

YEAR 6 Puberty Problem Page Teacher Guide

There are no 'set' answers for the puberty problem page letters - in this activity the children are asked to give advice, based on what they have learned about puberty so far. Encourage the children to focus on the specific questions that are being asked, such as 'Is this normal?' and 'What can I do?' Remind them to take into account the age of the person asking for advice. Accept advice that seems helpful and appropriate. There are some general principles that can be useful when giving advice, relating to self-esteem and keeping safe and healthy. For example:

- Remind the person that they are not alone
- Encourage the person to talk to someone they feel they can trust
- In the right circumstances and with the right person anything can be discussed
- All children have a right to feel safe

Ref: <http://www.kidshealth.org>

Below is some suggested advice that may be helpful for the problem page letters, bearing in mind that the children may come up with their own, very good suggestions.

Problem 1: He's asked me out and I don't know what to do

My family doesn't talk about things like sex and going out with people. I've got an older sister but she is married and doesn't live with us anymore. I know about some things but now this boy has asked me out and I don't know what to do. What does going out mean and how do you do it? T, age 12

Suggested Advice

- Explain that 'going out' can mean different things to different people. For most people it means deciding that they like someone and want to spend time with them. It can also mean being more physical with someone, for example, showing feelings through touching, kissing, and holding hands. When two adults are 'going out' this may lead to a sexual relationship.
- As this person is 12, suggest that it would be good to talk to an older person they feel they can trust.
- If they feel they can't talk to their family, this could be someone at school or someone from a support service for young people.
- Encourage this person to 'listen to their feelings' and work out how they feel about the boy.
- Emphasise that they don't have to feel pressured into going out with someone if they don't want to, or if they don't feel ready.
- Suggest the person talks to the boy about what his expectations of 'going out' are.

Problem 2: They all laughed at me

The boys in my class sometimes talk about wet dreams. When I asked what that was they all laughed at me and now they keep going on about it. How will I know when I have a wet dream and how can I stop them making fun of me? P, age 12

Suggested advice

- Explain that wet dreams happen to most boys during puberty. This means that the male body has started to produce sperm – it's an important change for boys.
- Describe what to expect. When a boy has a wet dream, semen – the whitish liquid that contains sperm- comes out of his penis while he is asleep. He'll know it's happened because there'll be a wet patch on his pyjamas or on the bed, when he wakes up.

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- Reassure this person and explain that puberty affects people in different ways and not everyone changes at the same time. It's also ok if you don't know things, lots of boys don't know about wet dreams until it happens.
- Hopefully being informed will make this person feel better when the other boys make fun. If they don't stop, he could talk to a teacher in confidence about their attitude.

Problem 3: Growing Pains

I am starting puberty and I have lots of questions about growing up. I don't live with my family so can't ask them about it and I feel embarrassed about asking my carer. Who should I speak to and what should I say? A, age 11

Suggested Advice

- Suggest that there may be someone at school that this person can talk to – a teacher, the PSHE coordinator, a school counsellor, or a school nurse, for example. Different schools have different support services available.
- Suggest contacting Childline – 0800 1111, which offers free confidential advice to young people.
- Suggest talking to friends.
- There are numerous books and child-friendly leaflets about puberty.

Problem 4: Too Close to Home

I can't talk to anyone in my family about personal things because they get too embarrassed. I had my first period last week but I didn't tell anyone. I don't know what to do when I have it again. How can I get sanitary protection and what do I do if I have to go swimming. Please help. R, age 12

Suggested Advice

- Explain that pads, tampons and reusables are available from chemists, supermarkets and many shops.
- Some girls choose to use tampons if they want to go swimming when they have their period. It's important to talk to someone about how to use these properly.
- Suggest talking to a teacher at school, someone this person feels comfortable with. They can advise them how to use menstrual products and perhaps help them to communicate with someone at home.

Problem 5: Gay Pride

People in my class often say stuff is gay when they mean it is rubbish. It really upsets me because my aunties are gay. I can't tell anybody in my class because they might start saying stuff about me. Why do people say things like that and how can I make them stop? W, age 13

Suggested Advice:

- Explain that some people do say this as an insult to gay people, because they are prejudiced towards them.
- Other people may say this and not realise that it can be insulting or upsetting to gay people.
- Reassure this person that it's not ok to use the word gay in a negative way like this. Explain that all schools have a legal duty to ensure no-one faces discrimination because of their sexuality.
- Suggest talking to a teacher about this so that they can help deal with these attitudes.

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Problem 6: Ballet Blues

I've been doing ballet since I was seven. I really enjoy it and have been in two shows. Before nobody said anything about it, but since I've been at my new secondary school people in my class sometimes laugh at me and make jokes about it. Why do people think boys shouldn't dance and what can I do to stop them making fun of me? W, age 13

Suggested Advice:

- Explain that some people have set ideas about what people of different genders should and shouldn't do – these are prejudices, or stereotypes. Reassure this person that it is absolutely ok for boys to dance if they want to and that it's wrong for these boys to laugh about it.
- Encourage this person to do what makes them happy!
- Suggest getting help and support from someone at school, talking to a teacher for example, who can help to sort this out.

Problem 7: How can I tell her I need more freedom?

My Nan never lets me go out with my friends on Saturday. The only time she said I could go out she told my brother to come and meet me after the cinema and bring me home. It was really embarrassing and I got really mad at her. What can I do to make her see that I am growing up and need more freedom? S, age 12

Suggested Advice

Suggest that this person tries to talk to their Nan, so that they can understand each other's points of view. If it's important to go out with friends, it's also important to think about getting home safely and coming to an agreement with Nan about this.