

# Supporting Medical Professionals to Talk to Parents About Healthy Sexual Development

Parental Support and Values + Medically Accurate Sex Information = Sexual Health and Safety

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Brought to you by:



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Brought to you by:  
The New York State Initiative to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse



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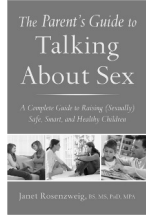
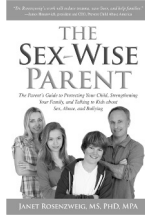
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Presented by:  
Janet Rosenzweig PhD, MPA



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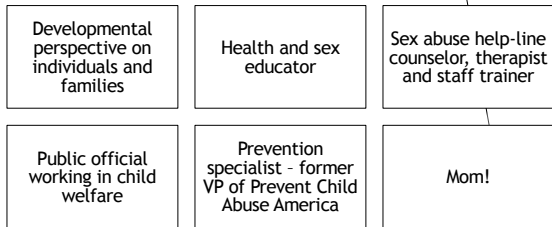
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### Perspective



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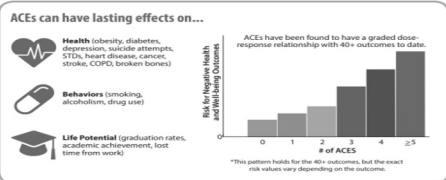
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### Context: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Studies



<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/preventingACES.pdf>

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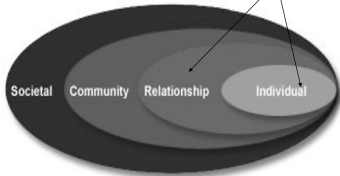
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### Context: The Social Ecology of Prevention



This presentation will start with the individual and relationship/family levels. Medical personnel have important roles at all levels.

Learn more from the CDC

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### My Ideal:

Each child should be able to go out in the world with age appropriate, medically accurate information about human sexuality, all wrapped up in the values of their family and faith tradition.

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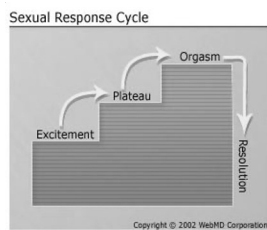
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### Physical Facts with Emotional Impact Fact 1:

► *The human body will react to various kinds of stimulation with very specific physical manifestations.*



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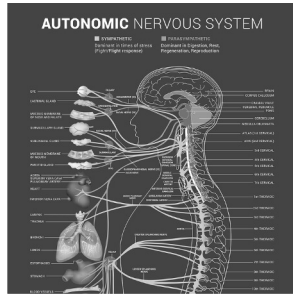
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## Physical Sexual Arousal

### ► The Autonomic Nervous System:

*The part of the nervous system responsible for control of the bodily functions not consciously directed, such as breathing, the heartbeat, and digestive processes.*



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Key words!

*not consciously directed, such as breathing, the heartbeat, and digestive processes. Physical sexual/genital arousal is an autonomic response.*

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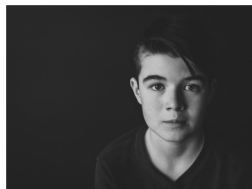
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## Key reasons why kids need to know this

- Victims may experience a physical, sexual/genital response while being victimized.
- Predators may use the response against them, convincing the child they were a willing participant because they 'enjoyed' the act.



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## Key reasons why kids need to know this

- ▶ Victims may experience a physical, sexual/genital response while being victimized.
- ▶ This is wildly confusing for children who have experienced sexual abuse prevention as only 'good touch/bad touch.'



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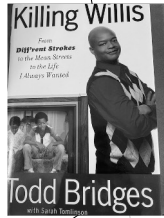
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## Account from a Victim

Child TV star describes being molested by his publicist:  
"Pull your pants down," he said.  
I didn't want to lose everything he had given me. And so I did.  
He put his mouth on me. I got hard. I didn't know where to look or how to feel. I squirmed against the back of the seat. He kept on going, getting into it.  
I hoped it would be over fast.  
Then it happened. I came.  
As confused and upset as I was, I liked the feeling."  
  
"No one had ever talked to me about sex before, but somehow, I knew it was wrong for a man to do that to a boy. I was really confused because having an orgasm had felt good."



