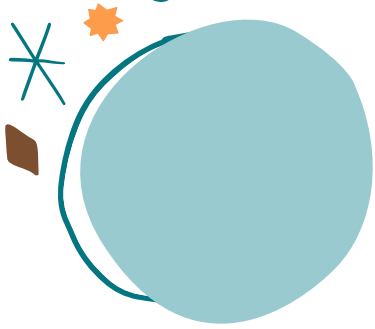


A Guide: How to Respond to your Child's Difficult Questions about Gender



Kids are naturally curious and will often ask questions when they don't understand something. These questions can catch parents off-guard or make us feel uncomfortable, particularly when the questions are about a taboo or complex topic.

Here are some common questions that are asked during early childhood:

Questions about Family Structure

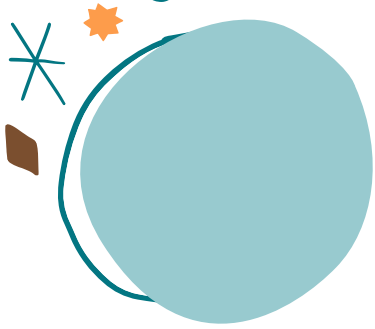
"Everyone has a mommy and a daddy"
"Why does _____ not have a daddy/mommy?"
"Why does _____ have two mommies/daddies?"
"Does everyone have a grandma at their house?"

It's always helpful to ask clarifying questions and make sure your response meets your child's developmental level. Keep responses short and simple!

Here are some sample responses to family structure questions:

- ◆ Everyone's family can look different. Some families have two mommies, some have two daddies, some only have 1 mommy and some only have grandparents (i.e., give them examples of how families can look different).
- ◆ Provide books/media that normalize all types of family structures

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Here are some common questions that are asked during early childhood:

Questions about Anatomy

"Why does daddy/mommy have a _____? "

"Will I have _____ when I get bigger?"

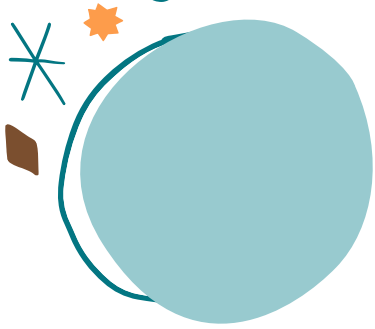
"I am going to have _____ like daddy when I get bigger!"

It's always helpful to ask clarifying questions and make sure your response meets your child's developmental level. Keep responses short and simple! It is a good idea to use correct terms for body parts when explaining physical differences (i.e., vagina, penis). This is also a good time to talk about "private parts" and that no one else should touch their "private parts"

Here are some sample responses to anatomy questions:

- ♦ Most boys (or most girls) have _____.
- ♦ When you get older you may have _____.

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Here are some common questions that are asked during early childhood:

Questions about Gender Roles

"Boys don't cry!"
"Boys don't play with dolls"
"Girls can't play with trucks"
"Girls like pink!"
"Boys don't wear dresses"
"Boys have short hair and girls have long hair"

It's always helpful to ask clarifying questions and make sure your response meets your child's developmental level. Keep responses short and simple!

Here are some sample responses to gender role questions:

- ◆ Everyone cries when they feel sad and sometimes when they are angry or excited!
- ◆ Boys and girls can play with whatever toys they would like!
- ◆ Boys and girls can wear dresses.
- ◆ Some girls like pink and some girls don't!
- ◆ Boys and girls can have short or long hair

Questions:

Consider for yourself what aspects of these questions make you uncomfortable?

Think back to when you were exploring gender. What was that experience like for you?

Do you wish your parents would have supported you differently? How?
