

**Child Care Training and Resource Kit**  
Healthy Sexual Growth and Development  
**Teacher Enrichment**

## SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN BEGINNING FAMILIES

### Role of the teacher when talking to parents

#### GOALS:

- To help parents realize the importance of actively teaching information to their children.
- Clarify and prioritize parent values about sexuality education
- Provide information about sexuality development and behavior
- Encourage parents to communicate with their children

#### Importance of active teaching

children learn one half of their information by age 5  
develop healthy self-concept higher self-esteem  
education starts young before children begin school  
children will pick up information from other sources which may be incorrect  
more comfortable for children if parent explains information  
chance for parents to discuss values  
strengthens the family unit

#### Clarify values

discussion in group sessions helps parents to identify values  
encourage parents to read articles about sexuality to increase knowledge level  
recall past sexuality education experience to make changes in how sexuality education is approached  
compare parents lifestyle as a child to today's children in society

#### Provide information

focus on early childhood, role-modeling, and communication building  
information is needed by parents to initiate quality education  
lectures, books, films, handouts, small group discussion, resource display

#### Encourage communication

factual information makes it easier for parents to discuss sexuality  
try it, it may not be as threatening to talk to your child as you thought  
keep answers simple  
understand the stages of development  
use outside resources as props i.e., books, media  
realize you are already modeling behavior i.e., nonverbal  
ongoing education process not just a one time conversation  
parents of young children are more likely to seek information than parents with older children

# GROUND RULES

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## **Increasing comfort level when discussing sexuality**

### 1. Recall past experiences

How old were you when you learned about sex?

Who taught you?

Did you know if the information was correct or incorrect?

What or who was most helpful in your sexuality education process?

What or who was not helpful?

How could improvements have been made in your sexuality education process?

### 2. Clarify values

How and when do you think a child should learn about:

genital differences

reproduction

gender roles

sexual relations

What are some important values associated with human sexuality that a young child needs to learn?

