

Resources and Guidelines for parents to talk to their children about sex to prevent sexual abuse

By Paul J. Ashton, PA, DRE

A child's life is like a piece of paper on which every person leaves a mark.
Ancient proverb

Parents have always been the primary force behind the forming of moral and religious values of their children. They are their children's teacher from the very beginning. In order for children to thrive and develop, children must feel loved, safe and protected. Knowledge is power and when a parent passes on knowledge to a child, they put that child in a position of power.

Often, when it comes to the important topic of sexuality, parents feel embarrassed or inadequate to address this issue with their children. They are confused, do not know when, how and what to explain to their child, and consequently this important task never gets addressed.

To assist parents in their role as educators of sexuality to their children, we have compiled this list of resources that is an invaluable tool to help you talk with your children. Resources are compiled by book, brochure or video title and an additional listing of Internet sites is provided.

It is never too late to begin teaching your children, and it is never too early. Please refer to the boxes below, which offers a guideline regarding what and when to teach your children. Each family is different, each has its own rules and regulations—use your best judgment in teaching your children the important facts about sex. Please remember that they are counting on you—don't wait for them to ask.

Age Appropriate Topics to Discuss with your Child

[Resources follow in italics]

- 18 months** **Teach your child about the proper names for body parts.**
Going to the Potty. Fred Rogers (Mr. Rogers); Penguin Putnam Books.
- 2-5 Years** **Teach your child about private parts of the body and how to say “NO” to sexual advances. Give straightforward answers.**
What’s the Big Secret? Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown; Little, Brown.
- 5-8 Years** **Discuss safety away from home and the difference between good touch and bad touch. Encourage your child to talk about a scary experience.**
Protect your Child From Sexual Abuse: A Parent’s Guide, Janie Hart-Rossi;
Seattle, WA: Parenting Press, Inc. 800-992-6657
- 8-12 Yrs** **Stress personal safety. Discuss rules of sexual conduct that are accepted by the family.**
No More Secrets for Me. Oralee Wachter. Sexual abuse is a secret no child should have to keep. Little Brown.
- 13-18 Yrs** **Stress personal safety. Discuss rape, date rape, STDs and unintended pregnancy.**
The Safe Zone: A kid’s Guide to Personal Safety. Donna Chaiet & Francine Russell; NY: Beech Tree.

Prevention Techniques

1. Listen when your child tries to tell you something; especially when it seems hard for him/her to talk about. Ask questions. Studies indicate most common ages for sexual abuse are 8-13 years.
2. Know with whom your child is spending time. Be careful about letting your child spend time in out-of-the-way places with other adults or older children.
3. Visit your child’s caregiver without notice.
4. See if your child’s school has an abuse program for teachers and children. If it doesn’t, get one started.
5. Do background checks on day care providers, and baby sitters; search online to see if they’re listed on a sex offender’s list.

Sexual Abuse: Let’s Talk About It. Margaret O. Hyde; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

Books

Asking About Sex & Growing Up, Joanna Cole; (A family talks about sex) NY: Morrow Junior Books.

Carla Goes to Court, Jo Beaudry and Lynne Ketchum; Human Sciences Press.

Changing Bodies, Changing Lives, Ruth Bell et al.; NY: Vintage.

Child Sexual Abuse: The Initial Effects; Newbury Park, CA, Sage Publications.

The Family Book About Sexuality, M.S. Calderone and E. W. Johnson, Harper Collins.

From Diapers to Dating. Debra Haffner; (A parent's guide to raising sexually healthy children – step-by-step program to provide accurate information and communicating their values to children)

Growing Up with Sex and *Living with Sex*, both by Richard F. Hettlinger; Seabury Press, New York.

The Guy Book, Mavis Jukes; (Chapter 14 "Road Hazards: Knowing who and what to avoid") NY: Crown Publishers.

How to Avoid Sexual Abuse and What to Do if it Happens to You, Susan Terkel & Janice Rench; Minneapolis:Lerner Publications.

How to Talk with Your Child About Sexuality: A parent guide, Faye Wattleton; NY:Doubleday.

How Were You Born? Jonna Cole; NY: Mulberry Books.

It's OK to Say No and Your Body is Your Own, Amy C. Bahr, Grosset & Dunlap.

It's Perfectly Normal. (Changing bodies, growing up, sex and sexual health). Robie Harris. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick.

It's So Amazing, Robie H. Harris; (10-15 Upbeat, caring, child friendly) Cambridge MA:Candlewick Press.

Love, Sex and Being Human, Paul Bohannon; (written especially for teenagers) Doubleday, Garden City, New York.

My Body, Myself for Boys/Girls, Lynda Madaras and Area Madaras; (Ages 12-15) NY:New Market Press.

No More Secrets for Me. (For families with children between the ages of 2 & 14); NY: Little Brown & Company.