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## Knowledge is Power!



Thank you. This is the first time I fully realized that I was a victim. I had a 20 something high school teacher have an inappropriate relationship with me. I always thought I was an equal party and felt guilt about hiding it. Nobody at all knows this ever happened and this was over 15 years ago.  
Thank you

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## Sexual arousal influences sexual decision behavior and reduces restraint!

ARTICLE

The impact of sexual arousal on elements of sexual decision making: Sexual self-restraint, motivational state, and self-control

Skayna Skakoon-Spawling<sup>1,2</sup> and Kenneth M. Cramer<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada  
<sup>2</sup>The University of Western Ontario, London, ON

Sexual arousal has been shown to have an effect on risk-taking and intentions to engage in risky sexual behaviors (e.g., Arora & Eisenstein, 2010; Cooper & Fomon, 2008; Skakoon-Spawling, Cramer, & Skowronski, 2016). However, the mechanisms underlying the effect are not well understood. To better understand the effects of sexual arousal on sexual decision-making, the current study was designed to examine the relationship among self-control, sexual self-restraint, and motivational state. In total, 60 students of sexual arousal for 10-minute periods. Participants female and 20 male participants viewed either sexually arousing (romanticized) or neutral video clips and reported on their intentions to engage in sexual behaviors. Results indicated that self-control and self-restraint mediated the relationship between sexual arousal and intentions to engage in sexual behaviors. A moderate positive correlation was found between self-control and self-restraint, suggesting that self-control is a key factor in sexual decision-making. The results of this study suggest that sexual arousal affects decision-making by reducing self-control, which in turn leads to a decrease in self-restraint. This effect, combined with the vulnerability to sexual arousal, suggests that the role for self-control in sexual decision-making is particularly important in situations of sexual arousal.

Skakoon-Spawling, S. and Cramer, K.M. The impact of sexual arousal on elements of sexual decision making: Sexual self-restraint, motivational state, and self-control. *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 2016, 29(2): 119-125.

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## Key reasons why kids need to know this

- ▶ Kids may confuse a physical sexual/genital response for an emotional attachment, making them vulnerable to predators.
- ▶ Adolescents and teens are particularly vulnerable.
- ▶ Physical sexual/genital arousal decreases sexual self-restraint.
- ▶ Physical sexual/genital arousal may lead a victim to believe they participated in a sinful act, unnecessarily adding to guilt and confusion.

### Female Teacher Charged with Sexually Assaulting 13-Year-Old Male Student



HU Staff: Mycolle Hutcherson (@mycolle\_h) A former Ohio teacher has been charged with sexual assault. She is 26 years old and lives in Columbus, Ohio.




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## Key reason why parents need to understand that arousal is autonomic

- ▶ To understand why kids like to touch their genitals
- ▶ To avoid unhealthy messages - we don't want children to learn to associate negative emotions with their sexual arousals
  - ▶ Fear, guilt and shame have no place in healthy sexuality
  - ▶ At best interferes with healthy adult sexual relationships
  - ▶ At worse a child can grow into someone who needs these negative emotions to experience sexual arousal

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Let's go back to Psych 101 for a moment:

- ▶ Operant conditioning is a learning method in which a specific behavior is associated with either a positive or negative consequence. Thus, this form of learning links the taking of certain voluntary actions with receiving either a reward or punishment, often to strengthen or weaken *voluntary* behaviors.
  - ▶ Think BF Skinner....
- ▶ Classical conditioning is a learning process focused more so on involuntary behaviors, using associations with neutral stimuli to evoke a specific involuntary response.
  - ▶ Think Pavlov....

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Physical Facts with Emotional Impact  
Fact 2:

- ▶ *Having accurate, understandable language about all body parts, specifically the genitalia, is a protective factor in sexual abuse prevention.*
  - ▶ *If a child becomes a victim, they have language to tell a trusted adult.*



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Physical Facts with Emotional Impact  
Fact 2:



- ▶ *Having accurate, understandable language about all body parts, particularly the genitalia, is a protective factor in sexual abuse prevention.*
  - ▶ *A child who knows it is OK to talk about sex with their parent will be able to ask questions, and not be tempted to turn to unsavory sources such as the internet, or possibly predatory older kids or adults.*

