



Welcome to...

Teaching Healthy Sexuality Skills

with Steve Becker, Ph.D.

RISE Conference

April 30, 2010

10:50-12:20



Today's Program

10:50 What *is* it about sex: Normal vs. Problem Sexuality

11:00 10 Ways Disabilities Can Affect Sexuality

11:15 What Should Be Taught: a Brief Sexual Curriculum

11:25 Teaching Healthy Sexuality

12:00 Sexual Behavior Problems

12:20 That's all, folks!

WARNING: This workshop contains sexually explicit pictures and materials. Adult discretion is advised.

What *is* it about sex?



- Adults bring their own experiences (positive/negative) about sex into the conversation. How do I not let my personal prejudices affect him/her?
- Sex can be embarrassing to talk about. How can I use words like penis or vagina without feeling silly or ashamed?
- How do I know when s/he is ready?
- What should be taught? At what age?
- How do I teach him/her about abstract concepts like personal likes/dislikes, social boundaries, ethical behavior, and commitment?
- How much guidance should I offer while s/he's learning about sex?
- How do I prevent getting into trouble?

“Normal” vs. “Problem” Sexuality



- 1) **“Normal” is defined by family values.**
- 2) **“Normal” is regulated by both criminal law and “social codes.”**
- 3) **Values lead to concepts of acceptable behaviors.**
- 4) **What is “problematic” to one adult may be “normal” to another.**
- 5) **People do not always know or remember the consequences of sexual behavior.**

Sexual Myths



- They are “children” and always will be.
- They are intellectually disabled.
- They cannot learn how to have sex.
- Sexual behavior is too dangerous.
- They do not have sexual feelings.
- We should not give them “*ideas*.”
- We must prevent them from “being exposed.”
- He’ll grow out of it.
- She’ll never have sex.
- I’ll always be there to take care of her.



10 Ways Disabilities Can Affect Sexuality

- 1) Low self-esteem
- 2) Guilt
- 3) Acceptance of worthlessness
- 4) Victimization
- 5) Loss of hope
- 6) Exploitation/Abuse
- 7) Overattaching to seek acceptance
- 8) Lack of awareness of consequences
- 9) Isolation
- 10) Sexual acting out



What Should Be Taught: A Brief Sexual Curriculum

- 1) Self-esteem (feeling good about yourself)
- 2) Values
- 3) Levels of Intimacy (see next slide)
- 4) Social Codes and Rules
- 5) Advocacy (asking for what you want)
- 6) Sexual Anatomy
- 7) Healthy Sexual Decision-Making
- 8) Relationships
- 9) Choices
- 10) Risks

When to Start Talking about Sex

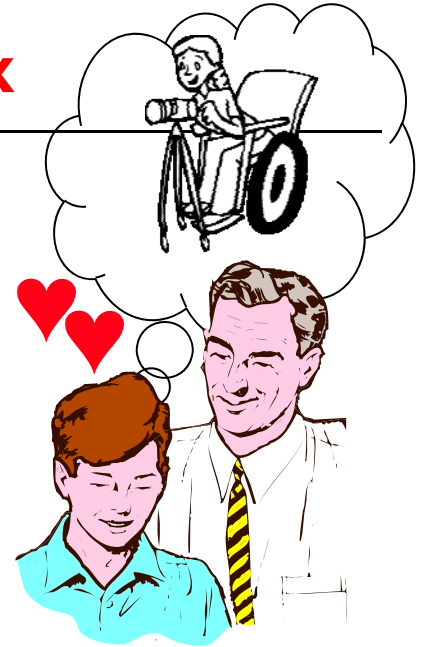
Deciding when to start should be based on these variables:

- Level of understanding
- Emotional readiness
- Maturity
- Need

It's best to avoid starting when your teen is a certain age because some teens are ready at age 10, while others might not be ready at age 18.

Also, it's best to wait until after emotions have calmed after a big mistake, such as having unprotected sex.

And don't start in order to satisfy your own worries as a parent.





Building Self-Esteem-1

Self-esteem means how you think about yourself. People can have high or low self-esteem. People with high self-esteem believe that they are worthwhile, that their lives have meaning, and that what they do matters to others.

