

SEXUALITY



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTION ALLIANCE

WHAT IS SEXUALITY?

Sexuality is a central, complex, and lifelong aspect of being human. It encompasses much more than whether someone is sexually active or who they are sexually or romantically attracted to.

WHAT CAN SEXUALITY LOOK LIKE:

The Interagency Gender Working Group (www.igwg.org/) suggests sexuality is comprised of 6 categories:

- **Sensuality:** An awareness of how our bodies look and feel, and the pleasure our bodies can give ourselves and others.
- **Intimacy:** The ability and need to be close to another person, aspects of which can include sharing, caring, emotional risk-taking, and vulnerability.
- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:** Sexual orientation is the feelings of attraction towards other people. Gender identity is a person's internal sense of their own gender.
- **Sexual and Reproductive Health:** A person's capacity to reproduce and their sexual health.
- **Sexual Behaviors and Practices:** Who does what with which body parts, items, and/or partners as a way of enacting or expressing sexuality.
- **Power and Agency:** What a person has the right, ability, or capacity to do.

LEARN MORE ABOUT SEXUALITY:

- Sexuality Education: advocatesforyouth.org/resources/fact-sheets/sexuality-education-2/
- Action Toolkit: siecus.org/community-action-toolkit/
- Sex Ed Crash Course: knox.edu/title-ix-at-knox/sexual-health-resources

HOW YOUNG PEOPLE CAN PRACTICE HEALTHY SEXUALITY:

- Gain an awareness around their thoughts, feelings, and body processes.
- Practice media literacy and critical thinking-skills;
 - Avoid letting outside influences (like family, friends, movies, and pornography) shape who they are and what feels good to them.
 - Debunk gendered sexual myths, personal biases, and the normalization of sexual violence.
- Visit a healthcare provider regularly to prevent and address sexual health issues.

We are all sexual beings. Sexuality influences how we feel about our bodies, our gender, our sexual identity, our values, and how we experience the world around us.

HOW ADULTS CAN SUPPORT HEALTHY SEXUALITY:

- Explore your own attitudes and be open to expanding them. Having a clear understanding of our own beliefs can help us to be more open, non-judgmental, and non-shaming.
- Serve as a safe adult for young people to ask questions and seek support.
- When talking to young people about sex, avoid a fear-based perspective. Instead, promote a joyful sexuality framework which promotes bodily autonomy: that we each have the right to govern what happens to our bodies and choose what is right for us, without coercion or force, shame or stigma, or other external influence or interference.

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