

THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL SEXUAL EDUCATION ON GENERATION Z'S AWARENESS OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of digital sexual education on Generation Z's awareness of reproductive health. The development of information technology has made adolescents and young adults increasingly obtain knowledge about the body, puberty, healthy relationships, prevention of sexual violence, and health services through social media, educational websites, applications, podcasts, and short videos. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a literature study approach. Data were collected from books, scientific articles, health institution reports, and policy documents relevant to sexual education, reproductive health, digital literacy, and Generation Z behavior. The findings show that digital sexual education has a positive influence on increasing reproductive health awareness when the materials presented are accurate, age-appropriate, ethical, easy to understand, and derived from reliable sources. Digital media helps Generation Z access information that was previously considered taboo, encourages the courage to seek help, strengthens understanding of reproductive organ hygiene, the risks of sexually transmitted infections, consent, personal boundaries, and the importance of healthy communication. However, digital education also has risks, such as the spread of misinformation, age-inappropriate content, commercialization of sexual issues, and low ability to verify sources. Therefore, the roles of teachers, parents, health workers, and digital platforms are necessary to guide critical media use. In conclusion, digital sexual education can become an important strategy for increasing Generation Z's awareness of reproductive health, as long as it is supported by digital literacy, information curation, guidance, and responsible educational policies. This finding emphasizes that digital space is not a replacement for formal education, but a complement that can reach adolescents quickly, personally, interactively, and relevantly according to their daily communication habits in today's digital culture in Indonesia.

Keywords: Digital Sexual Education, Generation Z, Reproductive Health, Digital Literacy, Sexual Education

Introduction

The development of digital technology has changed the way Generation Z obtains information, builds identity, and understands health issues. This generation, born in the internet era, is accustomed to searching for answers through search engines, social media, short videos, online forums, and messaging applications. In the context of reproductive health, this transformation creates both opportunities and challenges. Information that was previously obtained only through teachers, parents, textbooks, or health workers can now be accessed within seconds. (Nayla Azzahra 2026).

Adolescents can find explanations about puberty, menstruation, wet dreams, reproductive organ hygiene, sexually transmitted infections, sexual violence, consent, and healthy relationships more easily. (Sri Rahmawati, 2026) However, this openness of access also exposes them to information that is not always accurate, age-appropriate, unbiased, or beneficial for their psychological and social development. (Selviani, 2026)

Reproductive health is an important part of overall human health. During adolescence and early adulthood, individuals experience physical, emotional, social, and cognitive changes that influence how they understand their bodies and relationships with others. (Sabila Yassarah, 2026). Lack of knowledge about reproductive health can lead to misunderstanding about body functions, excessive shame, risky behavior, delayed medical help-seeking, and low ability to protect oneself from violence or social pressure. Therefore, sexual education should not be understood as an encouragement to engage in sexual activity, but as an educational process that helps learners understand their bodies, maintain hygiene, recognize boundaries, respect themselves, respect others, and make safe and responsible decisions. (Salsabila Siregar, 2026)

In Indonesia, discussions about sexuality are often still considered taboo, especially within family and school environments. (Solehah Aura, 2026). Many adolescents feel awkward asking parents or teachers because they fear being judged as impolite. As a result, digital media often becomes the main source when they want to understand bodily changes and reproductive issues. This condition shows that digital space has become a highly influential informal educational arena. If the information found is accurate, adolescents can gain understanding that helps them maintain their health. Conversely, if the information comes from unreliable sources, adolescents may absorb myths, stigma, or misleading advice. Therefore, digital sexual education needs to be examined as a factor influencing Generation Z's awareness of reproductive health. (Dinda Syahbana, 2026)

Digital sexual education includes the delivery of reproductive health information through technology, such as articles, infographics, educational videos, online modules, webinars, health applications, remote counseling, and social media content. (Ibnaty Salsabila, 2026). The main characteristics of digital education are speed, flexibility, interactivity, and closeness to adolescents' communication habits. Generation Z tends to prefer information that is concise, visual, shareable, and accessible without revealing identity directly. (Rahel Salma, 2026). This makes digital media potentially capable of reaching adolescents who were previously reluctant to seek information due to shame or limited access to services. (Aulia Farah, 2026). With appropriate language, attractive design, and clear scientific sources, digital education can bridge adolescents' need for information and the limitations of conventional communication. (Sayla Ramadani, 2026).

