

TEACHING YOUR CHILD ABOUT SEXUALITY

General Goals of Christian Sexuality Education

The goals of Christian sexuality education are to:

- celebrate God's goodness in creating humans as sexual beings.
- identify biblical principles regarding sexuality and foster the development of Christian beliefs, attitudes and values.
- provide accurate, developmentally appropriate information about human sexuality.
- dispel myths about sexuality.
- empower parents as primary, competent and trustworthy sources of information regarding sexuality.
- foster the wholesome development of men and women as persons and enhance their capacities for caring relationships.
- foster connectedness with God and others in the family and in community.
- enhance a person's capacity for a loving, supportive, non-coercive, mutually pleasurable, intimate and sexual relationship with a marriage partner.
- broaden understanding of the different responsibilities family members assume and how they interchange and interact.
- increase understanding of the stages of marital and family lifecycles and their impact on the sexual functioning of the couple.
- empower individuals to exercise responsibility regarding sexual relationships.
- develop interpersonal skills necessary for assertively communicating personal values and decisions regarding sexuality.

Sexuality Education for Infants and Preschoolers

The sexuality education of infants and preschoolers is based on several important beliefs:

- Sexuality is a natural and healthy part of God's design for human beings from birth.

- Children experience their sexuality as a natural part of their development.
- All children should be treated with respect and valued as God’s creation and persons for whom Christ died.
- The parent-child relationship is based on love and respect. Love and respect are incompatible with the sexual manipulation, coercion and exploitation of children.
- All children should be loved, cared for, and protected from harm.
- Children begin learning about sexuality as soon as they are born, and continue to learn throughout their lives.
- Children are increasingly curious about how their bodies look and work, about how male and female bodies differ, and about where babies come from. Natural curiosity should be encouraged, and age-appropriate answers provided.
- Children need to be helped to learn about and appreciate the beauty of the human body—including the genitals—and how the body works.
- Children learn from how people touch them, talk to them, and expect them to behave as males and females. The messages children receive in early childhood affect their future attitudes, values and behaviors.
- Children’s understanding of sexuality is influenced by their parents, family members, friends, neighbors, church, community, school, the media, and other factors.
- Information about sex-related health risks and abuse should be presented to children within the context of positive information aimed at healthy personal and sexual development.

Parent-child bonding. Good body sensations at the time of birth involving both parents lay the foundation for good sexual attitudes.

Consistent needs. From the beginning babies need to feel love through caressing, touching, rubbing, snuggling and all of the other wonderful ways to send positive messages through the skin in addition to the messages sent through the other senses. These good sensations establish body awareness and help give the child feelings of security and trust.

Birth to eighteen months. Rather than answering the child’s questions at this stage of development, it is parents who ask questions of themselves.

- Do I hold my baby close during feeding?
- Do I focus my attention on the baby with eye contact and soft words of endearment?
- Do I touch, hug and kiss my baby as expressions of appropriate intimacy?
- Do I make bath time a playful experience and foster my baby's sensual appreciation with the application of body lotion?
- Do I display positive facial expressions when I change my baby's diaper?
- Do I refer to my baby's anatomical parts by their proper names?
- Do I confirm my baby's beauty with loving affirmations?
- Do I say "yes" to each of my baby's successes?

Eighteen months to six years. By the time a child is three years old he has certainly developed a sense of his maleness or femaleness. Hopefully this is without sexism and stereotyping. A child entering school should know:

- Differences between girls' and boys' bodies.
- The correct names for the body parts and terms that have to do with the body functions.
- How the human baby develops inside the mother in the uterus.
- That the mother sustains the baby through breast feeding.
- That there are good body feelings.
- That experiences of love and devotion, touching and caring are special within the family.
- That all families are not the same (because of death, divorce, separation, remarriage, etc.).
- That not all families function in the same way (i.e. both parents work, babysitters, etc.).

Sexuality Education for Kindergarten - Grade 12

The sexuality education of children in Kindergarten through Grade 12 is based on several important beliefs:

- God created all human beings sexual creatures.
- God has revealed His plan for human sexuality in Scripture.
- The Bible views human beings as wholistic in nature. There is no dichotomy between body and spirit.
- Sexuality is a natural and healthy part of God's design for human beings.