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## Example: When parents are a source of sex information, condom use increases

### Source of Sex Information and Condom Use Intention Among Latino Adolescents

Jillian S. Everedole, MPH<sup>1</sup>, Nancy F. Berglas, DrPH<sup>1</sup>,  
Jufanna Deardorff, PhD<sup>2</sup>, and Norman A. Constantine, PhD<sup>1\*</sup>

**Abstract**  
Adolescence is a transition time for sexual initiation and information seeking about sexual health, yet little is known about how adolescent sources of information about sex influence their sexual beliefs and behaviors. This is particularly true for Latino adolescents, whose sources of sex information and sexual behaviors are rarely understood. A survey of sixth-grade Latino adolescents ( $N = 1,188$ ) was designed to explore the relationship between adolescents' primary source of sex information and their intentions to use condoms. The study also explored the potential influence of demographic, family, and peer factors, sociodemographic (socioeconomic status, parent education, and linguistic acculturation), and sexual behavior (sex initiation and frequency). Among Latino youth, the most common reported source of sex information was parents (37.8%), followed by another relative (17.5%), school (13.4%), and friends (11.4%). Hierarchical regression analyses showed that after controlling for other factors, primary source of sex information was significantly associated with condom use intention ( $\beta = .040$ ). Hierarchical regression results stratified by gender showed that this relationship remained significant for males ( $\beta = .040$ ) but not for females ( $\beta = .003$ ). Males who reported friends (beta:  $0.075$ ,  $p < .001$ ) as their primary source of sex information, as compared to parents as their primary source, reported significantly lower intention to use condoms. These findings suggest a need to encourage for Latino adolescents, particularly males, to have additional or other sources for sex information to their parents' healthy sexual behaviors. Alternatively, interventions targeting parents or other family members to improve sexual health communication with adolescents may prove essential.

Everedole, J.S., et al. Source of sex information and condom use intention among Latino adolescents. *Health Education & Behavior*, 2017, 44(3): 419-447.

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## Parents communicate important information and values to their children

THE JOURNAL OF SEX RESEARCH, 0000, 1-17, 2017  
Copyright © The Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality  
ISSN: 0022-4494 print/ISSN 1744-5019 online  
DOI: 10.1080/00224494.2016.1267903



### 21st Century Parent-Child Sex Communication in the United States: A Process Review

Dalmacio Flores<sup>1</sup>  
University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing  
Julie Barroso  
Medical University of South Carolina College of Nursing

*Parent-child sex communication results in the transmission of family expectations, societal values, and risk modeling of sexual health risk-reduction strategies. Parent-child sex communication's potential to curb negative sexual health outcomes has sustained a multidisciplinary effort to better understand the process and its impact on the development of healthy sexual attitudes and behaviors among adolescents. This review advances what is known about the*

Flores, D and Barroso, J. 21<sup>st</sup> century parent-child sex communication in the United States: A process review. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 2017, 54(6): 522-548.

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Medical personnel are a key source of sexuality information!

They are consistently rated as a highly credible source of sexuality information!

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## A Little History

▶ Video is played here.

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## Access to accurate information about human sexuality was strongly curtailed starting in the 1990

- ▶ Comprehensive sex abuse prevention was replaced with Megan's Laws starting in the mid-1990's
  - ▶ Sex abuse prevention became checking registries
  - ▶ Adults were concerned about being falsely accused by a child or parent if they spoke to a child about sex
- ▶ Abstinence only education funding 1996
  - ▶ Limited topics to be presented in classes
- ▶ Jocelyn Elders 1994....

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## Jocelyn Elders



- ▶ 1994 Dr. Jocelyn Elders, U.S. Surgeon General, was forced to resign after replying to a specific question at a World AIDS Day conference.
- ▶ When asked if she "thought that masturbation could serve as a useful tool to help discourage school children from becoming sexually active too early" she stated, "With regard to masturbation, I think that is something that is part of human sexuality and a part of something that perhaps should be taught."
- ▶ Weeks after the event, foes of Elders' superior, President Bill Clinton, repeated this one sentence out of context, seeking to paint a dedicated public health official as a pervert who wanted curricula on how to masturbate taught in grade schools.

