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## Responsibility of sex education should be retained at home

**Q: Since you disapprove of public school sex-education programmes as currently designed, who do you think should tell children the facts of life, and when should that instruction begin?**

**A:** For those parents who are able to handle the instructional process correctly, the responsibility for sex education should be retained in the home. There is a growing trend for all aspects of education to be taken from their hands (or the role is deliberately forfeited by them). This is unwise. Particularly in the matter of sex education, the best approach is one that begins casually and naturally in early childhood and extends through the years, according to a policy of openness, frankness, and honesty. Only parents can provide this lifetime training – being there when the questions arise and the desire for information is evidenced.

Unfortunately, moms and dads often fail to do the job. Some are too sexually inhibited to present the subject with poise, or they may lack the necessary technical knowledge of the human body. Another common mistake is to wait until puberty is knocking at the door and then try to initiate a desperate, tension-filled conversation that embarrasses the kid and exhausts the parent. If this the way sex education is going to be handled, there has to be another alternative to consider.

## Religious groups must help parents in sex education

**Q: When parents need help with sex education, who do you think should provide it?**

**A:** It is my strong conviction that churches believing in abstinence before marriage and in lifelong marital fidelity should step in and offer their help to families sharing that commitment. Where else will moms and dads find proponents of traditional morality in this permissive day? There is no other agency or institution likely to represent the theology of the church better than the church itself. It is puzzling to me that so few have accepted this challenge, given the attack on biblical concepts of morality today.

A few parents who enroll their children in private schools are able to get the help they need with sex education. Even there, however, the subject is often ignored or

handled inadequately. What has developed, unfortunately, is an informational vacuum that sets the stage for far-reaching programmes in the public schools that go beyond parental wishes, beginning in some cases with kindergarten children.

## Kids should be given info they need at particular age

**Q: I would like to teach my own child about human sexuality, but I'm not sure I know how to go about it. Talk about the matter of timing. When do I say what?**

**A:** One of the most common mistakes made by parents and many overzealous educators is teaching too much too soon. One parent told me, for example, that the kindergarten children in her local district were shown films of animals in the act of copulation. That is unwise and dangerous! Available evidence indicates that there are numerous hazards involved in moving too rapidly. Children can sustain a severe emotional jolt by being exposed to realities for which they are not prepared.

Furthermore, it is unwise to place the youngster on an informational timetable that will result in full awareness too early in life. If eight-year-old children are given an understanding of mature sexual behaviour, it is less likely that they will wait ten or twelve years to apply this knowledge within the confines of marriage.

Generally speaking, children should be given the information they need at a particular age. Six-year-old, for example, don't need to understand the pleasures of adult sexuality. They are not ready to deal with that concept at their developmental stage. They should be told where babies come from and how they are born. Sometime between six and nine, depending on the maturity and interest of an individual (and what is being heard in the neighbourhood), he or she ought to understand how conception occurs. The rest of the story can be told later in elementary school.

Admittedly, this ideal timetable can be turned upside down by exposure to precocious friend, racy videos, or unwise adults. When that occurs, you have to cope with the fallout as best as possible. It is regrettable that we expose our vulnerable children to far too much of the wrong kind of sexuality.

## Be ready to respond to your child's questions

**Q: How do I get started? Is there a natural way to get into the topic?**

**A:** Fortunately, most children will ask for information when they need it. You should be ready to grab those opportunities at the drop of a hat. Sometimes very little warning is given. Our daughter asked for very specific details when she was only seven years old, catching her mother off guard. My wife stalled for an hour, during which she alerted me. Then the three of us sat on the bed drinking hot chocolate and talking about matter we hadn't expected to discuss for several years. You never know when such a moment will arrive, and you need to think it through in advance.

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Although those spontaneous conversations are easiest, some children never ask the right questions. Some boys and girls have “inquiring minds that want to know”, while other never give the subject of sex a second thought. If your child is one of those who seems disinterested, you’re still on the hook. The task must get done. Someone else will do the job if you won’t – someone who may not share your values.