

Talking to Your Neurodivergent Child About Masturbation

BE DIRECT & FACTUAL

Explain what masturbation is and why people do it.

Masturbation is when you touch your own body, usually your genitals.

People masturbate because it feels good.

Masturbation is a way to feel sexual pleasure.

People masturbate to learn about their bodies.

Masturbation is a way to understand what feels pleasurable in your body.

NORMALIZE

Reassure them that masturbation is normal and there is no need to be embarrassed.

Masturbation is a normal part of growing up.

Most people masturbate at some point in their lives.

Masturbation is a safe way to learn about your body.

There is nothing dirty or shameful about masturbating.

Avoid expressing any opinions that could impart shame.

- If you feel you can't provide direct and unbiased information, try alternative resources like books and videos. Find resource lists for this topic at ndandpuberty.info

START EARLY

Begin talking about masturbation before they reach puberty.

- Infants, toddlers, and children often touch their genitals for pleasure and comfort.

Touching your genitals can feel good. It is something we do in private.

- Children who are familiar with their genitals are better able to detect changes and bring up concerns.

It looks like you're touching your [genital name], if it feels uncomfortable tell me so I can help.

When kids feel safe discussing sensitive topics early, they're more likely to come to you with questions or concerns later.

DISMANTLE STIGMA

Acknowledge biases and present facts about neurodiversity and sexuality.

- Addressing stigma supports your child in unlearning internalized ableism.

Sexual pleasure is for everyone, not just neurotypical people.

Anyone can have sexual desires.

*It is **not** inappropriate for neurodivergent people to be sexual.*

*Some people think it is wrong for ND people to masturbate. This is **not** true.*

EMPHASIZE PRIVACY

Explain that masturbation is private.

Masturbation is a private behavior.

We masturbate in private to keep ourselves and others safe.

Masturbation is something we do in private but that doesn't mean it is secret or shameful.

We only masturbate when we're alone because genitals are uncovered.

It is normal for it to take time for your child to grasp the need for privacy when masturbating.

- Use gentle reminders about privacy
- Never punish or shame your child for masturbating

It looks like you need some time masturbate. Why don't you head to [private place] for some private time.

Remember, if you want to masturbate you can do that in [private place].

Masturbating is private. We are in [public place] which is public. You can masturbate when you are alone in [private place].

ESTABLISH PRIVATE PLACES

Establish your child's own private place.

- Be specific and clear about privacy across contexts.
- Identify other family members private places to reinforce the concept.
- You may consider labeling public and private spaces in your home.

[Private place] is your private place where you can do private behaviors.

When the door to the bathroom is closed it is a private place.

My bedroom is my private place. Your bedroom is your private place.

Establish rules about entering another persons' private place.

- Ensure any guests or providers who enter the home know and follow these rules.

Always lock the door when you are masturbating in [private place].

If the door is closed, we must knock before entering someone's private place.

You can put this sign on your door when you are doing private things in [private place].

You can text me when you want alone time in your private place.

ENSURE ACCESS

Address barriers to self-pleasure and communication about masturbation.

- Physical limitations and cognitive differences may inhibit effective masturbation.
 - Provide adaptive tools as needed.
 - Provide explicit instructions on how to masturbate.
- Adapt to their learning style.
 - Avoid using euphemisms when educating your child.
 - Use plain, accurate, and concrete language.
- Language access
 - Teach correct terms for genitals and sexual activities.
 - Children who use alternative communication must have access to all words relating to sexual activities and genitals.