

Sexuality Education Information for Parents

Tips for Parenting Infants:

Good news! This is the perfect time to start talking to your baby about anatomy.

If you only talk about heads, shoulders, knees and toes, very important parts – and opportunities – are missed! As you change your baby's diaper, say things like, "Here's your nose, here's your elbow, here's your penis / here's your vagina, here's your knee, here are your toes!" This gives you an opportunity to practice naming body parts you may not be comfortable naming – or that no one named for you as a child. If you start now, you are paving the way for open communication in the future. You are giving your child the ability to talk about sex as and when they grow up. You are also sending a very important message to your child, "You can talk to me about sexuality." Remember, if you don't educate your kids about sex, someone else will!

Tips for Parenting Toddlers:

As you bathe and potty train your toddler begin (or continue!) to teach them accurate names for body parts – all of them! If you can avoid names for body parts like "Wee wee" or "Down there" you are giving your child the great gift of comfort with sexuality. Kids catch on right away when parents are embarrassed about something. Take a deep breath if you have to but use the right words. You can be honest and say, "When I was little, my mommy called this a ditty wa wa, but it's real name is a vagina." Be prepared for them to explain this type of thing to their grandparents! Just smile and say you are doing the best job you can.

It is at this stage that children start to touch themselves. They discover it feels good to touch their own genitals. They may rub a book or a blanket against themselves. This will not hurt your child. It will not make them blind and will not make them grow hair on their palms. It will not diminish their ability to give or receive pleasure as an adult. It is your job, however, to explain that this is something to do in private, not in a grocery store cart!

Oh, and one more thing. If your toddler should happen to toddle in when you are making love, the first thing you should do is smile! Don't scream as it will scare them, perhaps even more than they're already scared. Often a child will interpret what is going on as hurting you. Reassure them you are all right, send them back to bed, and if they need an explanation you can say something like, "Sometimes grown-ups play differently than kids do. It is a private thing and we are both safe."

Preschool

Discovering your child and a friend playing "doctor" is likely to happen about this time. Try to be as calm as you can and redirect them. Shouting, "Oh my God! Put your clothes back on right this minute!" is likely to prompt them to explore this secret thing more later. Far more learning will occur from you saying something like, "Doctors have very special jobs that make it necessary for them to be able to examine our bodies. Unless you are at a real doctor's office it is important to keep your private parts covered. Body parts that a bathing suit covers are private. How about getting dressed and helping me walk the dog / bake cookies / etc."

Continue to use correct words for body parts with your child. Terminology gives your child a powerful tool in the horrifying event he or she is sexually abused. Being able to explain exactly what happened can be very helpful.

School Aged children

Now it is time to get a book or two. Hopefully, you are reading bedtime stories to your child and can add these to your stack from the library. There are many age appropriate books available (see the resource list below). Read them together so you can answer questions. This sets the stage for them to be able to come to you later. They will know you are an "askable" parent.

At this age kids will start to hear things from friends and friend's older siblings. Don't let misinformation from a little friend be the source of your child's sexual knowledge. Come on, I **know** you remember hearing stuff from friends that was not true! If you do not educate your child about sexuality, someone else will!

This is also an age where kids will bring home new words to try out on you. "Mommy, what does fuck mean?" Here are some possible scenarios.

You shout, "Don't EVER say that word again!" and they will not come to you with other questions. They will simply ask their friends.

—OR—

“That is a bad word for making love.”

“What is making love?”

“Remember the book we read last month? That is when adults cuddle very closely.”

“Why is it a bad word?”

“Lots of grown ups are not comfortable talking about bodies and sometimes they use bad words instead of the real ones. In our family, we don’t use that word.”

—OR—

“I’m glad you asked me that question. It is an important one. I’d like a little time to think about the answer. Let’s talk about it at bedtime.”

Kids approaching puberty (8-11)

Some schools will separate the girls and the boys and show films at this age. The girl’s film will be about menstruation, sanitary protection, and maybe pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. The boys’ film will be about nocturnal emissions (wet dreams), the need for deodorant, and maybe sexually transmitted diseases. There will be much laughter, embarrassment (on the part of the kids and often the adults who teach them), and sharing of misinformation.

My advice is to beat your school district to the information. It is book time again! Again, read the book or books together so that your child knows they can come to you when they have questions. Would you prefer that your child have the parts the film leaves out filled in by their friends, or would you prefer they have the ability to correct some of the nonsense that will come from other kids?

They will likely ask questions you cannot answer. This is a great time to demonstrate for them how you find accurate information. Go to the library, bookstore, or online together (see resources list below). You can always say, “That’s a great question! Let me see if I can find the answer and get back to you. I’d like to know that too.”