### 3. Practice answering questions about sexuality

#### **Possible topics for discussion with parents:**

normal development and behavior

nudity

abnormal behavior

genital play and masturbation

language use

young children and sex play

family bed

genital features

privacy

new sibling in the family

## **Teaching techniques to use with parent groups**

Small group discussion

Questionnaire - arouse interest, initiate discussion

Walkabout station

Resource display - books, brochures, articles

Film

Lecture - informational only

Rate least to most distressing

Open discussion based on television program, upcoming event

## **Teaching tools to use with children:**

Anatomically correct dolls

Games -Humanology, Kid Power

Field trip to the hospital

Books

Observe a new baby

Walkabout stations

Color a picture of a baby in the womb

Puppets

Feeling faces

identify faces in public or  
by looking in a mirror, happy sad, worried

## **Teaching Techniques to use with parent groups**

Visit a zoo

Family tree with pictures, shows differences and similarities

Role play - office kit, school kit, kitchen kit

Pictures of male and female animals

Interest inventory -boy, girl

Identify different jobs in the family and who does them

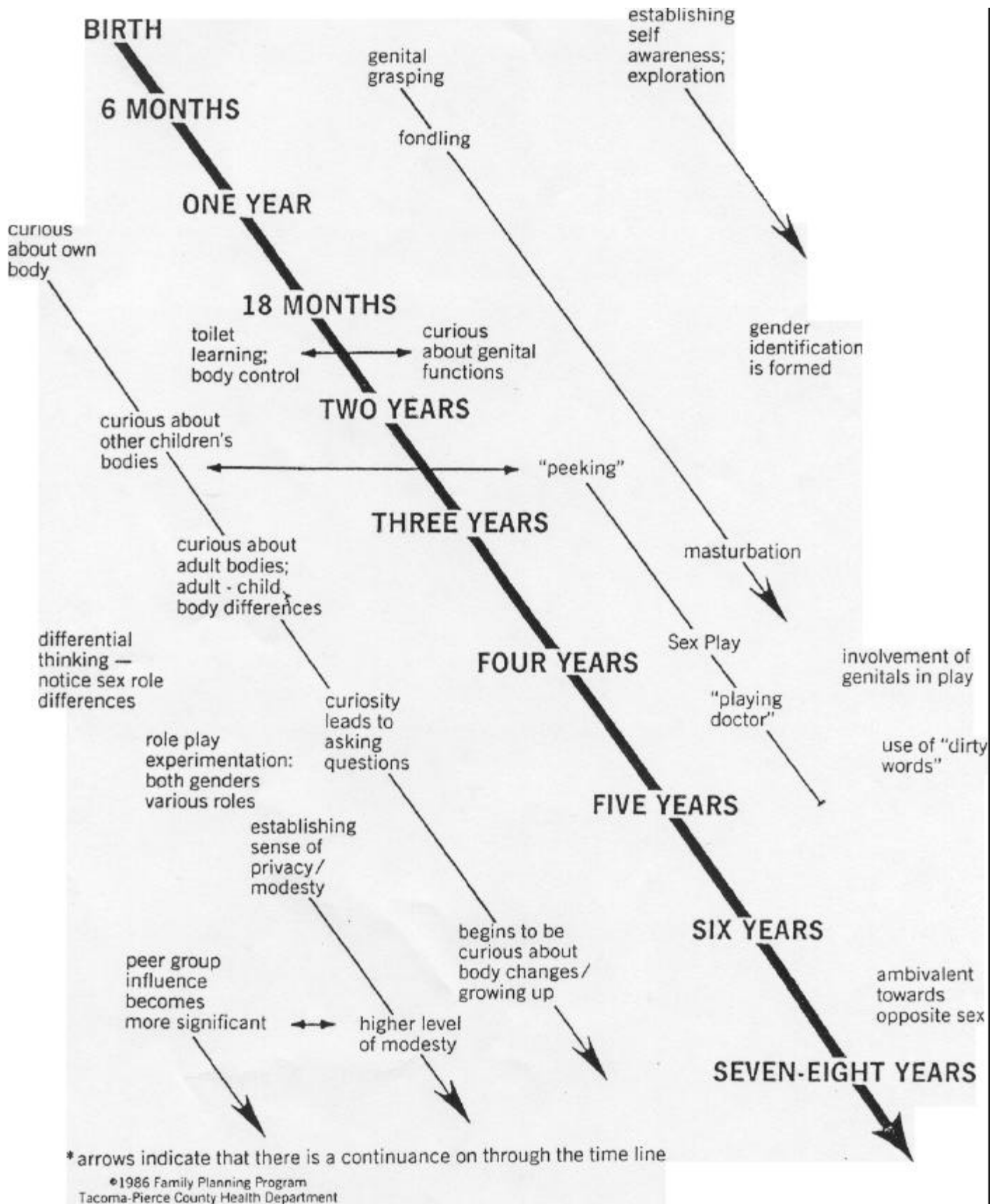
Trace child's body and label

What if. . . stories

Sexuality Education in Beginning Families

**TIME.LINE**

Overview of Sexual Behaviors  
in Young Children



## **GUIDELINES FOR ANSWERING CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS ABOUT SEXUALITY**

These guidelines will help parents, teachers, and care providers appropriately answer questions children may ask about body parts, genital differences, reproduction, birth, and sexual activity.

- When asked, always try to answer.
- Answer the question that was asked; don't add information.
- Don't answer with myths or untruths.
- Use simple, yet accurate terms.
- Don't exclusively talk about animals or plants when the child has asked about people.
- Talk about feelings and values, as well as the facts.
- Be patient; be consistent.
- Be an active listener.
- Keep the child's age and understanding level in mind.
- Acknowledge if you ...don't know the answer.
  - ... are embarrassed or uncomfortable.
  - ...are caught "off-guard".
- Let your child know that you are glad he/she asked you for the information.
- Set up the opportunity for future communication.
- Remember, sexuality education can be an everyday part of life and is a life-long process.