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## Restricted Sex Ed

- ▶ Abstinence only education:
  - ▶ Limited funding 1982
  - ▶ Massive infusion 1996
- ▶ Funded both schools and youth serving agencies
- ▶ Specified topics that could be covered

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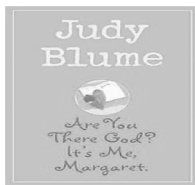
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Judy Blume



- ▶ "When I began to write, thirty years ago, I didn't know if anyone would publish my books, but I wasn't afraid to write them. I was lucky. I found an editor and publisher who were willing to take a chance. They encouraged me. I was never told what I couldn't write. I felt only that I had to write the most honest books I could. "

"...the censors crawled out of the woodwork, seemingly overnight, organized and determined. Not only would they decide what their children could read, but what all children could read. Challenges to books quadrupled within months, and we'll never know how many teachers, school librarians and principals quietly removed books to avoid trouble. "

- ▶ Read Judy Blume on censorship:  
<http://judyblume.com/censorship.php>
- ▶ It's timely....

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### One Result??

- ▶ Adults, even well-intentioned ones, STOPPED TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT SEX!
- ▶ Kids are left vulnerable, getting inaccurate information and 'values' about sexuality from peers, predators or pornography.

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The members of the generation educated under these restrictions are now parents!

*They need your help....*

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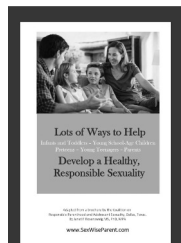
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We will provide you with resources to give parents that can be helpful!



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Medical Professionals are among the very few adults who have 'social permission' to talk to kids about sex!

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### Anatomy and Physiology for Grownups

The next slides are anatomical line drawings of male and female sexual and reproductive organs with simple suggestions for describing to kids.

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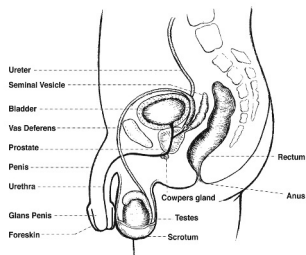
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#### MALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM



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## Important concepts for kids - male anatomy physiology

- ▶ School aged and younger
  - ▶ Testicles are located inside of scrotum.
  - ▶ Scrotum tighten up when they're cold.
  - ▶ Penises get big when they feel certain things - like getting goose bumps from being tickled. It happens and it means things are working.
- ▶ School aged/young adolescent
  - ▶ Sperm or Dad's seeds are produced in the testicles and follow the tube around to come out the tip of his penis.

*Note for treatment folks - knowledge of how bodies work can help give back a sense of control.*

Sad case of adolescent who had been victimized by her older brother; sharing a bed with her younger brother; she masturbated his nocturnal erection to prevent it from hurting her.

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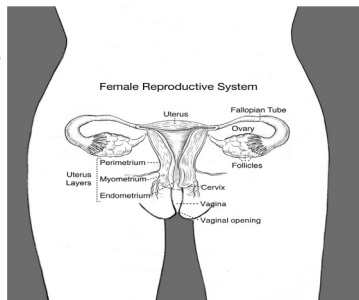
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Treatment folks should be able to name the major anatomical structures in this diagram and be able to help explain the menstrual cycle to kids. Predictability helps bring back a sense of control for victims




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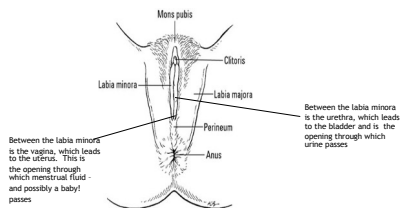
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## Female External




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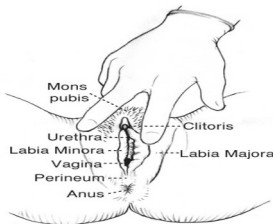
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## Female External



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## Important concepts for kids - female anatomy physiology

- ▶ School aged and younger
  - ▶ Sometimes it feels good to touch your genitals. That's fine, but we don't touch anyone else's, and no one else touches ours.
- ▶ School aged/young adolescent
  - ▶ Girls have one opening for urination/peeing attached to the bladder and another for periods/childbirth that is attached to the womb.
  - ▶ Menstrual fluid is only partially made of blood - there is other tissue being expelled, and the blood makes it all red. You're not bleeding, you're healthy!

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## Parent's fears and how you can help...

- ▶ If I talk about sex, they'll be sexually active.
  - ▶ Research shows the opposite is true.
- ▶ Kids don't want to hear my opinion.
  - ▶ Research shows the opposite is true. Developmentally, kids' frame of reference switches from the nuclear family to their peer group in adolescence. Take every opportunity to communicate family values and key information while in grade school and reinforce it with adolescents.
  - ▶ They may not appear to pay attention but they are listening!
- ▶ They might ask me a question I don't know the answer to.
  - ▶ Be honest and say you don't know the answer. Then find it. Search reliable websites (.edu); contact your pediatrician's office.
- ▶ They might ask me about my own sexual behavior.
  - ▶ This is a great opportunity to model boundaries and privacy, two things critical to sexual health and safety. "My sexual experiences are private and I'm not OK sharing them with you. And this is something I hope you can learn to say about sexuality to anyone, even someone you love."

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## Sexual Climate In the Home

Resource: Family Norms Exercise

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## Assessing family values - defining NORMS

- ▶ What do we mean by NORMS?
- ▶ Adults come to relationships with expectations or norms about every aspect of sexuality and sexual behavior, and it would be very rare for two people to have exactly the same norms when entering a relationship. Part of building a strong foundation for a relationship includes working to clarify and articulate these expectations, then agreeing on a compromise when differences are discovered.

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## Support parents to consciously set norms!

A message to communicate to parents:

*"Traditional and social media and peer pressure will direct plenty of confusing messages about sex to your children. By clarifying your family's norms and expressing them to your kids, confusion can be replaced with knowledge and comfort. And most importantly of all, your child will know and most likely come to share your values, a dream come true for parents."*

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### Family Norms about Language

- ▶ What words we will use for all body parts
  - ▶ Caution not to refer to the genitals as the 'dirty parts.'
  - ▶ If you choose to go with 'private parts,' teach your kids the name for each of the parts.
- ▶ What words we will use for urination and defecation

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### Family Norms about Dress

- ▶ Be very clear about who sees whom in underwear (or less). This becomes a particularly important question in two circumstances –
  - ▶ when a child approaches puberty and
  - ▶ when new members are entering the household, such as the blending of families.

*It's not uncommon for both things to happen around the same time.*

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### Family Norms about Privacy

- ▶ Bathroom and bedroom doors opened or closed?
- ▶ How will we handle visitors used to different rules? How will we handle visiting homes with different rules?
  - ▶ *Parents know that friends and family willing to host kids for an overnight visit are a GIFT, but make sure everyone knows the norms !*

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## Conversations to consider for anticipatory guidance...

### Family Norms Exercise

The following questions can be used to start the process of parent education groups, or be given to parents in advance. The goal is to encourage parents to consider the norms they want to set for their child. Encourage parents to think of this as a conversation and consider taking with a partner, or even a family. A list of questions about the norms and values you can be found on The Nurture Project, (Kilbuck, 2015) (link)

**What norms will you set to teach your kids about all of their (and your body parts) Mom and Dad?**

Discussion points: Family, sexuality, consent

**Will you have a dress code?**

Discussion points: Family, sexuality, consent

**What will you let your child talk to friends?**

Discussion points: Family, sexuality, consent

**What rules do you set about having kids in your bed?**

Discussion points: Family, sexuality, consent

**Will you give your kids a choice about having and kissing relatives?**

Discussion points: Family, sexuality, consent

**What will you do when your child's curiosity leads him to touch your body?**

Discussion points: Family, sexuality, consent

**Will you give your kids a choice about having and kissing relatives?**

Discussion points: Family, sexuality, consent

**How will you react when you see your child touching his or her genitalia?**

Discussion points: Family, sexuality, consent

**How will you respond to your child's expression of all his senses the taste of food, the smell of a newborn, the feel of his or her body, the sound of his or her voice?**

Discussion points: Family, sexuality, consent

**How will you react when you see your child touching his or her genitalia?**

Discussion points: Family, sexuality, consent

This exercise is provided as a handout for this webcast.

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## Before we leave families...

### A word about siblings

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## Siblings: The good, the bad and the ugly...

- ▶ Older siblings are an important source of information about the 'facts' of sex and the family values.
  - ▶ Some parents engage an older child as a partner in sharing information with the younger ones.
- ▶ Older siblings can also be terrifying bullies.
  - ▶ When kids fight (which is normal) determine if the younger/smaller one is mad or terrified.
  - ▶ One widely cited study found 13% of a college population reported sibling incest.

Finkelhor. Sex among siblings: A survey on prevalence, variety and effects. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 1980, 9(1): 171-194.

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### Link to Bullying

- ▶ Sex abuse is bullying taken to a grotesque extreme.
- ▶ The perpetrator cares only for their own satisfaction with absolutely no regard for the impact their behavior has on others.
- ▶ Older, more powerful siblings may learn bullying behavior at home.
- ▶ Bullying prevention programs, when done well, are an important component to community sexual health and safety. Another role for schools - many of whom are incorporating prevention into curricula!

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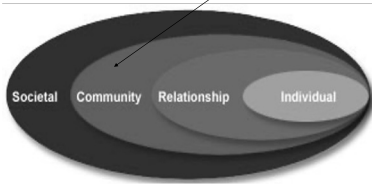
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### Moving Up the Social Ecology



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### The medical community can step up!

Regardless of the specific religious tradition, the concept of 'spirituality' provides a perfect backdrop to teach the values of love, empathy, honesty and respect, which are all critical components of sexual health and safety.

- ▶ Consider stepping up in your own faith-based institution to lead workshops for parents.
- ▶ Advocate for resources in faith based, health and community organizations to support parents to become the primary sex educators of their children.

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### Steps to take in your community

Encourage schools to adopt the **National Sexuality Education Standards** endorsed by *The American School Health Association*, *The American Association for Health Education*, *The Society of State Leaders for Health and Physical Education*, and the *National Education Association Health Information Network*.



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### Resources!

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### A handout from this webcast Family Checklists and Norms Exercises

- ▶ Family Norms Exercise (shown on slide 49)

This handout also includes:

- ▶ Checklist for Assessing the Sexual Climate in a School
- ▶ A Sex-Wise Parents Guide: Sexual health and safety checklist for child care and summer camp
- ▶ Institutional Norms Exercise for agencies serving young children
- ▶ Institutional Norms Exercise for schools and agencies serving adolescents and teens

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A handout from this webcast  
**Lots of Ways to Help**  
(shown on slide 33)



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A handout from this webcast  
**Healthy Child Sexual Development**  
(shown on slide 33)



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More Information and Resources  
from Dr. Janet Rosenzweig



In addition to her book, a website:  
[www.sexwiseparent.com](http://www.sexwiseparent.com)  
and  
blog posts in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*:  
[www.inquirer.com/author/rosenzweig\\_janet/](http://www.inquirer.com/author/rosenzweig_janet/)

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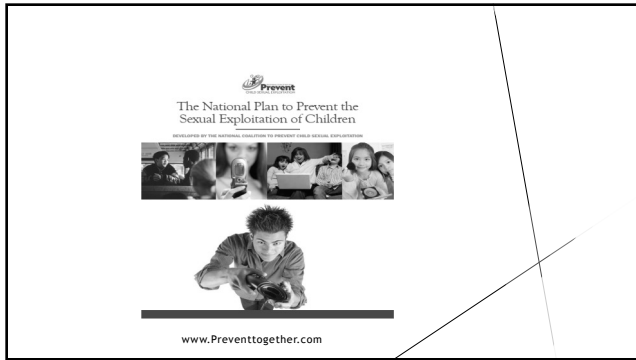
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**New York State Initiative to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse**

The Initiative is dedicated to the prevention of all forms of child sexual abuse throughout the state of New York through advancing research, policy, education and practice. We are organized as a cooperative initiative to provide state-of-the-art theory and research-based knowledge to inform, guide, and empower the public, professionals, and all those who serve children and families at all levels and sectors of society, toward the elimination of child sexual abuse. The Initiative is comprised of leaders in the field of child maltreatment, child protection, and promotion of well-being in children and families.

Learn more about us: <https://www.nypreventsexabuse.org/>

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**The Final Thought**

Parents consistently underestimate the influence they have on their kids' decisions about sex. Always remember that they are watching and listening, even when they pretend not to be!

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