Reproductive health awareness in this study is understood as Generation Z's ability to know, understand, evaluate, and apply information related to reproductive health in everyday life. (Fifi Afifah, 2026). This awareness does not only include biological knowledge, but also attitudes, values, and decision-making abilities. (Dita Chaniya, 2026). A person with reproductive health awareness is able to maintain reproductive organ hygiene, recognize signs of health problems, understand the importance of examination or consultation, respect consent, reject coercion, avoid risky behavior, and seek help when experiencing violence or health problems. (Tika Zahra, 2026). Thus, awareness is not merely knowing, but is also reflected in critical attitudes and self-protective behavior. (Rindi Artika, 2026)

The study of the influence of digital sexual education is increasingly important because Generation Z lives in a dense and rapidly changing information ecosystem. (Meliani Putri, 2026). Social media algorithms can strengthen the distribution of educational content, but they can also encourage the consumption of shallow and misleading content (Maysyarah Tanjung, 2026). Adolescents with good digital literacy will be more capable of distinguishing scientific information from opinion, promotion, or myth. Conversely, adolescents with low literacy tend to easily believe

popular information without checking its source. (Nabilah Resti, 2026). In this situation, digital sexual education is not enough simply by providing content; it must also teach how to read, compare, and verify information. Digital literacy becomes an important requirement so that reproductive health education truly has a positive impact. (Eni Karlina, 2026)

In addition, digital sexual education has social and ethical dimensions. Reproductive health materials need to be delivered in language that is sensitive, non-judgmental, respectful of cultural norms, and still based on scientific knowledge (Diva Taswin, 2026). Content that is too vulgar, fear-based, or victim-blaming may cause misunderstanding and resistance. Conversely, content that is clear, polite, scientific, and developmentally appropriate can help adolescents understand reproductive issues in a healthy way. (Satria Putri, 2026). The role of facilitators, such as teachers, parents, counselors, and health workers, remains necessary so that adolescents are not left to interpret information alone. (Siti Husnah, 2026). With proper guidance, digital space can become a safe and productive learning tool. (Zahwa Syaqla, 2026)

Based on this explanation, this study is important to discuss how digital sexual education influences Generation Z's awareness of reproductive health. The focus of the study is directed toward the forms of digital education, access to information, changes in understanding, attitude formation, the risk of misinformation, and the importance of guidance. (Airin Raudhatul, 2026). This study is expected to contribute to the development of reproductive health education that is relevant to adolescents' digital lives. The results are also expected to serve as input for schools, families, health workers, and policymakers in designing sexual education that is scientific, ethical, communicative, and appropriate to the needs of Generation Z today. (Widya Aslika, 2026)

In the educational context, this issue is also related to students' right to obtain accurate health information. (Dhea Puspita, 2026) Education that ignores reproductive health may cause adolescents to seek answers from uncontrolled sources. Conversely, education that is open, measured, and responsible can help adolescents understand their changes without fear. Such openness does not mean neglecting religious, cultural, and moral values in society, but rather placing knowledge as the basis of self-protection. Therefore, schools need to view digital sexual education as part of health education, character education, and violence prevention. (Khairuna Pratiwi, 2026)

Generation Z is also known for having a participatory communication pattern. They do not only receive information, but also share, respond to, and shape opinions through comments, reposts, or online discussions. This condition makes digital sexual education have a chain effect. Good content can spread healthy understanding to many people, while misleading content can expand misunderstanding. Therefore, message quality, content creator credibility, and users' ability to assess information are determining factors. This study views the influence of digital sexual education in a balanced way, namely as an opportunity to increase awareness as well as a space that requires supervision and literacy. This study is relevant for adolescent education in Indonesia during the current period of urgent digital transformation.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a narrative literature study approach. This method was chosen because the study focuses on describing, interpreting, and constructing a theoretical picture of the influence of digital sexual education on Generation Z's awareness of reproductive health. The research was not conducted through field-based statistical measurement, but through the exploration of various relevant written sources, such as academic books, journal articles, health institution reports, educational policy documents, and publications from national and international institutions that discuss sexual education, adolescent reproductive health, digital literacy, and Generation Z behavior.

