

Talking About The Birds and the Bees

We have completed the series of group sessions for parents for this year and it has been a very enriching experience for the parents who joined us for the sessions.

Many parents felt that this was a really good topic and that it should be discussed over a few sessions. Indeed, we discussed a variety of important issues, starting with the role of parents in engaging with their adolescents to talk about the birds and the bees. I emphasised that they should not focus only on the sexual act, but to discuss related issues like having healthy relationships, developing a positive body image, anchoring strong values and principles, and so on. This is not an easy topic to talk about with our teens because we feel uncomfortable about it, and they probably feel the same way too. We may prefer to leave the education of such matters to the school since the school conducts lessons on such topics. However, the lessons are not going to be sufficient because our teens need to have trusted adults whom they can go to if they want to discuss these sensitive issues on a more personal level. If we do not teach our children, someone else may teach them what we do not want them to learn!

There are many opportunities to have such conversations with our teens, such as newspaper articles, movies and other media. Unfortunately, the popular media does not provide the current generation with the right values and role models, which we would like our children to have. The teenagers are constantly bombarded by social media, music, movies and so on, which contain over-sexualised messages, and these are largely undesirable and unhealthy for young people. Although we are unable to control what our teens have access to, we are able to establish strong foundations of the values which we would like them to have, and the information and tools they need to make decisions about how they would like to live their lives and how they want to develop their relationships.

Parents should have conversations with their teens about various aspects of a relationship: how to find love, what characteristics to look for, how to engage in healthy dating behaviour, addressing expectations of time, money and intimacy (emotional and physical) and dealing with break-up. Regarding sexual behaviour, we discussed the laws in Singapore, and that consent cannot be given when either party is under the influence of alcohol (or drugs), a reiteration of the knowledge and understanding about contraception and sexually-transmitted diseases, maintaining a healthy body image. During the session, we talked about the risk our teens are exposed to due to the internet and social media, addressing concerns of online communication and relationships, dating apps, sexting and proliferation of pornography.

At the end of the session, I shared that we are currently exploring incorporating “Project Schools” into our well-being curriculum for next year. “Project Schools” is an initiative by The Law Society Pro Bono Services, which is designed for students so as to increase the awareness of the law, their rights and obligations.

Group Session for Parents 2018

I would like to invite you to join us for the group sessions for parents: <http://tinyurl.com/SJII-parents2018>. Feedback from those who have attended these sessions suggests that parents have valued these opportunities to connect with other parents and learn from one another. The sessions provide an avenue to discuss issues and concerns faced in relation to parenting; how to relate to your teenager; how to assist your teenager; how to engage both parents in the parenting role; and, of course, self-care.

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