Teens

If you haven’t started the process of talking to your teen about sexuality, spend a little time watching TV with them. It will give you all sorts of opportunities to discuss sexuality and your values about it. If either of you are not comfortable talking about the topic, the car is a great place to start. You don’t have to make eye-contact and no one can leave the room! Remember, this is an ongoing process, not a one-time talk. It is your job to bring it up again and again. It is their job to roll their eyes and tell you they already know all this stuff. Bring it up again anyway!

They need to know your values. If you don’t want your child to have sex until they are married, tell them so. If you don’t want your child to have sex until they are in a committed, long-term relationship and are at least 18, share this with them. If you want them to use a condom (if they choose to ignore your advice about when to have sex), tell them that as well. You may have to practice saying this, but, I promise it will not make your kids go out and have sex. Say it. “I do not want you to have sex yet, but I want you to use a condom if you do.”

More teens today have had oral sex than have had intercourse. As a culture we have told them not to have sex while bombarding them with all sorts of sexual ads, TV programs, music, etc. We have said don’t have sex so you don’t create a pregnancy or get a disease. They now are figuring it is “safe” to have oral sex. They need to hear from you that they CAN get a disease from oral sex (no matter who performs it on whom).

They also need to know what you DO think is OK for them to do. Is it OK for them to kiss? Hug? Cuddle? Touch above the waist? Below? If you have been talking to them comfortably since they were infants, this will not be so hard to do. If this is new it may be time for a long car trip with a good book!

Books

Selected from the list at the SIECUS Website;
The Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S. <http://www.siecus.org>

Bellybuttons Are Navels*

Mark Schoen

This book helps parents create a relaxed environment for the discussion of sexuality. It will help parents initiate and guide matter-of-fact, accurate discussions about sexual anatomy with their young children.

1990; \$19; ISBN 0879755857; Prometheus Books, 59 John Glenn Drive, Amherst, NY 14228-2197; Phone: 800/421-0351; Fax: 716/691-0137; Web site: <http://www.prometheusbooks.com>

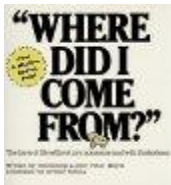


Did the Sun Shine Before You Were Born?: A Sexuality Education Primer*

Sol and Judith Gordon

Targeted to children 3 to 7 years old, this book focuses on the family and how it grows. It explains everything from conception to birth. Illustrated with multicultural charcoal drawings, this book fosters communication between parents and children by the sharing values and ideas.

1992; \$10; ISBN 087975723X; Prometheus Books, 59 John Glenn Drive, Amherst, NY 14228-2197; Phone: 800/421-0351; Fax: 716/691-0137; Web site: <http://www.prometheusbooks.com>



Where Did I Come From? The Facts of Life Without Any Nonsense and with Illustrations*

Peter Mayle

Celebrating it's 20th anniversary, this book uses humor and bright illustrations to explain to children anatomy, intercourse, orgasm, fertilization, pregnancy, and birth.

1973; \$12; ISBN 0818402539; Kensington Publishing Corporation, Department CO, 850 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022; Phone: 888/345-2665.

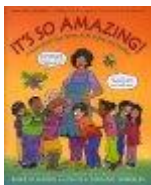


Ten Talks Parents Must Have With Their Children About Sex and Character

Pepper Schwartz, Ph.D. and Dominic Cappello

This book is intended for parents of children in grades 4 through 12. Developed to help parents and children talk about sexuality and building character it offers advice to parents on how to begin and what to say. Topics include safety, character, peer pressure, ethics, the Internet, and the media. Each chapter provides ways for parents to clarify their values and family rules about specific sexuality issues, anecdotes to share with children to foster communication, questions to ask your child, opportunity to reflect on responses and identify potential problems, and sample talks.

2000; \$12.95; ISBN 0786885483; Time Warner Trade Publishing; 3 Center Plaza, Boston, MA 02108; Phone: 800/759-0190; Fax: 800/286-9471; Web site: <http://hyperionbooks.go.com/>

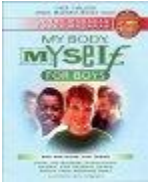


It's so Amazing: A Book About Eggs, Sperm, Birth, Babies And Families

Robie H. Harris, Illustrated by Michael Emberley

Intended for children ages 7 to 12, this book provides accurate information about sexuality is presented in a reader-friendly style. Age-appropriate illustrations and humor address conception, pregnancy, birth, anatomy, sexual orientation, HIV, love, sex, gender, and families.

