

Helping children to develop healthy attitudes towards sexuality

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Your relationship to your own sexuality

- ▶ When did you first learn about relationships, love, sexual intercourse, conception and reproduction?
- ▶ Who told you?
- ▶ What did you learn?
- ▶ What was helpful and what was unhelpful?
- ▶ What have you had to unlearn since childhood and what new things did you need to learn?
- ▶ What effect has this experience had on your perspective of sex?
- ▶ How has this/might this affect how you teach your own children?

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How would you have liked to learn about sex as a child and teenager?

What would have been most useful to know?

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Sex is God's very good gift to us

Our bodies have been wondrously made – in every detail.

God designed our bodies for intimacy and pleasure.

Sex is God's beautiful idea for us to enjoy within loving and committed relationships.

It is important to develop healthy attitudes towards sexuality from birth, so that painful unlearning and re-learning is not necessary.

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Healthy attitudes towards sex

Treating each other as precious people and not objectifying each other	Each showing the other how much they are loved	Lifting each other up and not putting down or hurting each other	Learn from each other, not from staged pornography
Mutual consent	Mutual pleasure	Infused with love, joy, gratitude and peace	Patience, kindness, no record of wrongs, etc.

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Positive messages

- ▶ Focus on the positive reasons for keeping sex for marriage, rather than the negative reasons for not having sex outside marriage.
- ▶ Sex is God's very good gift for us. It's His idea for loving couples in committed relationships.
- ▶ Sex is a special way to show love and give and receive pleasure in committed relationships
- ▶ It is also the way God has given us to have babies.
- ▶ A whole book of the Bible is dedicated to celebrating romantic and sexual love!
- ▶ God uses the metaphor of marriage to express His loving commitment to us.


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It starts before birth – with you

- ▶ When your own attitudes towards sexual intimacy are positive and healthy, it is much easier to pass these on to your children.
- ▶ Exploring your beliefs and attitudes towards sexual intimacy before your children are born, can help you to draw your own roadmap for developing your child's positive attitudes.

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Model a healthy couple relationship

- ▶ When parents are modelling a healthy, loving relationship, the children learn what it means to love their future partners.
- ▶ Healthy relationships are affectionate, kind, thoughtful, humble, compassionate, soothing, generous, mutually beneficial, supportive, flexible and collaborative, etc.

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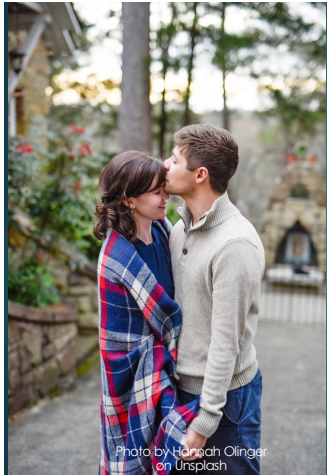


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Model a healthy couple relationship

It can also be helpful for the children to see their parents showing affection and love to each other by:

- ▶ saying loving things to each other,
- ▶ giving small gifts and treats,
- ▶ smiling and laughing together,
- ▶ hugging and kissing,
- ▶ Helping and supporting each other,
- ▶ Comforting and soothing each other,
- ▶ and negotiating their differences in a balanced and amicable way, etc.

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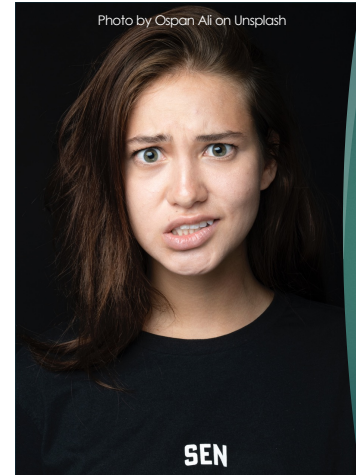


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It's not easy...

- ▶ It is normal to struggle with how to talk to your child about sex.
- ▶ Sex is a huge, complex topic, and children need to learn about it slowly in bite-sized chunks, not in one big talk.
- ▶ Find some simple books and information in your language to help you talk to them about sex in age-appropriate ways.
- ▶ Choose Christian books if possible.

