



AGES 16-18

A Parent and Caregiver's Guide to Healthy Sexual Development

Older teens are forming their identities, values, and relationships.

They may explore romantic and sexual experiences, seek independence, and think more deeply about the kind of adults they want to become. Parents' calm guidance, trust, and honest conversations help them make responsible, caring choices.



What's Normal at 16-18

Physical

Fully maturing bodies; stronger sexual feelings.

Cognitive

Can think critically and understand consequences; seeks autonomy.

Social & Emotional

Romantic relationships deepen; independence and privacy matter more.



Sexual Development

- May explore sexual relationships or choose to wait.
- Understands love, consent, and emotional connection more clearly.
- Forms clearer sexual or gender identity.
- Thinks about safety, contraception, and values.
- Faces peer or online pressure around relationships and image.

At this age, your teen is becoming an adult — but still needs your belief and guidance.

When you talk openly and respectfully, you help them build the confidence to make healthy, caring, and responsible choices in love and life.



How You Can Help



Shift from Control to Trust.

Encourage open discussions about responsibility, respect, and readiness instead of imposing rules.

Talk About Consent and Equality.

Consent must be clear, mutual, and never forced. Relationships should feel safe, equal, and respectful. Explain that the legal age of sexual consent in India is 18.

Discuss Contraception and Safety.

Provide factual information about pregnancy and STIs. Responsibility protects both partners.

Support Identity and Inclusion.

Affirm your teen's identity or orientation. Home should always feel like a safe space.

Model Healthy Relationships.

Show empathy, honesty, and communication in your own relationships — they learn by watching you.

When to Seek Help

Seek professional help if your teen:

- Engages in unsafe or coerced sexual activity.
- Experiences or inflicts emotional or physical harm in relationships.
- Feels fearful, withdrawn, or shows signs of depression.
- Is bullied or isolated because of gender or sexuality.
- Shows physical symptoms such as: frequent urinary infections, vaginal discharge, a missed period, itchiness in the genital area.

Stay calm and supportive. Reassure them that they're loved and that help is available.





Children and Adolescents with Special Needs

Children and adolescents with developmental disabilities are also sexual beings, and like non-disabled children, they also need to understand their bodies and relationships.

They go through the same stages of physical and emotional development as others, though some may experience puberty earlier or later.

They may need extra help to understand privacy, consent, and appropriate behaviour.

Use clear language, visual cues, and gentle repetition to teach about body boundaries and safety.

Every child — regardless of ability, gender, or sexuality — has the right to know about their body, relationships, and personal safety.

ABOUT US

Dil Se is an NGO working for the Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse in Kochi, Kerala.

Founded in Switzerland in 2000 by Marina Racine and Cristelle Hart Singh, and later established in India as a Trust in 2009, Dil Se works to protect children, educate communities, and support healing for survivors.



OUR VISION

A world where child sexual abuse is a thing of the past

OUR MISSION

Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse

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