

# App helps parents talk to tweens about sex

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A new app that helps parents discuss confronting sexual issues with their tweens (10-13 year olds) has been developed in a collaboration between psychologist and Swinburne University of Technology alumna Sarah Calleja and Swinburne design students.

"Parents complain there is little suitable material to support them in having meaningful conversations about confronting sexual issues with their tweens that enables them to share their personal values and ethics," Ms Calleja said.

"I wanted to address this issue by creating a resource that uses the technology tweens are using to inspire conversations with their parents. Having these discussions doesn't give kids permission to have sex, it gives them information to help them choose to behave responsibly."

The content focuses on addressing sexual issues that are not covered in standard sex education material, including challenging [relationship issues](#), provocative sexual material in the media and on the web, and sexual situations that threaten the emotional and [physical health](#) of tweens.

Swinburne postgraduate design students previously collaborated on a book published by Ms Calleja to help girls transition from primary school to high school. She was keen to work with students again to develop a resource for tweens and parents.

"The content was written but it required a design concept and support materials to make it work," Ms Calleja said.

She approached Swinburne Design lecturer Nicki Wragg who developed the project as an assignment for Bachelor of Communication Design (Honours) and Bachelor of Digital Media Design (Honours) students.

The students pitched their ideas to Ms Calleja to win a place on the design team. Communication Design students Candice Ayad, Gretchen Dobson, and Leonie Beatson, and Digital Media Design students Conlan Normington and Sam Van Ingen worked to create the [app](#), including the design of the pages, production of the video stories and more.

Ms Dobson said the students appreciated the chance to work with a real client on a real job.

"Working on the Parents, Tweens and Sex app gave us the opportunity to enhance our design skills while communicating and creatively interpreting a real client brief," she said. "We are thrilled with the resulting product and the opportunity for engagement it offers its audience."

Ms Calleja said: "The app leads the way as a new educational tool for

parents to guide their tweens and can be used as needed, depending on the topic of interest at the time.

"It provides video narratives, quizzes and facts and raises questions that naturally convert to conversation starters, packaged in an engaging and responsive design.

"Some parents might find the content or the thought of talking about such things with a tween worrying, but research has shown that tweens prefer parents to be the 'go-to person' to discuss [sexual issues](#).

"This app allows discussion of complex issues in a way that is safe. You can choose the topic that interests you, read the stories and do the quizzes to get the information you need to start talking."

The [Parents](#), [Tweens](#) and Sex app costs \$25 per download. [Find out more](#).

Provided by Swinburne University of Technology

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