1999; \$21.99; ISBN 0763613215; Penguin Putnam Incorporated, Order Processing, 405 Murray Hill Parkway, East Rutherford, NJ 07073; Phone: 800/526-0275; Fax: 800/277-9604; Web site: <http://www.penguinputnam.com>

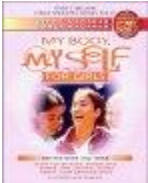


My Body, My Self For Boys For Preteens and Teens**

Lynda Madaras and Area Madaras

This journal/activity book for boys 8-15 years of age is a companion to What's Happening to My Body? Book For Boys. It includes exercises, quizzes, and personal stories to help boys learn about the changes that take place in their bodies during puberty.

2000; \$12.95; ISBN 1557044406; Newmarket Press, 18 E. 48th Street, Suite 1501, New York, NY 10017; Phone: 212/832-3575; Fax: 212/832-3629.

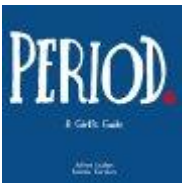


My Body, My Self For Girls For Preteens and Teens**

Lynda Madaras and Area Madaras

This journal/activity book for girls 8-15 years of age is a companion to What's Happening to My Body? Book For Girls. It includes exercises, quizzes, and personal stories to help girls learn about the changes that take place in their bodies during puberty.

2000; \$12.95; ISBN 1557044414; Newmarket Press, 18 E. 48th Street, Suite 1501, New York, NY 10017; Phone: 212/832-3575; Fax: 212/832-3629.

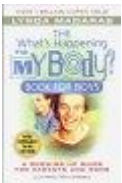


Period. A Girl's Guide**

JoAnn Loulan and Bonnie Worthen

Illustrated with drawings, this book intended for girls ages 8 and older addresses some of the changes that they will experience as they mature. Emphasizing that we are all unique and special, it explains physical changes during puberty. Chapters include: "So Many Changes," "So Many Parts," "Menstruation," "I Have a Question About That," "Why Do I Feel This Way?," and "What is a Pelvic Exam?" A parents' guide is included.

2001; \$9.95; ISBN 0916773965; Book Peddlers, 15245 Minnetonka Boulevard, Minnetonka, MN 55345; Phone: 800/255-3379; Fax: 952/912-0036; Web site: <http://www.bookpeddlers.com>

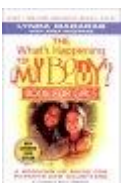


What's Happening to My Body? Book For Boys: A Growing Up Guide for Parents and Sons New Expanded, Third Edition**

Lynda Madaras

This book covers the physical changes of puberty for boys. Chapters include: "Puberty," "Beginning Changes and the Stages of Puberty," "An Owner's Guide to the Sex Organs: What's Normal? What's Not?," "The Puberty Growth Spurt," "Pimples, Perspiration, Body Hair, Shaving, and Other Changes," "Changes in the Male Reproductive Organs: Erections, Sperm, and Ejaculations," "Spontaneous Erections, Orgasms, Masturbation, and Wet Dreams," "Girls and Puberty," and "Romantic and Sexual Feelings." A resource section is also included.

2000; \$12.95; ISBN 1557044430; Newmarket Press, 18 E. 48th Street, Suite 1501, New York, NY 10017; Phone: 212/832-3575; Fax: 212/832-3629.

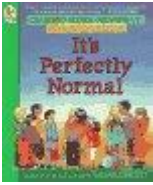


What's Happening to My Body? Book For Girls: A Growing Up Guide for Parents and Daughters New Expanded, Third Edition**

Lynda Madaras

This book provides basic information to girls about their bodies as they go through puberty. Chapters include: "Puberty," "Your Breasts: AN Owner's Manual," "Pubic Hair and Other Changes "Down There"," "The Puberty Growth Spurt," "Body Hair, Perspiration, Pimples, and Other Changes," "The Reproductive Organs and the Menstrual Cycle," "All About Having Periods," "Boys and Puberty," and "Romantic and Sexual Feelings." A resource section is also included.

2000; \$12.95; ISBN 1557044449; Newmarket Press, 18 E. 48th Street, Suite 1501, New York, NY 10017; Phone: 212/832-3575; Fax: 212/832-3629.

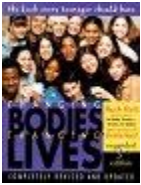


It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Sex and Sexual Health*

Robie H. Harris

Accurate information about sexuality is presented in a reader-friendly style that includes age-appropriate illustrations and humor. From conception and puberty to contraception and HIV/AIDS, it covers both the biological and psychological aspects of sexuality. It is intended for ages 10 and up.