Note: This page is also available as a reproducible Parent Handout in Section III.

PARENT HANDOUT

A PARENT'S GUIDE FOR  
SELECTING AND USING A BOOK ABOUT  
SEXUALITY

A variety of books addressing sexuality education are available in most book stores and libraries. Here are some suggestions and guidelines for choosing a book for yourself and your family.

Examine the Text --

One of the first considerations in selecting a book is the content. It may not be feasible to read entire portions of a book, but it is a good idea to scan some of the text to get an impression of the style and approach.

Is the text

- humorous?
- serious; sensitive?
- for a specific audience (parents, children, teachers, etc.)?
- written from a specific perspective (religious, medical, etc.)?
- based on social, moral, or physical aspects of sexuality?
- focused for a specific stage of development or age level?

How does the author present

- male/female roles?
- parenting roles?
- the family unit?
- single parenting?

Does the text format and design

- allow for easy reading and reference?
- include a table of contents, index, glossary or bibliography?
- have a question-answer structure?
- include chapters on specific topics?

Take a Look at the Illustrations

Colorful pictures, sketches, cartoons and diagrams may be a book's strongest appeal. If the book is for your children, consider their age. Older children will appreciate more detail and realism in pictures; younger children might prefer bright colors over pastel, abstract sketches.

Continued ...

## A PARENT'S GUIDE FOR SELECTING AND USING A BOOK -page two

Look more closely- are the illustrations compatible with the text? Are the pictures accurate, e.g., small people with huge genitals? Are the animals, e.g., chickens and eggs, used exclusively to illustrate reproduction, or are there pictures of humans? If real photographs are used, do you find them tasteful and comfortable to look at? Do the illustrations portray specific values and attitudes?

### **Investigate the Author**

Usually, a description of the author's background and experience will appear on the back cover, inside jacket, or in the preface. Is the author a physician, teacher, psychologist, parent, clergyman, etc.? Consider their viewpoint: a minister may write from the perspective that is specific to his/her religious beliefs; a physician may focus on the physical or medical aspect of sexuality, rather than emotional or moral views. An author who has solicited input from parents and documented their responses, feelings, and experiences may provide a more practical and helpful point of view. Is the name of the



of the author familiar to you, or do you see the name on other books on the shelf? For example, Sol Gordon has written many books about sexuality for children, parents, and professionals. Some books may be more appealing to you than others. If you particularly liked an author's style and writing in a children's book, you might want to consider him/her as a source for a parent book as well.

**In** contemplating the purchase of a book, consider how often it will get used. Buying a book that would serve as a reference while your family grows, deserves consideration. Passing the book on to friends or relatives will extend it's lifetime and will increase the worth of the purchase.

Children enjoy having access to books and like to read the same ones again and again. Books about sexuality, body parts, or reproduction are of particular interest because children are fascinated with their own bodies. This interest may be substantial enough to prompt your decision to buy such a book for your child.

Continued . . .

### A PARENT'S GUIDE FOR SELECTING AND USING A BOOK - page three

Many books are available in both hardcover and paperback, and usually the paperback editions cost less. Hardcover books are more durable and may be the best investment if the book will receive considerable use.

Some suggestions to help defray the cost: purchase a used book; co-buy a book with a friend; suggest that your parent group buy a book collectively. Perhaps a "long distance" grandparent could buy a book for your child as a birthday present or to celebrate the announcement of a new sibling. Books are an ideal gift to send through the postal system.

If buying a book is not practical, the library is an excellent source. Most public and school (private, public, college and university) libraries have a selection of sexuality books for children and adults. Churches, preschools or parent groups may also have several books about sexuality in their resource libraries. Inter-library loans may be requested to obtain a particular book that your library does not have. Ask the librarian to include specific books on the new acquisition list.

#### Using the Book you have Selected

Before you read a book about sexuality to your child, it is imperative that you read it first. The book may be more explicit than you thought it would be, or you might find that you are uncomfortable reading portions of it to your child. It may not be necessary to read the entire text of a book to a young "pre-reader". You can modify reading the text, insert your own wording, or "picture read". The book can "grow" with your children and be used more extensively as their understanding and interests change.

