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Family Matters Institute

Teenage Sexuality

Some parents are worried that telling their children about sex will push them into sexual relationships earlier than would otherwise be the case. They don't want to 'shatter their innocence'. However, all the evidence suggests that exactly the opposite is true.

Current trends in teenage sexuality

"Across all social backgrounds, young people whose parents were reported as being easy to talk to about sexual matters were more likely to have used effective contraception at first-ever intercourse, and for this to have occurred at a later age."

(Meyrick and Harris '94)

Nearly two thirds of sexually active young people in the 13 - 15 age range say they have had two or more sexual partners. A quarter of sexually active 13-year-olds say they have had four or more sexual partners. (Sex Under 16, Dr Clifford Hill)

"When asked the question 'What was it that made you decide to have sex the first time?'

More than one in five 13 - 15 year olds said that they were drunk at the time.

Almost one third were not able to give any rational reason.

Their response was simply 'it just happened' 4% said 'I had no choice.'

This means that only one third of these young people had actually made a conscious decision to engage in sex for the first time." (Sex Under 16, Dr. Clifford Hill)

Whereas most young people have heard of AIDs many do not know of Chlamydia Trachomatis, a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Chlamydia is very common and on the increase in teenagers and in rare cases could cause infertility in both sexes if left untreated.

Teenage Sexuality & Statistics

- The average age for sexual intercourse is 17 years old.
- 18% of today's teenage girls first have sex before they are 16 years old.
- Most boys do not have sex with a girl because they love her or because they want any kind of ongoing relationship. In fact only 6% of boys who were sexually active under the age of 16 report that their main motive was love. 40% report that they really did it out of curiosity.
- 35% of teenagers (13-15 year olds) who have had sex believe it is none of their parent's business.



- "58% of girls who had sex before they were 16 said that they regretted it that they were too young and it was too soon for them." (A Johnson et al., Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles, Blackwell 94)

Puberty & Sexuality

This can increase confidence about understanding how the body looks, feels and responds.

Masturbation is an extension of this kind of exploration. Masturbation means playing with one's genitals, massaging and rubbing them. It is a form of sexual expression and it can release sexual tension.

Sexual relationships between men and women are called heterosexual or 'straight' relationships. Sexual relationships between partners of the same sex are called homosexual or 'gay' relationships. Some people feel they are gay from a very early age and are perfectly comfortable in that knowledge. Some may not know, and others hide their feelings because they are scared or ashamed of feeling different. Life can be very difficult for a gay person because of the prejudices many people have about homosexuality. In some countries homosexuality is still illegal.

Parent pointers

Be positive.

- Being armed with enough good information usually delays a child's sexual activity. Coping with newly-activated hormones is difficult enough, but doing so with no guidance makes it even tougher so with thanks to an article from www.Parentsoup.com try the following points.
- Admit that sexuality is positive. If you only ever talk about sex as a negative, as in "Don't do it" then your child will simply tune you out.

Don't short change boys. Broaching sexuality is easier with girls because you can start with menstruation. Talking about wet dreams and ejaculation is far more disquieting.

Surveys show girls' get far more information about their bodies and sexual urges than boys.

Define sexual behaviour as a romantic progression. It begins with a smile and proceeds along a path from kissing, to touching/petting above the waistline and below the waistline and onto intercourse. A step by step approach ensures that you can stop along the path at any point.

Girls and boys require different instructions. Girls need to be empowered to look a boy squarely in the eye and firmly say "No!" Looking away or saying nothing is likely to be misinterpreted by a boy who will continue to make sexual advances. Boys ought to be warned of the possibility of being accused of date rape.



Decisions, decisions

Talk about how to decide when one is 'ready' to have sex. Discuss typical reasons: love, boyfriend or girlfriend pressure, peer pressure, lower inhibitions as a result of alcohol or drug use. This gives a good opportunity for a teenager to explore his or her own values and for you to interject your own.

Link sex to emotional consequences. Sex is a physical drive but with emotional connections. Once sex happens people are more vulnerable. Broken hearts hurt more. Reputations are at risk. Regrets may follow.