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Be comfortable and relaxed

- ▶ When your children ask you questions about sex, try to be as warm, smiling and comfortable as possible.
- ▶ If they sense that you are nervous, uncomfortable, or ashamed, then they may feel uncomfortable or ashamed about asking questions in the future.
- ▶ When you welcome their questions and search for answers together then you encourage them to ask more questions when they need to.

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Make any question ok

- ▶ Children and teenagers can have all kinds of questions about sex and it's important to make any question OK.
- ▶ Say things like, "That's a really interesting question! What made you wonder about that?" This will hopefully give you some time to pray and gather your thoughts and ideas.
- ▶ You don't have to answer every question straight away. "Let me have a little bit of time to find the best answer for you! Can we talk tomorrow evening?"
- ▶ Use www.axis.org to help you find some of the answers. The site has lots of well-researched discussion guides for parents and teens on lots of topics.

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Handle with care!

- ▶ As soon as they are born, we teach our babies about their bodies.
- ▶ Even the way we change their nappies/diapers makes a difference.
- ▶ Do we respond with repulsion and disgust and tell them they are dirty? Or do we laugh and enjoy the experience and tell them they are beautiful and beloved?



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Respect and delight

- ▶ Treat your little ones with respect. Honour their choices and wishes – this helps them to express their wishes to others as they grow older.
- ▶ Be careful which pictures you post of them on social media. Only post pictures that they would be happy for others to see in ten or twenty year's time.
- ▶ Delight in them and treasure them, to give them a positive experience of their identity.



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Drip-feed information




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Toddlers up to 3

- ▶ Toddlers ask questions. Ask what made them think of their question, so that you answer it appropriately.
- ▶ Explain that their genital areas are very precious places and that it is not OK for other people to touch them. If someone tries to touch them, they should always tell you.
- ▶ Say that babies grow in a mummy's tummy. Show them a pregnant mummy to help them understand.
- ▶ It's OK to tell them that they have asked a special question and that you will tell them the special answer when they are older.




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Preschool 4-6

- ▶ Talk about the differences between boys and girls.
- ▶ Let them tell you when they do and don't want to be hugged and kissed, etc.
- ▶ Teach them how to recognise and avoid bad pictures (porn) on the internet (more later).
- ▶ Explain that when secrets are fun and happy, they can keep them secret, But when the secrets make them feel sick, then they must always tell you.
- ▶ Say that they can always tell these bad secrets to you, and you will help them to be safe.

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Preschool 4-6

- ▶ Make sure that they learn the simple truths about sex from you first.
- ▶ Use simple, age-appropriate, Christian books to tell the story of sex.
- ▶ Watching animals mate and have babies can be a useful discussion starter.

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School age 7-9

- ▶ Teach internet safety and wisdom – how to avoid porn and grooming.
- ▶ Discuss the changes of puberty. Ask them if they know how boys turn into men and girls turn into women. Make sure they are well prepared. Usually best for same sex parent to have these conversations.
- ▶ Ask what they have learned about sex at school, on the internet, and from their friends, and correct any misconceptions and unhealthy ideas.
- ▶ Make sure they know they can always come to you with questions, and you will always love them and help them to feel safe.

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Pre-teens 10-12ish

- ▶ Consent – the importance of 'No!' meaning 'No!' and 'Stop!'
- ▶ Discuss ongoing changes of puberty, and answer questions.
- ▶ Help them to understand the risk of sending naked photos and sexting.
- ▶ Discuss friendships and how to choose good friends and be good friends.

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Teens

- ▶ Use movies, and news stories as discussion starters about sexuality, relationships and making good choices.
- ▶ Talk when you are walking and driving and playing games together.
- ▶ Discuss how bonding works. Sex is a powerful bond and the more bonded we are to someone, the more it hurts them and us and when the bond is broken.

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Teens

- ▶ Teenage brains struggle to assess risks, such as sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancies.
- ▶ Help them to think through the various consequences of sexual and relational choices so they can hopefully make wiser decisions.
- ▶ When it seems like everyone is doing it, it's ok to be different.
- ▶ Ask teens to think about the best context for sexual intimacy.

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Sexual intimacy is usually best when it takes place in the context of a very loving, safe and committed relationship, where there is good communication and trust.