On Sex and Human Loving, William H. Masters & Virginia E. Johnson; Boston: Little Brown.

Parents and Home Sex Education, Gordon J. Lester; The Inland Register, Spokane, Washington.

Period Book, Karen Gravell; (everything you don't want to ask, but you need to know – helps parents and daughters talk about menstruation and sex, ages 12-16) NY: Walker and Company.

Recognizing Child Abuse: A Guide for the Concerned, Douglas J. Besharov, The Free Press.

The Right Touch: A Read-Aloud Story to Help Prevent Child Sexual Abuse, Sandy Kleven, Illumination Arts.

The Rugrats' Potty Book (Ages 2-5) Kathi Wagner; NY Simon & Schuster.

A Search for Meaning in Love, Sex and Marriage, Hugo L. Hurst; a valuable resource for parents in discussing sexuality in the language of the adolescent and the young adult; St. Mary's College Press, Winona, Minnesota.

Sex and the Young Catholic, Gregory Kenny; Claretian Publications, Notre Dame, Indiana.

Sex Education for the Developmentally Disabled, Fischer, Krajicek, and Borthick; designed for teaching developmentally disabled children; University Park Press, Baltimore, Maryland.

Sexual Abuse: Let's Talk About It, Margaret O. Hyde; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

The Stork Is Dead, Charlie Shedd; a readable book, particularly good for middle to older teens; combines openness with a Christian perspective; Word Books, Waco, Texas.

Talking Sex With Your Children, Lois B. Morris. NY; Simon and Schuster.

The Teenage Body Book, Kathleen McCoy & Charles Wibblesman, M.D. NY Simon & Schuster.

Teenage Boys! Shaping the Man Inside, Bill Beausay; CO: Waterbrook Press.

What a Modern Catholic Believes About Sex and Marriage, Eugene Kennedy; Thomas More Press, Chicago.

What to Tell Your Child About Sex, A handy reference manual in paperback; offers typical questions from children and possible parent answers; Child Study Association, 9 East 89th St., New York 10028.

What's Going on Down There? Karen Gravell; (Answers to questions boys find hard to ask) NY:Walker & Company.

What's Happening to My Body, Lynda Madaras; NY:New Market Press

What's the Big Secret? Laurie Krasny Brown & Marc Brown. NY: Little, Brown and Company.

What We Told Our Children About Sex, Betsy A. Weisman & Michael H. Weisman, M.D. NY: Harcourt.

Where Did I Come From? Peter Mayle (6-10 Yrs); NY: Kensington Publishing.

What Your Child Really Wants to Know About Sex and Why, Dr. William Block; Fawcett, World, Greenwich, Connecticut.

When Your Child Has Been Molested: A Parent's Guide to Healing and Recovery, Kathryn Hagans and Joyce Case; Jossey-Bass.

Brochures

10 Ways to Keep Children Safer; Children's Trust Fund 888-775-4KID.

Chances Are...A Child You Know Will Be Sexually Abused; Our Kids Center 615-862-4211.

How to Protect Our Children from Sexual Abuse, Dolores Curran; Claretian Publications; 800-326-6515.

No One knew my Secret 'til One Day, Childhelp USA of Woodland Hills, California.

Once I Was a Little Bit Frightened, Joy Williams, Fargo, ND:Rape and Abuse Crisis Center of Fargo-Moorhead.

Reducing the Risk for Children in Our Care; #520 ACT for Kids 509-343-5010 PST.

Red Flag, Green Flag People, Joy Williams; Fargo, ND:Rape and Abuse Crisis Center of Fargo-Moorhead.

Tears on a Pillow: Talking Together About Child Abuse, Kimberly Roy and Deborah Daigle; New Hampshire Catholic Charities; 800-562-5249.

What do I Say Now? How to Help Protect Your Child From Sexual Abuse; Video for parents and caregivers of children ages 3-9; Committee for Children; 800-634-4449.

The Trouble with Secrets; Loving Touches; Something Happened and I'm Scared to Tell; and Helping Abused Children; Seattle, WA: Parenting Press, Inc. 800-992-6657

Video

Bubblyonian Encounter, Bubblyonian Productions, the Kansas Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse, and the Johnson County Mental Health Center.
A new film about Bub: National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse,
332 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 1250, Chicago, IL 60604-4357.

No More Secrets, National Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect.

Speak up, Say No, Klaine Krause, Filmstrip – preschool to second grade. Oregon City , Oreg:Krause House.

The Touching Problem, Coalition for Child Advocacy of Bellingham, Washington.

Internet

www.actforkids.org (Act for Kids)

www.kcsarc.org (King County Sexual Assault Resource Center)

www.cfchildren.org (Committee for Children)

www.nhcadsv.org (NH Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence)

www.randomhouse.com/teens (Teens @ Random)

www.candlewick.com (Candlewick Press)

www.mctf.org (Children's Trust Fund)