Methods:

- **Show them you value yourself. Talk about how you respect yourself and see value in what you do.**
- **Catch them being good. Praise products and accomplishments.**
- **Show how “belonging” helps us to build self-esteem.**
- **Show ways you appreciate them.**
- **Help them develop their talents and skills.**



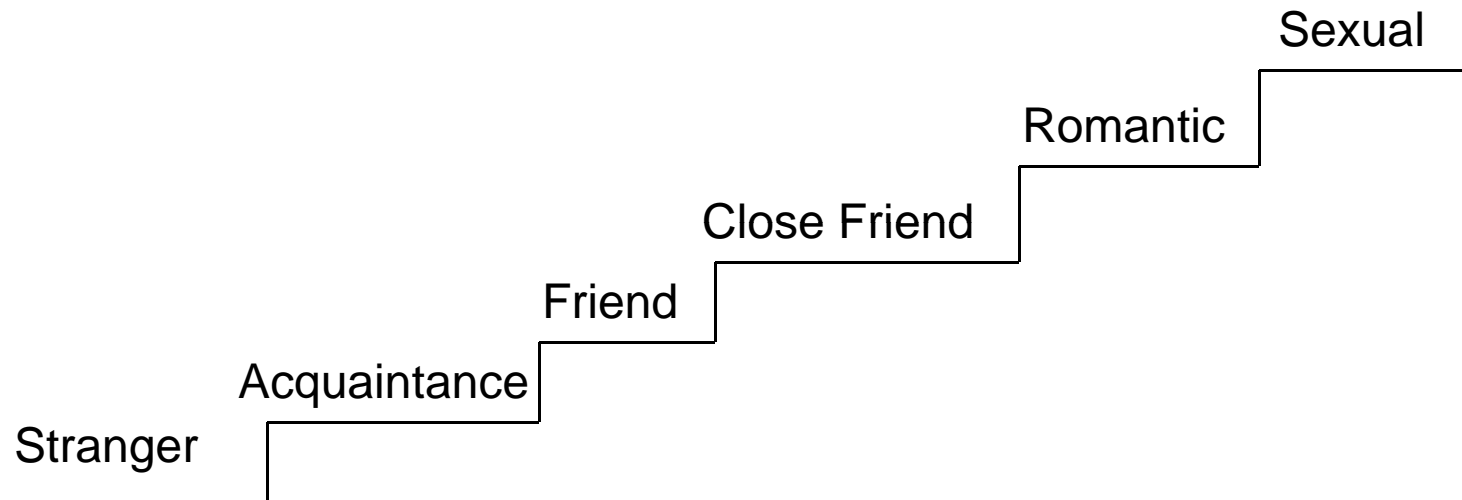
Building Values: Exercises-2

- 1) Listing 20 things you love to do
- 2) Rank ordering your likes
- 3) Values continuum
- 4) I Learned...statements
- 5) Percentage questions
- 6) Unfinished sentences
- 7) Strongly Agree/Strongly Disagree
- 8) Diaries

(taken from Values Clarification, by Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum. Hart Publishing Company, 1978.) (Don't be dismayed by its age. It's a classic.)



Six Levels of Intimacy-3





Social Codes and Rules-4

Many years ago people got together to figure out how to live together so we can all be happy. They made up rules about how to act around others. Some behaviors were so bad, like hitting, that people who broke those rules would be sent away from everybody else. Those rules became laws.

Other rules were made about how we treat people socially, but these rules were not written down. Each Level of Intimacy carries its own Social Code of what's OK and Not-OK.

Examples of Social Codes:

- Don't talk to strangers.
- Only tell an acquaintance your name.
- Only tell secrets to close friends.
- Only have sex with someone you know and trust.



Advocacy-5

Advocacy means asking for what you want. Advocacy includes:

- **Knowing what you like/don't like**
- **Assertiveness**
- **Finding out how to get what you need (resources)**
- **Doing what you need to do to meet your needs**
- **Not hurting people**



Sexual Anatomy: Levels of Sexual Understanding-6

- 1) Factual (This is your penis.)
- 2) Functional (Your penis gets hard when you stroke it.)
- 3) Appropriate behavior (Rules):
 - Men do not stroke their penises in public.
 - It's OK to stroke your penis in your bedroom with the door shut.
- 4) Expression of Values:

"I like to touch myself when I think of kissing her."
- 5) Use of Body Parts in Sexual Expression with another
 - I touched her breasts after she said "OK."