

Understanding expected vs problem sexual behaviour 5-7yrs

To know what sexual behaviour is problematic, we need to first understand what is normal for each age and stage of child development

Influences on children's sexual behaviour

- Parents
- Media – TV, radio and magazines
- Peer relationships/family relationships
- How adults treat each other
- Children's services, schools

Expected sexual behaviour 5 -7 years: Early school age

- Self touching including masturbating
- Show me yours/I'll show you mine with same aged children
- Likes to hear and tell dirty jokes
- Playing house – mummies and daddies
- Kissing/holding hands
- Mimicking or practicing behaviours observed

Concerning sexual behaviours

5 -7 years: Early school age

- Continually rubbing/touching own genitals in public
- Persistent use of dirty words
- Wants to play sex games with much older or younger children
- Continuously wants to touch private parts of other children
- Chronic peeping behaviour

Cavanagh Johnson, 1999

Situations of sexualised behaviour and peer sexual play which causes concern (Tony Cavanagh Johnson, 1994)

- The children engaged in the sexual play do not have an ongoing mutual play relationship
- The children engaged in the sexual play/behaviour are of different ages or developmental levels
- Any sexual play/behaviour which continues in spite of consistent and clear requests to stop
- Sexual behaviours which occur in public or other places where the child has been told they are not acceptable
- Sexual play/behaviour which is eliciting complaints from other children or adversely affecting them
- Sexual behaviour which progresses in frequency, intensity or intrusiveness over time
- Sexual behaviour that is associated with fear, anxiety, deep shame or intense guilt
- Children who manually stimulate or have oral or genital contact with an animal
- Sexual behaviours which cause physical or emotional pain to self or others
- Children who use sex to hurt others
- When verbal and/or physical expressions of anger precede, follow or accompany the sexual behaviour
- When coercion, force, bribery, manipulation or threats are associated with sexual behaviours

Considerations

- Is the observed sexual behaviour age appropriate or concerning?
- What is the context of the sexual play?
- Age difference and relationship between children/young people
- Do not over or under react

Gil (1993)