The data collection technique was carried out through the identification, selection, reading, and recording of literature sources. Sources were selected based on thematic relevance, publisher credibility, information currency, and direct connection with the research focus. The data obtained were then analyzed using narrative content analysis. The stages of analysis included data reduction, namely selecting information relevant to the study focus; data presentation, namely grouping findings into major themes; and conclusion drawing, namely formulating the meaning of the relationship between digital sexual education and Generation Z's awareness of reproductive health.

The descriptive approach was used to describe the phenomenon systematically, while the narrative approach was used to organize explanations coherently based on the relationship between ideas in the literature. The analysis focused on six aspects, namely the forms of digital sexual education, Generation Z's access to information, increased reproductive knowledge, changes in attitudes and self-awareness, the risk of misinformation, and the role of guidance in strengthening digital education. To maintain the validity of the study, this research used source triangulation by comparing information from different references. Through this method, the findings are expected to provide an objective, critical, and relevant picture of the role of digital sexual education in building Generation Z's awareness of reproductive health.

Result and Discussion

Forms and Characteristics of Digital Sexual Education

Digital sexual education is a form of knowledge delivery about sexuality and reproductive health through technology-based media. Its forms can include health articles, educational videos, infographics, online modules, podcasts, webinars, health applications, social media campaigns, anonymous question-and-answer services, and remote counseling. For Generation Z, this form of education is relevant because their lives are closely connected to the internet and digital devices. Information is no longer obtained only from classrooms, books, or direct counseling, but also from mobile screens used every day.

The main characteristics of digital sexual education are accessibility, speed, visual presentation, interactivity, and personalization. Generation Z can choose materials according to their needs, such as puberty, menstruation, reproductive organ hygiene, sexually transmitted infections, sexual violence, consent, or healthy relationships. They can also access information without having to ask parents or teachers directly. This condition is important because some adolescents still feel embarrassed to discuss reproductive health openly. Digital media provides a more private space, allowing questions considered sensitive to be searched for more comfortably.

However, the review shows that not all digital sexual education has the same quality. Good content usually presents scientific information, uses age-appropriate language, avoids judgmental and vulgar expressions, and includes trustworthy sources. In contrast, irresponsible content often oversimplifies reproductive issues, uses sensational titles, spreads myths, or presents information

unsuitable for adolescent development. Therefore, digital education must be viewed not only from the medium used, but also from its content, purpose, language, and the credibility of its creator.

In the context of reproductive health education, digital media functions as a complement to formal education. Digitalization does not replace the role of teachers, parents, and health workers, but helps expand the reach of information. Properly designed digital sexual education can reach adolescents in various places, including those who have difficulty obtaining information services directly. Therefore, the existence of digital media opens great opportunities for increasing Generation Z's awareness of reproductive health, provided that the content is curated, directed, and used responsibly.

In addition, digital formats allow messages to be delivered more creatively. Infographics can simplify medical terms, short videos can explain hygiene procedures generally without vulgar detail, and online quizzes can help adolescents assess their understanding. This interactivity makes the material feel less instructive. Generation Z is more likely to accept messages when information is delivered in a communicative, concise, and visual style. Thus, the effectiveness of digital sexual education is strongly influenced by the ability to transform scientific material into messages that are clear, polite, attractive, and relevant to adolescents' daily experiences today.

Generation Z's Access to Reproductive Health Information

Access to information is one of the most visible influences of digital sexual education on Generation Z. Before the development of digital technology, reproductive health information often depended on adolescents' courage to ask parents, teachers, or health workers. In many cases, questions about the body and sexuality were considered embarrassing, leading adolescents to remain silent. Digital media has changed this situation because information can be searched independently, quickly, and relatively privately. This gives Generation Z a greater opportunity to recognize reproductive health issues early.

Ease of access helps adolescents obtain basic knowledge about bodily changes during puberty. Adolescent girls can search for information about menstruation, menstrual pain, personal hygiene, or signs of reproductive disorders. Adolescent boys can understand voice changes, hair growth, wet dreams, and reproductive organ hygiene. In addition, digital information can also explain the importance of respecting bodily boundaries, recognizing forms of sexual violence, and knowing where to seek help when facing problems. Thus, digital access plays a role in opening knowledge spaces that were previously often closed by shame and taboo.