1996; \$10.99; ISBN 1564021599; Candlewick Press, 2067 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02140; Phone 617-661-3330; <http://www.candlewick.com>



Changing Bodies, Changing Lives: A Book for Teens on Sex and Relationships, Expanded 3rd Edition**

Ruth Bell

This newly updated book for teenagers provides information on such subjects as "Changing Bodies," "Changing Relationships," "Changing Sexuality," "Emotional Health Care," "Eating Disorders," "Substance Abuse," "Living with Violence," "Physical Health Care," "Sexually Transmitted Diseases," "Protecting Yourself: Safer Sex and Birth Control," "So You Think You Might Be Pregnant," and "Changing Things."

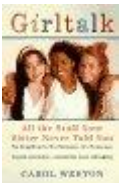
1998; \$23; ISBN 081292990X; Out of Stock

Finding Your Way: A Book About Sexual Ethics*

Susan Neiburg Terkel

Intended for adolescents, this book explains the importance of making educated decisions about sexual behavior, and of appreciating others' sexual standards.

1995; \$25; ISBN 0531112349; Franklin Watts, Sherman Turnpike, Danbury, CT 06816; Phone: 800/621-1115; Fax: 800/374-4329; Web site: <http://www.grolier.com>

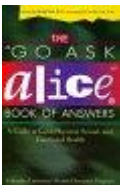


Girltalk: All the Stuff Your Sister Never Told You*

Carol Weston

This book is for girls 11 to 18 years old and provides straightforward advice. It answers questions that teens may feel too awkward to ask. Chapters include: "Body: Looking and Feeling Your Best," "Love: Falling in, Falling Out," and "Sex: What You Should Know Before Saying Yes."

1997; \$14.00; ISBN 0060928506; HarperCollins Publishers, 1000 Keystone Industrial Park, Scranton, PA 18512; Phone: 800/331-3761; Fax: 800/822-4090; Web site: <http://www.harpercollins.com>



"The Go Ask Alice Book of Answers" A Guide to Good Physical, Sexual, and Emotional Health

Columbia University's Health Education Program

This book provides youth with knowledge and advice on a variety of frequently asked questions from the "Go Ask Alice!" Web site at Columbia University. Topics include relationships; sexuality; sexual health; emotional health, fitness and nutrition, alcohol, nicotine, and other drugs; and general health questions.

1998; \$15.95; ISBN 0805055703; VHPS, 16365 James Madison Highway, Gordonsville, VA 22942; Phone: 888/330-8477; Fax: 540/672-7542; <http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/book.html>

WEB SITES

(Selected from the list at the SIECUS Website;
The Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S.)
<http://www.siecus.org>

Campaign For Our Children has information on their web site for both parents and teens. The parent section includes “How to talk with your kids about sex,” “How to talk to your school board about sex,” as well as frequently asked questions.

<http://www.cfoc.org>

Go Ask Alice!, developed and maintained by Columbia University’s Health Education Program, uses a question-and-answer format to provide information on relationships; sexuality; sexual health; emotional health and fitness; nutrition; alcohol; nicotine and other drugs; and general health. Visitors can search the database or ask anonymous questions.

<http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu>

gURL is committed to discussing issues that affect the lives of girls 13 years and older. The site helps girls with a wide range of experiences and interests. It warns visitors they might find frank information. It also offers chats***, posting boards, pen-pal lists, and homepage listings.

<http://www.gurl.com>

Iwannaknow, sponsored by the American Social Health Association, provides a safe and fun place for teenagers to learn about sexual health. The site includes a chat room*** and games related to sexual health services. It also provides guidance for parents.

<http://www.iwannaknow.org>

Sex Etc., sponsored by The Network For Family Life Education, includes articles on a variety of sexuality topics as well as an online newsletter, advice, message boards***, resources, links, and information for parents.

<http://www.sxetc.org>

SIECUS offers a section for parents and caregivers as well as teens. For Parents and Other Adults provides a Radio Series: Listen to the SIECUS Radio Series Containing Frequently Asked Questions and Answers, publications, and special reports including Kids Online: What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Children From Cyberspace and Public Support for Sexuality Education. For Teens, is a starting place for teens to learn about sexuality issues. It includes information about communication, abstinence, sexual involvement, safer sex, sexual abuse, resources, and linksThe Sex Information and Education Council of the US.

<http://www.siecus.org>

Girls, Inc. Inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold.

<http://www.girlsinc.org/>

Sex Ed Honestly
Rutgers University “answer” program

<http://answer.rutgers.edu/blog/>