After considering all aspects of a book and agreeing in general with the approach and style, there may be parts of the text, or opinions of the author with which you disagree. This does not mean that the book is not useful. Often, disagreement helps you clarify and more clearly understand your own feelings and values about sexuality, and can help you teach your children critical thinking skills.

In conclusion, the most important consideration is your satisfaction with the book. Use these suggestions as guidelines and then trust your judgment. Enjoy your book!

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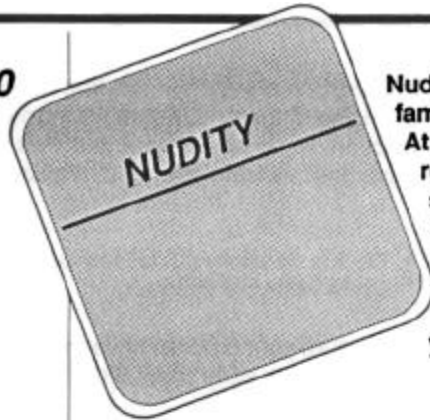
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## Fact Sheet #10



Nudity is a concern of many families. Is it harmful or helpful? At what age should privacy be respected? Should children see parents of the opposite sex without clothes? Respecting your own comfort level will help you answer these questions for your own family.

### **Basic Facts**

#### ***Nudity is not harmful.***

Nudity is not harmful for children or parents. It can be helpful. Parents need to follow their own comfort level about nudity, but in any case be sure to give children the opportunity to learn about sex differences.

Many parents feel at ease undressing, bathing or using the toilet in front of young children. This gives young children many good opportunities to observe similarities and differences between males' and females' bodies, as well as between adults' and childrens' bodies. Observing toilet behavior is also helpful for young children as they learn to use the toilet. They usually enjoy imitating, and are often enthusiastic about imitating toilet behavior.

Nudity between siblings or neighborhood children is not harmful, so long as neither child is being coerced. In that situation it is the coercion that is wrong, not the nudity. Many siblings enjoy bathing together when they are young. They usually prefer privacy as they get older. Likewise, it is fairly common for young neighborhood children to undress and play doctor. This is normal developmental behavior for young children.

#### ***Privacy needs to be respected.***

Parental nudity is only helpful though if parents really feel relaxed and are able to directly answer questions as they are asked. A time generally arises when parents or children want privacy and are no longer comfortable with nudity. It is important to respect this desire for privacy.

Some parents are not comfortable being nude in front of their children at any age. This is also fine, as long as parents provide information about male and female bodies in other ways, such as

## **Guidelines For Parents**

reading books with their children or pointing out differences while changing diapers. Children who grow up in a household where strict privacy is observed accept that as the norm. They can still have positive feelings about their bodies.

1. Decide on family guidelines for nudity in the home and share these with your children.
2. Be sure your children have the opportunity to learn about male and female body parts, either through observation or books.
3. Teach your children that the genitals are private parts of the body, which are kept covered in public. Private does not mean nasty or dirty. It can mean special and good.
4. Teach your child that they have the right not to have those parts touched. You can explain that parents and doctors are exceptions to the rule--as long as the child feels OK about the touching and there is no secrecy involved.
5. Do not create a scene or send a child home if you find your child undressed with a neighbor child. Tell them that the genitals are private and should be kept covered. Help them satisfy their curiosity about body differences in other ways (show them books or explain).
6. Help your child discriminate when and where nudity is appropriate. For example, it is inappropriate in most public places and appropriate at home under certain circumstances.
7. Respect your child's privacy just as you expect them to respect yours.

## **References**

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Seattle-King County  
Department of Public Health  
Family Planning Program  
Revised 7/86



King County  
Tim Hill  
County Executive



City of Seattle  
Charles Foyor  
Mayor

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3. Hindman, *A Very Touching Book*, 1983.

FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department

The following exercise is designed to help you identify your comfort level toward certain situations associated with sexuality. These could arise at anytime, often requiring an immediate response.

Please read each circumstance and rank them from most to least difficult for you. Afterward, as a group, we will discuss some possible reactions and solutions.

MOST DIFFICULT OR DISTRESSING

- 1.
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

LEAST DIFFICULT OR DISTRESSING

- A. You find a child trying to insert something into his/her genital opening.
- B. You are faced with explaining - how babies are born - to a group of Cambodian students who have only a limited understanding of English.
- C. A student constantly uses swear words.
- D. You notice a student rubbing his genitals during class. As you walk over you hear another student telling him, "Don't do that or you will grow-up to be gay."
- E. A student asks a parent volunteer, who is eight months pregnant, about babies. She begins giving a very detailed explanation of conception and the reproductive process.

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FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM  
TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Small Group Discussion

Discuss the assigned situation with members in your group.

Remember:

- Share only what is comfortable for you.
- Observe guidelines about confidentiality.
- Be empathetic and caring - not judgmental.

Instructions:

1. Identify 2 ways to handle the situation.
  2. Evaluate each answer.
  3. How would you feel in such an instance?
  4. What personal beliefs are you applying?
- 
1. A parent mentions to you her son of 4 years occasionally wants to take a shower with her. She asks you what to do.
  2. A child comes to school upset because his/her father has a new girl-friend and they are always kissing and hugging.
  3. A parent complains that another child in class is telling her children about sex. How would you respond to the parent?
  4. You discover two students, ages 4 and 5, playing 'doctor' and examining each others genitals.
  5. A student brings a copy of "Playboy" to class and begins showing other students. When you discover the magazine one of the other students says, "My dad looks at that."
  6. An affectionate student says he loves you and when he grows up could he marry you and have babies.

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PARENT HANDOUT

A SELECTED READING LIST

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

- Cole, Joanna. HOW YOU WERE BORN. William Morrow & Company  
New York, 1984.
- Fagerstrom, Grethe and Gunilla Hansson. OUR NEW BABY. Barron's  
Woodbury, New York, 1982.
- Gordon, Sol and Judith. DID THE SUN SHINE BEFORE YOU WERE BORN?  
The Third Press, 1974
- Gordon, Sol. GIRLS ARE GIRLS AND BOYS ARE BOYS - SO WHAT'S THE  
DIFFERENCE? John Day, 1974.
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Doubleday, 1973.
- Kaufman, Joe. HOW WE ARE BORN, HOW WE GROW, HOW OUR BODIES WORK, AND  
HOW WE LEARN. Golden Press, New York, 1975.
- Malecki, Maryann. MOM AND DAD AND I ARE HAVING A BABY. Pennypress,  
Seattle, WA, 1979.
- Martin, Gilbert. A NEW BABY AT OUR HOUSE. Cinnamon House/Charter  
Communications, 1979.
- Mayle, Peter. WHERE DID I COME FROM? Lyle and Stuart & Co., 1973.
- Sheffield, Margaret. BEFORE YOU WERE BORN. Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.
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- Stein, Sara Bonnet. MAKING BABIES. Walker & Co., New York
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- Waxman, Stephanie. WHAT IS A GIRL? WHAT IS A BOY? Peace Press  
Culver City, CA, 1976.

PARENT HANDOUT

A SELECTED READING LIST

BOOKS FOR PARENTS

- Auckett, Amelia. BABY MASSAGE: PARENT-CHILD BONDING THROUGH TOUCHING. Newmarket Press, New York, 1981.
- Bernstein, Anne. THE FLIGHT OF THE STORK. Delacorte Press, 1977.
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- Simkin, Penny and Sandra VanDam Anderson. BIRTH - THROUGH CHILDREN'S EYES. Pennypress, Seattle, WA, 1981.
- Wolfson, Randy Meyers and Virginia DeLuca. COUPLES WITH CHILDREN Warner Books, New York, 1981.