



Family Life Education

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The Power of Telling the Truth

About life, love, relationships and yes Sex.

"Well Tim we are going to have a new addition to the family soon, you are going to get a new little brother or sister". "Where is the baby now mum?" "The baby is tucked up in side my belly and it will stay there and grow for about 9 months until it is born." "Oh.....but how did the baby get in there?" ("AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!")

Children are very inquisitive, and every parent will inevitably face this or a similar scenario when they will have to answer tricky questions about sex and sexuality. Research indicates that children and adolescents prefer to seek this information from their parents more than any other source and perceive their advice to be trustworthy.

**'The Talk' is a myth!
Puberty questions start
young like 3-4 years
"Mum, why do you have
hair there?"**

Often, parents can feel uncomfortable discussing the topic of sex, and sometimes feel inadequate in their own understanding of sexuality and anatomy. So what can a parent do? First things first, DON'T PANIC! Getting uncomfortable, fretting, being embarrassed, avoidance, etc all communicate to the developing child something is wrong about sex and sexuality, specifically that it is a topic to be avoided and not discussed. This message could lead the child to seek the knowledge that one must have about themselves from less reputable sources that could put the child at risk of harm. Early exposure to pornography is a real thing and has lasting impacts on children.

Sexuality and inevitably sex are not topics that can be ignored. The reality of both is physically present in the very nature of our bodies. Boys have penises and girls have vaginas, but the inquisitive child as he or she develops will inevitably ask, why? They need to know the truth, because what ever they are told they will believe as the truth and if what you say is not right, eventually they will learn different and possibly grow to distrust what you say.

**If they ask a question they're
ready for the answer. Just
clarify first by asking "what
do you mean by that?"**



If you have very young children it is a good idea to prepare yourself. you could educate yourself on aspects of sexuality and anatomy that you are a bit rusty on so you are well armed with accurate information so you don't get caught off guard, and you can feel relaxed and comfortable in your response. This will in turn help your children feel comfortable asking you questions about these topics.

If you are asked a question, answer it with the truth. This is easily said, the difficulty is determining how much of the truth and in what manner it should be given and at what age. A good rule of thumb is if the child is asking the question then developmentally they are ready for the answer. Now this needs clarification, we need to understand that children will not necessarily link

Family Life Education



certain concepts together like adults will. It is important to be clear on what the child is actually asking, so don't jump in head first. The key is to listen, ask questions and start with the simple answer, ask if this is what they meant and adjust your answer accordingly. The importance of listening can not be overstated, sometimes a child may ask a question that, to you, seems wildly inappropriate to their level of development and maturity; and, you are the best judge of that; asking what they mean is important as it may be a topic that they overheard and simply don't know what the words mean.

'The talk' so to speak is not a one-off event. If you want your children to develop healthy and appropriate attitudes towards themselves and other people, it needs to be fostered in them from a young age. There are many resources available to parents that can help foster this development in an appropriate way and provide the parents with helpful suggestions. There is no generic way of fostering positive sexuality, as it is very dependent on the development of the child and the values of their family. If you feel at all concerned about this aspect of your child's development don't hesitate to seek advice, because in this day and age a parent can not afford to delay in fostering a positive attitude towards sex and sexuality.

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John is an accredited Family Life Educator and has been working in the area of age appropriate sexuality and relationship education for 13 years. He has delivered over 3000 Family Life Education sessions from Year 1 to Year 12, professional development workshops, parent sessions and conferences. John is the Director of Inspired Formation. John is married and a proud father of six children.