However, easy access does not always mean increased correct understanding. Generation Z can find information from highly diverse sources, ranging from official websites, health worker accounts, educational organizations, influencers, to ordinary user comments. These differences in source quality require adolescents to have the ability to select information. Without this ability, broad access may instead create confusion because many opinions contradict one another. For example, myths about menstruation, reproductive organ hygiene, or sexually transmitted infections still often circulate in the form of popular content that is not scientifically based.

The study shows that digital sexual education has a positive influence when access to information is accompanied by literacy. Adolescents need to know which sources are trustworthy, how to check the identity of content creators, and how to distinguish health information from personal opinion. Digital access is also more beneficial when schools and families do not close discussions, but help adolescents clarify information they find. Therefore, access to information is not the final goal, but an entry point toward more critical and responsible reproductive health awareness.

In this context, access inequality must also be considered. Not all adolescents have devices, stable internet connections, or the ability to understand health language. Some scientific content uses difficult terminology, while popular content is often too brief. Therefore, digital sexual education

needs to be inclusive, simple, and understandable for adolescents from various backgrounds. Equal access will increase the opportunity for Generation Z to obtain accurate reproductive information, not merely information that happens to appear on their social media feeds in an independent and safe manner.

Increased Reproductive Knowledge and Understanding

Digital sexual education plays an important role in increasing Generation Z's knowledge of reproductive health. This knowledge includes understanding reproductive organ functions, puberty changes, personal hygiene, menstrual cycles, the risks of sexually transmitted infections, sexual violence prevention, and the importance of health services. Information delivered through digital media can help adolescents understand that reproductive health is not something taboo, but part of bodily health that needs to be maintained. With this understanding, adolescents can reduce fear, shame, and misunderstanding about the changes they experience.

Increased knowledge occurs because digital media offers diverse ways of delivering information. Animated videos, infographics, and short articles can explain difficult material more simply. Adolescents who have difficulty understanding formal explanations in class can gain reinforcement through digital shows or readings. In addition, digital materials can be accessed repeatedly at any time, allowing adolescents to learn at their own pace. This differs from one-time counseling sessions that are often easily forgotten. Repetition of information through digital media helps strengthen memory and understanding.

Digital education also expands knowledge about the non-biological aspects of reproductive health. Generation Z does not only need information about body organs, but also about healthy relationships, communication, consent, privacy, digital safety, and self-respect. These materials are important because reproductive health risks are often related to peer pressure, dating violence, the spread of private content, and the inability to say no. With proper education, adolescents can understand that maintaining reproductive health means protecting the body, emotions, dignity, and social safety.

Nevertheless, increased knowledge depends on the quality of information received. Knowledge derived from inaccurate content can create wrong understanding. Therefore, digital sexual education must use an evidence-based approach and be developed by parties who understand health, developmental psychology, and adolescent education. Content needs to avoid fear-based or blaming language, because such approaches can make adolescents withdraw. The study shows that knowledge increases most effectively when information is delivered clearly, scientifically, empathetically, and according to the needs of Generation Z's age group.

Increased understanding is also reflected in adolescents' ability to connect information with real life. They can recognize when symptoms need consultation, why personal hygiene is important, and how to distinguish healthy curiosity from risky behavior. Digital media that provides examples from daily situations helps adolescents translate concepts into action. Thus, knowledge does not stop as memorization, but develops into practical awareness. This awareness becomes the foundation for Generation Z to make safer decisions, respect their bodies, and avoid being easily influenced by social pressure.

Changes in Attitudes, Self-Awareness, and Risk Prevention

The influence of digital sexual education is not only seen in increased knowledge, but also in changes in Generation Z's attitudes toward reproductive health. Adolescents who obtain accurate information tend to respect their bodies more, become more aware of personal hygiene, and are more willing to seek help when facing problems. This awareness emerges because digital education can shift adolescents' perspective from shame to the understanding that reproductive health is a normal part of human health. This change in attitude is important because many reproductive problems are not only caused by lack of information, but also by fear of discussing them.

