

LOVE IS LOVE

How to support a child exploring their sexuality



Useful Apps:



SAM



MoodTools



What's Up?



Fabulous - Daily Routine Planner



In Hand

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WHEN TO BE CONCERNED?

For some people, they know and feel certain about their sexuality whereas for others it may not be as clear, particularly for teens as this is a period of significant physical, emotional and mental change and development. It can take time to fully understand thoughts and feelings. For others it will be clear but may still cause worry or stress. Whilst we hope that the world is becoming a more understanding and accepting place, we know that coming out or sharing thoughts and feelings about sexual orientation may be a source of real worry, doubt, confusion or stress.

WHAT TO DO:

- Not all young people will be certain about their sexual orientation. Normalise that it's OK not to be sure or to be curious
- Understand that coming out can be highly anxiety provoking, try to be open to hearing a young person's thoughts, feelings and experiences
- Validate their thoughts, feelings and experiences
- Every young person's experience will be different so try not to compare to others
- Even if you are unsure of what to say or are worried about what to say, there is power in just listening
- Allow the young person time and space to share what they feel comfortable to share
- Respect a young person's terminology to describe their sexual orientation
- Help facilitate your young person's access to information, advice and support if wanted/ needed
- There is a lot of information on the Hampshire CAMHS website: hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/help/young-people/sexuality-and-gender-identity/

WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

Changes in a young person's behaviour and body language cannot indicate for certain that a young person is struggling with their sexual identity. However you may notice the following:

- Appearing withdrawn, isolating themselves and being less communicative
- Disrupted sleep (difficulties getting to or staying asleep, waking very early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep)
- Resistance to doing things; appearing unmotivated and disinterested; avoidance of seeing friends or doing activities they ordinarily enjoy
- Questions and curiosity about hypothetical situations to gauge reactions
- Frequent changes of emotion, more sensitive (e.g. irritable, upset, anxious, low)
- Low self-esteem and confidence
- Use of different terminology to describe their sexual orientation or preferences
- Thoughts or urges to harm self or some thoughts to end life; some infrequent or superficial (not requiring medical attention) self-harm may occur
- Substance misuse

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hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk