

Supporting Medical Professionals to Talk to Parents About Healthy Sexual Development

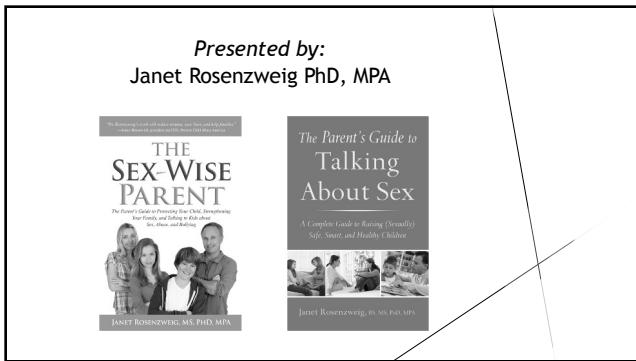
Parental Support and Values + Medically Accurate Sex Information = Sexual Health and Safety

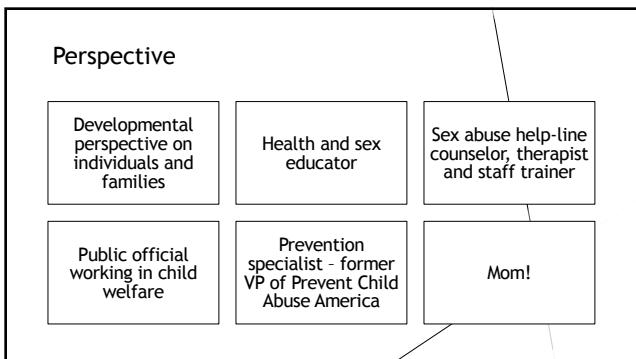
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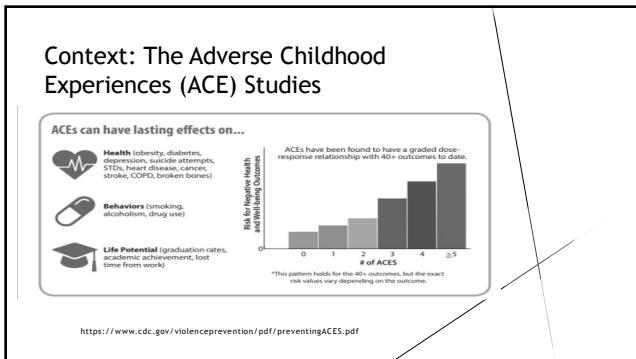


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The New York State Initiative to
Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

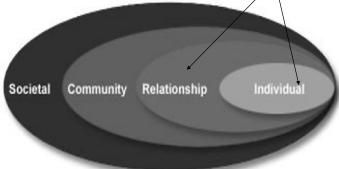








Context: The Social Ecology of Prevention



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

Learn more from the CDC

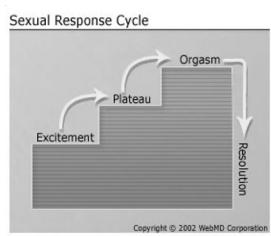
My Ideal:

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.

Physical Facts with Emotional Impact

Fact 1:

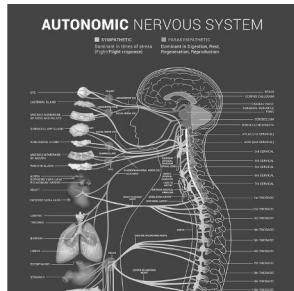
- *The human body will react to various kinds of stimulation with very specific physical manifestations.*



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.



Key words!

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

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.



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.'



Account from a Victim

Child TV star describes being molested by his publicist:
"Pull your pants down," he said.

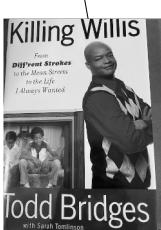
I didn't want to lose everything he had given me. And so I did. He put his mouth on me. I got hard. I didn't know where to look or how to feel. I squirmed against the back of the seat. He kept on going, getting into it.

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."



Knowledge is Power!

Thank you. This is the first time I fully realized that I was a victim. I had a 30 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.



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

Sheyna Skakoon-Sparkling^{1,2} and Kenneth M. Cramer¹

Skakoon-Sparting, 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, 25(2): 119-125.

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.



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

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....

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.



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.

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. Eversole, MPH¹, Nancy F. Berglas, DrPH²,
Julianna Deardorff, PhD³, and Norman A. Constantine, PhD^{1,3}

Abstract This study is a cross-sectional study of sexual initiation and information seeking about sexual health, yet little is known about adolescents' sources of information about sex and their sexual beliefs and behaviors. This is particularly true for Latino adolescents, whose sources of information and sexual beliefs are vastly underexamined. A total of 1,000 Latino adolescents, who were sources of information and sexual behaviors were surveyed. Adolescents' sexual initiation and their reliance to use condom. The study also examined the potential influence of demographics (age, gender, ethnicity, income, education) and sexual initiation on condom use. Adolescents' sexual initiation and condom use were interrelated. Among Latino youth, the most commonly reported source of sex information was parents (43%), followed by friends (30%) and teachers (14%). The most common source of sex information was parents after considering other factors; primary source of sex information was significantly associated with condom use ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$). Adolescents' sexual initiation was significantly associated with condom use ($\beta = -.04$, $p = .03$) for males ($n = 500$) but not for females ($n = 242$). Males who reported friends as their primary source of sex information were significantly more likely to use condoms than those who reported parents as their primary source, reported regarding condom use in one condition. These findings suggest it may be important for Latino adolescents, particularly males, to have additional or different sex information in order to promote healthy sexual initiation and condom use.

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

Parents communicate important information and values to their children

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

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

Dalmacio Flores®
University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing

Pennsylvania School of Nursing

Jillie Barron
Medical University of South Carolina College of Nursing

Medical personnel are a key source of sexuality information!

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

A Little History

- ▶ Video is played here.

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....

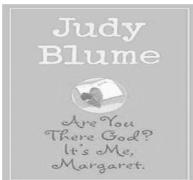
Jocelyn Elders



- ▶ 1994 Dr. Joycelyn 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 prevent teenagers 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' sexual health policies (Conservative Christians), 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.

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



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...

One Result??

► Adults, even well-intentioned ones,
STOPPED TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT SEX!

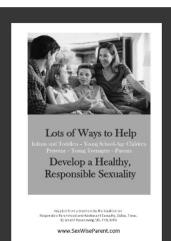
► Kids are left vulnerable, getting
inaccurate information and 'values'
about sexuality from peers, predators
or pornography.

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

They need your help....

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

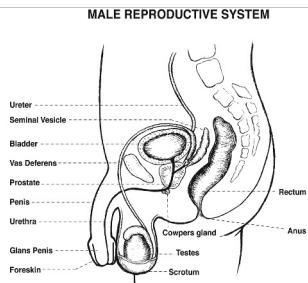
Healthy Child Sexual Development



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

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.



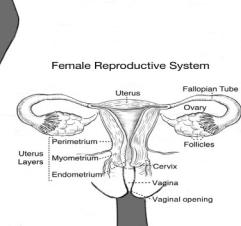
Important concepts for kids - male anatomy physiology

- ▶ 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.

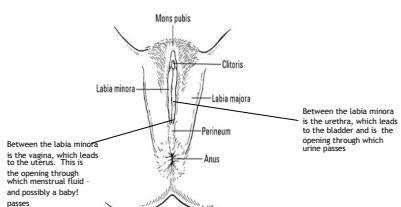
Note for treatment folks - knowledge of how bodies work can help give back a sense of control.

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.

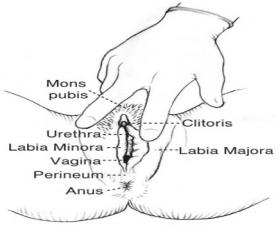
Treatment folks should be able to name the major anatomical structures in this diagram and be able to help explain the menstrual cycle to kids. Predictability helps bring back a sense of control for victims



Female External



Female External



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!

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."

Sexual Climate In the Home

Resource: Family Norms Exercise

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.

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."

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

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.*

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 !

Conversations to consider for anticipatory guidance...

Family Norms Exercise

The following questions can be used to start discussions in parent education groups, or be given to parents to discuss with their children. Encourage families to pick a date for an annual family discussion about body boundaries and sexual health. This can be done at the same time as other family discussions such as Thanksgiving or the holidays.

What norms will you use to teach your kids about all of their (and your) body parts? How and why do you feel these are important?

Discussion point: Children need words for genitalia easily understood by others.

What would you like your child to know about touching others?

Discussion point: Privacy, autonomy, self-respect

What would you like your child to know about sex?

Discussion point: Privacy, autonomy, safety

What rules do you want about having sex in your bed?

Discussion point: Privacy, autonomy, sexual health

What rules do you want about your child touching others?

Discussion point: Confidentiality, their own body, choice, respect

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

Discussion point: Privacy, role-modelling, setting boundaries, guidance, limits

What are your thoughts about your child touching his/her own body? What about other people's bodies? Why?

Discussion point: Awareness around privacy, respecting children and friend

How will you react when you see our child touching his or her genitals?

Discussion point: Autonomy, respect, avoid reacting with shame or anger

How can you support your child's awareness of all his senses the same of touch, the smell and taste of food, the sound of music, the sight of colors, etc.?

Discussion point: I think the majority is positive, wonderful and life affirming; too many parents only discuss the dangers and fail to show a balanced perspective.

This exercise is provided as a handout for this webcast.

Before we leave families...

A word about siblings

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

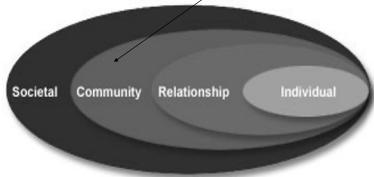
- Older siblings are an important source of information about the 'facts' of sex and the family values.
- Some parents engage an older child as a partner in sharing information with the younger ones.
- Older siblings can also be terrifying bullies.
- When kids fight (which is normal) determine if the 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): 171-194.

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!

Moving Up the Social Ecology



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.

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.



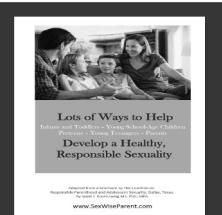
Resources!

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

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



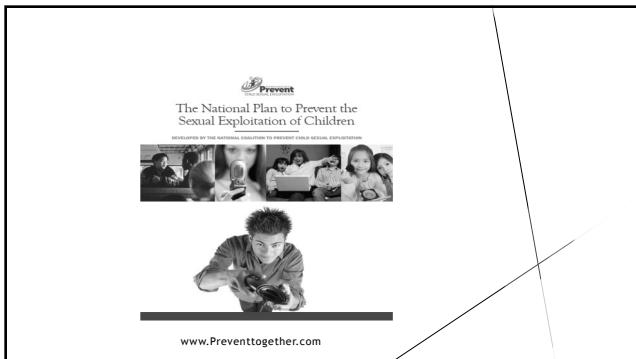
A handout from this webcast
Healthy Child Sexual Development
(shown on slide 33)



More Information and Resources
from Dr. Janet Rosenzweig



In addition to her book, a website:
www.sexwiseparent.com
and
blog posts in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*:
www.inquirer.com/author/rosenzweig_janet/



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 around three pillars to move the field forward—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/>

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!