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Develop your child's relational skills

Healthy relationships, and eventually healthy sexuality, require:

- ▶ Good listening skills
- ▶ Ability to identify and express emotions
- ▶ Empathy for others
- ▶ Conflict resolution skills
- ▶ Awareness of safety and boundaries in relationships
- ▶ Awareness of abuse and what to do when you see it or experience it yourself

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Teach consent

- ▶ Consent is an important aspect of healthy sexuality.
- ▶ It's important to respect your child's wishes when they don't want to kiss great aunt Emily.
- ▶ When we force them to kiss others against their wishes, we are teaching them that their wishes don't matter, and that their duty is to please others, regardless of their own desires.
- ▶ Teach them to make their own choices and to express their own wishes clearly, without ambiguity.
- ▶ Tea consent (clean version) video (less than 3 minutes) – suitable for teenagers.

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Teach them to understand and respect boundaries

- ▶ Teach children to recognize and maintain their own boundaries.
- ▶ Teach them to say "No!" clearly and strongly.
- ▶ This helps them to create safe boundaries when others want them to do things that they don't want to do.
- ▶ This also teaches them to respect others when they choose to say "No!"

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Teach about pornography

"Good Pictures, Bad Pictures" book - porn-proofing today's young kids. Kristen Jensen.

- ▶ C - Close the computer
- ▶ A - Tell an adult
- ▶ N - Name it as porn
- ▶ D - distract yourself
- ▶ O - order your thinking brain




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Prepare well for next stages

- ▶ Prepare your child for the next stage of their development well ahead of the time.
- ▶ Girls are starting their periods at much younger ages these days, and it is important to talk about changes long before they happen.
- ▶ Celebrate the changes and make them something to look forward to and not to dread.

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Continue to affirm their body

- ▶ Affirmation of your child's body as good, beautiful and created by God is very important.
- ▶ The messages that children hear about their bodies are very powerful and shape their identity with positive wonder, or destructive shame.
- ▶ Teens are very sensitive to messages about their bodies and appearance.
- ▶ This is complicated by thousands of messages that they receive about bodies and appearance on social media.
- ▶ There is a huge rise in young teenage girls seeking corrective surgeries for their breasts, faces, and even their genitals.

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Feelings versus identity

- Help them to understand the difference between feelings and identity.
- Feelings can be complex, but they don't define us.
- Feelings can change over time.
- It's normal for teens to idolise someone of the same gender who is a few years older than them as they are working out who they want to become.
- They are usually looking for a role model not a partner.
- Teens also have the potential to form strong bonds with their friends.

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Find good mentors and peer groups

- Help your teens to find safe Christian adults to mentor them, so that they have a caring and positive support system.
- Often easier for them to talk to other trusted adults rather than their parents.
- Find peer groups with similar values who can support each other in making wise choices.

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www.axis.org

- ▶ Axis is an excellent resource for parent/teen discussion guides on a wide variety of topics, including sex, dating, and homosexuality.
- ▶ These are currently free to download.
- ▶ They include current research, Biblical materials, and tips for handling tricky discussions with teens.
- ▶ Some of the topics have video discussion starters to use too.

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Learning about our sexuality is a life-long journey

- Your children are on a journey of learning about sexuality, just as you are.
- Try not to panic when your children are struggling to stay within your preferred boundaries. Stay calm and hold onto the bigger picture of their lives and God's grace.
- Understand the teenage brain – which struggles with empathy at times and is not always able to consider risks wisely.

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Prayer and love

- Keep praying for wisdom and love as you share the secrets of God's wonderful design for sexuality with your children.
- Tell them that whatever they are struggling with, you will always support them and be there for them, just as God is always there for us.
- Even when they have messed up, we will welcome them home, accept them, support them, and love them deeply, just like the Father of the Prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32).

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New beginnings...

- ▶ Jesus encountered several women who were living outside the socially accepted sexual norms of their time and culture.
- ▶ Each time He accepted them, lifted them up with grace and love, and gave them the opportunity to write a new story about their lives.
- ▶ Remember that every sexual mistake and unwise decision has already been forgiven by God. Everyone can start again and make better choices next time.

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This is just the beginning...

- ▶ This webinar is just a short introduction to a huge topic!
- ▶ I hope it will encourage you to think, pray, talk together as parents, and make wise choices about the sex education of your children.
- ▶ Use it to spark your curiosity and to search for deeper answers.
- ▶ We're all on a journey together and we can support each other.
- ▶ **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. James 1:5**

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