video many times to help them learn.

This is called video modelling.



This can be helpful if your child finds it hard to learn face-to-face.

Practicing communication and social skills

You can help your child to practice their communication and social skills by:

- involving them in family talk
- being happy when they do things well
- repeating things that they need to practice

As your child's skills grow they can practice these in different situations like the shops, at school, or on the bus.

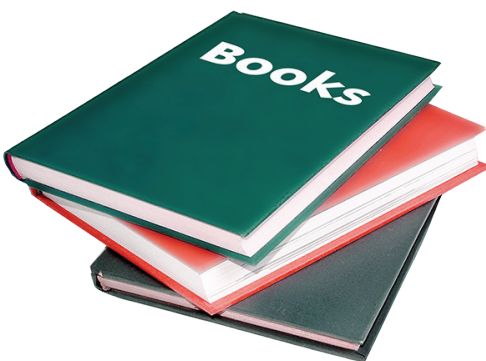


You can also talk to your child's teachers about how they can help your child to practice their communication and social skills at school.

Use resources to communicate about puberty

There are lots of resources to help children learn about puberty.

Some are for children with intellectual disability and/or autism spectrum disorder. They use simple language and lots of pictures.



Here are some resources you might want to have a look at.

- Special Boys' Business
- Special Girls Business
- Puberty and Special Girls

- What's Happening to Tom?
- What's Happening to Ellie?
- [BodyTalk](#)

You can use these resources to start talking to your child about puberty.



Resources for you to use

All About Sex – Puberty

https://www.fpnsw.org.au/sites/default/files/assets/fact-sheet_06_puberty.pdf



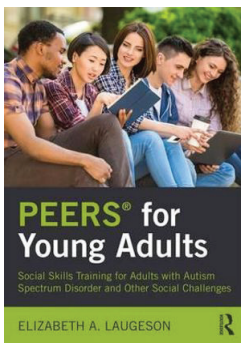
Body Talk Website

www.bodytalk.org.au



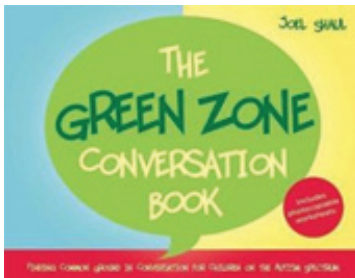
Social Skills Picture book

By Jed Baker



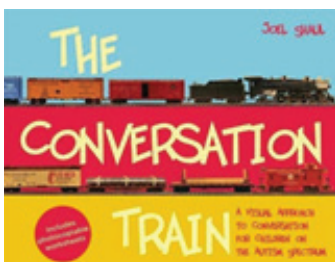
Peers for Young Adults

By Elizabeth A. Laugeson



The Green Zone Conversation Book

By Joel Shall



The Conversation Train

By Joel Shall



Raising Children Network – Communicating about relationships

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/communicating-relationships>



Raising Children Network – Therapy Guide

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/therapies-guide>



Speech Pathology Australia – Find a speech pathologist

https://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/SPAweb/Resources_for_the_Public/Find_a_Speech_Pathologist/SPAweb/Resources_for_the_Public/Find_a_Speech_Pathologist/All_Searches.aspx?key=0b04c883-80b2-43e7-9298-7e5d-b5c75197



What to read next:

- [Healthy relationships](#)
- [Private behaviour](#)
- [Consent and sex](#)

**For more information go to the
Planet Puberty website**

www.planetpuberty.org.au