Digital sexual education also helps build awareness about personal boundaries and consent. Generation Z lives in a social environment that does not only exist directly, but also through digital spaces. They may face invitations, pressure, comments, or the distribution of private content through social media. Proper education can help adolescents understand bodily rights, the importance of maintaining privacy, and how to reject treatment that makes them uncomfortable. Thus, digital sexual education plays a role in preventing sexual violence and promoting self-protection, not merely providing biological information.

In addition, digital education can encourage a more open attitude toward health consultation. Adolescents who understand symptoms of reproductive disorders, infection risks, or the impact of sexual violence are more likely to seek help from trusted adults or health services. Digital content that mentions the importance of consultation can reduce the habit of delaying help due to embarrassment. This attitude shows increased awareness that reproductive health needs to be taken seriously and should not be handled only through myths or advice from peers.

However, changes in attitude do not automatically occur after adolescents read or watch educational content. Attitudes are influenced by family values, religious norms, peer environments, personal experiences, and the quality of communication with adults. Therefore, digital sexual education needs to be accompanied by safe discussion spaces. If adolescents only receive information without guidance, they may understand the material only partially. The study shows that digital education has the strongest influence when it is able to build self-awareness, the courage to ask questions, the ability to set boundaries, and the habit of seeking help appropriately.

Changes in attitude are also related to decision-making ability. Generation Z with better reproductive awareness will be more careful in choosing relationships, protecting personal information, and assessing the risks of actions. They can also understand that healthy relationships must be based on respect, communication, and safety. Therefore, digital sexual education functions as an early prevention tool. Its impact is not always visible in major behaviors, but can be seen in small attitudes such as asking reliable sources and rejecting unhealthy pressure.

The Risk of Misinformation and Digital Literacy Challenges

Behind its benefits, digital sexual education has a serious risk in the form of misinformation. Generation Z can access information from many sources, but not all sources have a scientific basis. Social media often displays content created to attract attention, not to educate responsibly. As a result, information about reproductive health may be mixed with myths, product promotion, personal experiences that are generalized, or views that do not align with health principles. This risk can influence adolescents' understanding and lead them to make inappropriate decisions.

Misinformation can appear in various forms. Some content spreads myths about menstruation, reproductive organ hygiene, fertility, or sexually transmitted infections. Other content normalizes unhealthy relationships, blames victims of violence, or provides health advice without medical basis. In some cases, information is delivered in language that appears convincing but does not include sources. This is dangerous because adolescents may have difficulty distinguishing professional

information from ordinary opinion. The more frequently similar content appears on their feeds, the greater the possibility that adolescents will regard it as true.

Another challenge is digital algorithms. Social media platforms work by showing content considered attractive to users. If adolescents have watched or searched for certain content, platforms may recommend similar content repeatedly. This pattern can narrow perspectives and place adolescents in an unbalanced information space. If the content that often appears is misleading, adolescents' understanding risks being shaped by incorrect information. Therefore, digital literacy becomes a primary need in digital sexual education.

Digital literacy in this context includes the ability to check sources, read information critically, understand the purpose of content, recognize sensational language, and compare information with trusted references. Adolescents need to be trained not to immediately believe viral content, especially when it relates to health. Schools, families, and health workers have an important role in teaching these skills. The study shows that digital sexual education will have a positive influence when accompanied by the ability to filter information. Without digital literacy, educational spaces can turn into spaces for spreading misunderstanding.

Therefore, preventing misinformation needs to be done from both the production and consumption sides of content. Educational content creators must use scientific references, avoid exaggerated claims, and explain the limits of the information provided. Users also need to be directed to consult professionals when experiencing health complaints. Digital platforms can contribute through labeling official sources and limiting misleading content. Through these strategies, the risks of digital sexual education can be reduced, while its benefits for reproductive health awareness can continue to be strengthened sustainably for adolescents in a safe, critical, ethical, open, and responsible manner.

The Role of Family, Schools, Health Workers, and Digital Platforms

The success of digital sexual education depends greatly on the role of support systems around Generation Z. Digital media does provide broad access, but adolescents still need guidance so that the information they receive can be understood correctly. The family is the first environment that can build healthy communication about the body, puberty, hygiene, and personal boundaries. Parents do not have to explain everything technically, but they need to provide a safe, non-judgmental, and age-appropriate space for questions and answers. When families are open, adolescents do not depend solely on the internet as their only source of information.

