

Talking About Sex, Relationships & Intimacy With Your Teen

Shanti Psychotherapy offers affordable, culturally relevant, multilingual and expert mental health care for youth and families.

(437) 747-0692 | intake.shantipsychotherapy@gmail.com

This guide is designed to help parents and caregivers start meaningful, supportive conversations with youth about relationships, intimacy, consent, and safety. These conversations don't need to be perfect, they just need to be open, respectful, and ongoing.

Why These Conversations Matter

Young people are navigating relationships influenced by peers, social media, and cultural expectations. Having even one trusted adult to talk to can help them make safer and more informed decisions.

Understanding the Relationship Spectrum: Relationships can change over time

The Relationship Spectrum

Understanding Healthy vs Toxic Relationship Behaviours

HEALTHY	UNHEALTHY	TOXIC	ABUSIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respect boundaries• Mutual consent• Open communication• Encourages independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jealousy framed as love• Pressure to reply constantly• Passive-aggressive behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Checking someone's phone• Controlling clothing or friendships• Guilt-tripping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Threats or intimidation• Repeated sexual pressure• Sharing private images• Isolation

Relationships often move gradually along this spectrum. Recognizing early warning signs helps protect safety, consent, and emotional wellbeing.

Talking About Intimacy & Safety

You can ask:

- What makes you feel safe in a relationship?
- How do you know when you're ready for intimacy?



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Understanding Pressure

Young people may experience pressure such as:

"If you loved me, you would..."

"Everyone else is doing it"

Gender expectations like 'boys always want sex'- the pressure of toxic masculinity from social media

Help your child understand they always have the right to say no and explore how they can do that

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LGBTQ+ Relationships & Identity Safety

All teens deserve safe, affirming relationships.

Be aware of unique pressures some LGBTQ+ youth may face:

- Fear of being outed
- Pressure to keep relationships secret
- Identity-based stigma or rejection
- How to support:
 - Use inclusive language (partner vs boyfriend/girlfriend)
 - Affirm your teen's identity and autonomy
 - Ask what safety looks like for them
 - Never threaten or pressure disclosure of identity
 - Seek affirming resources if needed



Cultural & Family Values

Culture plays an important role in shaping beliefs about relationships and intimacy.

Consider discussing:

- What values are important in our family?
- How do these values apply today?
- How can we respect both culture and personal choice?

Supporting Your Teen

You don't need to have all the answers.

What helps most:

- Listening without judgment
- Staying calm and open
- Letting them know they can come to you
- Supporting them if they are in a difficult situation without your panic or judgements

Conversation Starters

- What do you think a healthy relationship looks like?
- What have you seen in your friend groups or online?
- What would you do if a friend felt pressured?
- What does consent mean to you?

Healthy relationships help young people feel safe, respected, and free to make their own choices.

Open conversations, even imperfect ones, make a lasting difference!

Toronto Community Youth Support

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If You Need Support Right Now

What's Up Walk In - 416 967 1773: Free short-term counselling for youth 24 years and younger

Distress Centres of Greater Toronto, Phone: 416-408-4357 (HELP):

<https://www.dcoft.com/>

Assaulted Women's Helpline: 1-866-863-0511 or #7233 (mobile):

<https://www.awhl.org/>

211 Ontario: 211: <https://211ontario.ca/>

Kids Help: 1-800-668-6868 | Text: CONNECT to 686868:

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

If You're Questioning a Relationship

WomanACT: <https://womanact.ca/>

Toronto Rape Crisis Centre (TRCC): 24/7 Crisis Line: 416-597-8808:

<https://trccmwar.ca/>

Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic: 416-323-9149: <https://schliferclinic.com/>

Planned Parenthood Toronto (PPT): 416-961-0113: <https://ppt.on.ca/>

If Identity, Culture, or Safety Feels Complicated

The 519: 416-392-6874: <https://www.the519.org/>

Sherbourne Health: 416-324-4180: <https://sherbourne.on.ca/>

South Asian Women's Centre (SAWC): 416-537-2276: <https://www.sawc.org/>

Naseeha Mental Health: 1-866-627-3342: <https://naseeha.org/>

Access Alliance Multicultural Health: 416-324-8677: <https://accessalliance.ca/>

If something in your relationship feels like pressure, confusion, or fear — you deserve support.

You don't have to figure it out alone.



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