

SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS

Thinking about sex is very normal – pretty much everyone does it. But what can you do if you've got a question you're feeling a bit awkward about? Sex and relationships specialist Gill Leno is here to answer any questions you may have.

Talking about sex can be fun, embarrassing, and a bit scary – and sometimes, all three at once. However, it's very important to get your facts right and it's never too late to find out. Sometimes it can feel a bit tricky, but remember – nobody starts off knowing all there is to know about sex and relationships, and we all have to find out from somewhere.

In the coming issues of **Progress**, we are going to be answering some of your questions about sex and relationships, so please send them in. There's no such thing as a silly question as far as sex is concerned, so don't feel embarrassed.

Because it's the first column, I thought I would get us started by answering a couple of general questions that I get asked all the time.

PARENTS

Do you have any questions around talking about sex with your child? I'm here to help everyone.

Q: Where can I find out about sex?

Gillian: It's very important that you find out about sex from a trustworthy and safe place. You have to know how to stay safe, so getting the wrong information could end up being quite risky. It's good if you can talk to your parents or whoever you live with, or a teacher/tutor. There are some great books, published by the Family Planning Association, called *Talking Together About...*, which are very helpful and cover lots of important subjects. They're available online at the FPA's website (www.fpa.org.uk) – perhaps you could suggest looking at them together with an adult you trust. I know that can make lots of people feel very shy, though, so you could also look online at the Brook website (www.brook.org.uk). Brook specialises in young people's sexual health and has lots of up to date information and games.

Q: Am I allowed to have sex?

Gillian: This is a really big question that lots of young people have asked me over the years. The short answer is yes, BUT there are quite a few things that have to happen first. You have to have a boyfriend or girlfriend that you know really well and who you trust. Sex is a really grown-up thing to do and you and your partner need to be absolutely sure about it before you do it. You also both have to be old enough – at least 16 – and you both need to really understand everything that sex involves, especially what could happen, and how to stay safe. Sex should be special, exciting and positive but you have to know all the facts first. That's where we can help.

Please do send in your questions to editor@progressmagazine.co.uk – nothing is off limits and there's no need to be shy. We'll choose one or two each time and they'll be anonymous, so you can ask whatever you like.

If your question is urgent (or private) you can contact me at gleno@qac.ac.uk and I will email you back.