- Sexuality has biological, emotional, social, psychological, spiritual and ethical dimensions.
- Every human being has dignity and worth as God's creation and as a person redeemed by Christ.
- Sexual relationships should never be coercive or exploitative.
- All children should be loved, cared for, and protected from harm and exploitation.
- All sexual decisions have effects or consequences.
- Individuals have the right and the obligation to make responsible choices about their behavior, including their sexual behavior.
- In God's design, sexual intimacy which leads to arousal and includes sexual intercourse is reserved for a man and a woman whose love relationship is protected by the covenant of marriage.
- Abstaining from sexual intercourse is the most effective method of preventing emotional damage, unintended pregnancy, and the transmission of sexually-transmitted diseases including the HIV virus.
- Premature involvement in sexual behaviors poses serious risks.
- Persons who are sexually active need information about sexual health care.
- Young people facing the reality of the consequences of their sexual activity outside of marriage should be supported by family and church in practical ways. God's gift of forgiveness should be extended to them, along with another chance to make better decisions through Christ.
- Individuals, families and society benefit when children are able to discuss sexuality with their parents and/or other trusted adults.
- Young people develop their personal values about sexuality as part of becoming adults.
- Parents should be the primary sexuality educators of their children.
- Families share their values about sexuality with their children.
- The church has a responsibility to help children and youth make good decisions regarding sexuality. This is primarily accomplished by empowering families to relate in nurturing ways which provide young people with a sense of connectedness to their parents and to the church as they formulate and internalize their own values. This responsibility also includes educating and supporting parents in their important role as primary educators regarding sexuality.

- The church also plays a vital role in strengthening marriages, helping couples stretch toward God's ideal established at creation.
- Christians value cultural diversity for the unique perspectives and family strengths varied cultures bring to the community of faith.
- While Christians base their values about sexuality on Scripture, they should treat persons with differing values and beliefs with respect.

Seven to nine years. During this period a child should learn:

- That the egg cell is the basis of human life.
- Where animals come from (i.e. eggs developing inside mother's body).
- To have a great appreciation for the wonder of the human body and develop a sense of responsibility for one's body.
- That different animals need different amounts of time to get ready to be born.
- What the role of the father is in the development of a baby (the internal fertilization).
- How animals are born (i.e. egg, larva, openings in mother's body).
- The need for love, time, and care in helping human babies grow and develop.
- That all types of sexual behavior should be conducted in privacy for other's comfort (i.e. body functions, genital touching, etc.).
- That no one but himself/herself should be allowed to touch or fondle their private parts, even if it is someone they know. If anyone tries to, they should let their mother, father, or teacher know immediately. If any one of these persons does not respond to their call for help, they should let one or both of the other members of this triad know.

Ten to twelve years. Children this age should:

- Learn that the body is regulated by certain glands.
- Have an appreciation for all body systems (i.e. circulatory, respiratory, digestive, as well as sexual).
- Appreciate the miracle of reproduction and care of both animal and human babies.

- Learn to sort out responsible and irresponsible behavior in peer group and family group relationships in all areas.
- Understand menstruation is a part of girls growing up and that seminal emissions occur as a natural part of boys growing up. These are the ways in which nature readies the body for its adult sexual role during the time of puberty.
- Learn to accept people from different racial extractions and those who have physical or economic handicaps, recognizing that prejudice, discrimination, and sexism is unfair.
- Learn about masturbation.
- Begin to understand the importance of responsible behavior in all areas, including sexuality.
- Learn how the family can undergo changes that can be joyful or sorrowful (i.e. death, divorce, new members born, illness, job changes, etc.).
- Understand one's emotions.

Twelve to fifteen years. Children at this stage need to:

- Understand the physical changes that occur in both boys and girls during adolescence.
- Understand reproduction and the male and female reproductive systems, again with correct names.
- Understand what self-esteem means (i.e. feeling good about yourself, not exploiting anyone, not making fun of anyone, getting along in your family, etc.).
- Appreciate the risk involved in sexual intercourse.
- Understand girl and boy relationships, readiness for dating, advantages and disadvantages of going steady.
- Have a basic understanding of the principles of birth control.
- Know the meaning of the following words: abortion, conception, chromosomes, erection, Fallopian tubes, fertilization, genes, genitals, homosexual, hymen, intercourse, menopause, menstruation, nocturnal emissions, ovulation, pelvis, pituitary, puberty, seminal vesicles, rectum, spinal column, urethra, vagina, venereal.

Sixteen to eighteen years. Sexual issues and related education during this period include:

- What it means to be in love.
- Understanding that sex is never a test of love.

- Understanding the meaning of equality of the sexes, double standards, assertiveness training in the area of rights.
- Responsible decision making in the area of sexual decisions, clarification of values.
- Peer pressure and sexuality.
- Detailed review of birth control including techniques of birth control, pros and cons.
- Problems associated with teenage pregnancies.
- A detailed exploration of sexually contracted diseases.
- Basic principles of parenting.
- Putting sex into perspective, “never an emergency.”
- Love and caring for another person, recognizing concern for other people.
- Social and emotional problems related to sex: promiscuity, abortion, prostitution, rape, adultery.
- Understanding people who have different sexual life styles.
- Learning about intimacy and trust.
- Resources in the community for getting help for problems in this area.
- Bonding sequence and implications.

College – Young Adult Level

Ongoing sex education will touch:

- Human sexual responses.
- Contraception methods—pros and cons of various forms including medical research on negative and positive aspects of each.
- Abortion.
- Promiscuity.
- Sexual variations.

Methods of Sex Education

Healthy family experience.

Early practice on delivery of information by parents.

Picking up on teachable moments.

Illustrations from nature.

Answering your child’s questions.

Literature available.

References and Bibliography

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