Schools also have a strategic role in integrating reproductive health education with character education and digital literacy. Teachers can help students understand materials scientifically, politely, and in accordance with cultural values. Schools can use digital media as supporting materials, such as videos, infographics, or online modules, but explanations and discussions remain necessary. In this way, sexual education does not stand as free content without direction, but becomes part of responsible learning. Schools can also teach students how to recognize valid information sources and how to seek help when facing problems.

Health workers serve as professional sources of information. In digital education, health workers can create accurate content, answer common questions, and direct adolescents to appropriate services. The presence of health workers in digital spaces is important because many adolescents first seek information online before visiting health facilities. If professional content is easy to find, the opportunity for adolescents to obtain correct information will be greater. In addition, youth-friendly consultation services need to be developed so they are not afraid to seek help.

Digital platforms also have responsibility in shaping the information ecosystem. Platforms can help display credible sources, limit the spread of harmful information, and provide space for reproductive health education campaigns. However, responsibility does not lie only with platforms.

Adolescents as users also need to be trained to become critical consumers of information. The study shows that digital sexual education will be more effective when families, schools, health workers, and platforms work together. Such collaboration makes reproductive education safer, more directed, and more suitable for Generation Z's needs.

Collaboration is also important to reduce message gaps between home, school, and the internet. If schools provide scientific information but families close the discussion, adolescents may become confused. If families are open but the internet is filled with misleading content, understanding remains at risk. Therefore, facilitators need to have the same awareness that digital sexual education is not a threat, but a tool that must be guided. With supervision, empathy, and good communication, digital space can become a medium for developing healthy and sustainable reproductive awareness.

Discussion

The findings show that digital sexual education has an important influence on Generation Z's awareness of reproductive health. This influence is reflected through increased access to information, increased knowledge, changes in attitudes, and adolescents' ability to recognize risks related to the body and social relationships. Digital media has become a learning space that is close to Generation Z's life because it is fast, visual, flexible, and accessible. This condition allows issues that were previously considered taboo to be discussed in a simpler and more personal way.

However, this positive influence does not happen automatically. Digital sexual education is effective only when the information provided is accurate, age-appropriate, ethical, and derived from reliable sources. Without digital literacy, adolescents may receive misleading information that can weaken reproductive health awareness. Therefore, content quality and users' ability to verify sources become key factors. Good education must explain reproductive health as part of self-protection, not as a vulgar or frightening discussion.

This discussion also emphasizes that the human role remains important in digital education. Teachers, parents, and health workers are needed to provide guidance, answer questions, and help adolescents understand information correctly. Digital platforms also need to support the spread of credible content. Thus, digital sexual education cannot be separated from a guidance ecosystem. When digital media is used critically and responsibly, sexual education can become an effective means of building reproductive awareness, preventing risky behavior, and helping Generation Z make healthier decisions in everyday life.

Narratively, the relationship between digital education and reproductive awareness can be understood as a gradual process. First, adolescents gain access to information. Second, accurate information forms knowledge. Third, knowledge develops into self-protective attitudes. Fourth, these attitudes encourage healthy behavior. This chain can be broken if information sources are invalid or if there is no guidance. Therefore, digital sexual education needs to be managed collaboratively, directionally, and continuously.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that digital sexual education has a positive influence on Generation Z's awareness of reproductive health when implemented appropriately, scientifically, and responsibly. Digital media provides great opportunities for adolescents to obtain information about puberty, reproductive organ hygiene, healthy relationships, consent, prevention of sexual violence, and health services more easily. This ease of access helps adolescents understand their bodies, reduce shame, and increase their courage to seek help when facing reproductive problems.

However, digital sexual education also has challenges, such as misinformation, age-inappropriate content, and low ability to verify sources. Therefore, digital literacy becomes an important requirement so that Generation Z can filter accurate information. The roles of parents, teachers, health workers, and digital platforms remain necessary to provide guidance and ensure that the materials adolescents receive are appropriate to their developmental needs. With this support, digital sexual education can become a relevant, safe, and effective health education strategy. This education does not only increase knowledge, but also shapes attitudes of self-protection, body respect, and healthy decision-making in everyday life. Thus, digital sexual education needs to be positioned as part of adolescent character and health education. Its implementation must respect cultural values, be evidence-based, and encourage open communication between adolescents and trusted adults.

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