



## GROWING HEALTHY PASSION

### **Strategies to Help Children Cultivate Healthy Sexuality**

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#### **Celebrating Our Design to Love**

##### **Why** is it difficult to talk about sexuality in a God-centered way?

*“Spirituality and sexuality are divorced in our culture. The secular got passion and God got chastity. We, the children of divorce, like all children from a broken home, find ourselves torn between the two, unconsciously longing for them to come together.” (Rev. Ron Rolheiser, The Holy Longing)*

##### **What** is Sexuality?

*Sexuality is our core longing to love and be loved that reveals the live of the Trinity.*

*“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...”*

*So God created man in his own image,*

*In the image of God he created him;*

*male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:26a, 27).*

##### **How** does human sexuality develop?

*Sexual longings require ongoing development and transformation (not elimination or gratification) through a process involving times and seasons of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Glory. Sexuality develops along the lines of a single or a married vocation, each of which contains its own freedoms and responsibilities.*

## Strategies to Cultivate Healthy Sexuality with Children (1-9 yrs)

### ◇ *Celebrate Creation*

1. **Build incarnational attachment in context of family:** Experiential teaching that shows child that all of her (including all the richness of having an inner life) is worthy of attention and love, and that others can generally be trusted to be there when needed.

*Strategies:*

1. Special Times
2. Most Important 30 minutes of the day
3. High Energy intrusive play (i.e. Theraplay)

2. **Teach core attitude of God-centered gratefulness and awareness of miracle of human body.**

*Example (for preschool years): "I think our bodies are the coolest of all gifts that God has given us. What can your body do, Jimmy? . . . And God made every part able to do something different . . . your hands can color. . . What parts of your body are you grateful for (do you like)? . . . Our tummy tells us really important information . . . can you think of something your tummy tells you? (When you have had enough food to eat, when we are afraid or sad). .. We call some areas of your body private areas. Where are your private areas, Jimmy? . . . That's right, your penis and bottom are very special areas of your body. Who can touch your private areas other than you? . . . (Clarify parents, other adults when helping you go potty, doctor's office, etc.)*

### ◇ *Embrace the Fall with love and truth (to invite Redemption and Glory)*

1. **Use gentle and simple guidelines regarding appropriate behavior to prevent abuse.**

*Example: "I know it feels really good to hold your penis like that but please don't touch it like that when you are with other people. I know you think it would be fun to touch Daddy's penis but we don't do that because that is Daddy's private area. (Why?) Remember your penis is a very special part of your body, one of your private areas that we don't share with other people.*

If there is concern or suspicion about inappropriate touch occurring, discuss "Good Touch, Bad Touch, and Secret Touch":

*Jimmie" how does it feel when Mommy or Daddy snuggles you or gives you a kiss? You know what, we call that Good Touch. If that is called good touch, what do you imagine Bad Touch is? . . . Yep, if someone hits you or hurts you we call it Bad Touch. What should you do if someone tries to touch you with Bad Touch? Yep, tell a grown-up. There is another kind of touching that you probably never heard of and will probably never happen to you. But I want you to be super smart and prepared to stay safe. It's called Secret Touch Secret Touch is when someone - either a grown-up or another kid - hurts you or touches you where you don't want them to -like in your private areas - and then tells you to keep it a secret. What do you think you could do if someone tried to touch you like that? (Tell them "Please stop!") .. Remember, Jimmie" you can always, no matter what, tell Mom or Dad about anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, OK? Secret Touch will probably never happen. but just in case, we wanted you to know.*

**2. Respond quickly and firmly to teasing, hurt, and rejection.**

*I know you are really angry with Mara for not letting you play with her and Sarah, and now you don't want to invite either of them to your birthday party. You know what, honey? Sometimes I get so angry with my friends I can't imagine ever talking with them again. What I have learned to do is just pray for them and ask God to help me love them. Then see what happens. Let me hug you. .. "Lord, thank you for how wonderful and full of love Mary is. . . . You know, Lord, how much it hurts when people are mean and reject us. Please let Mary feel your love right now. Give her wisdom to know how to be loving and honest with Mara and Sarah. "Sometimes, Sarah, it really helps to pray for them in a special way during Mass. It's really cool. We can talk more tomorrow before we go to church.*

**3. Experiences of service to poor with prayer and joy**

*How do you guys feel after spending the morning with Aunt Millie's friends at the nursing home? . . . I feel tired, too. . . .I also feel good. It feels great to share God's love with our friends there. As much as I just love hanging out as a family together, it feels so awesome to let our love spill over to the lives of our friends like today. I think that warm feeling we have inside is God's love inside of us.*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Early Adolescents (9-12 yrs.): Time for the Big Talk (And the Little One)</b></p>
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***The Big Talk***

**What?** Teaches a solid *theology and spirituality* of sexuality: *our core longing to love and be loved that reveals the life of God*

**When?** Between eight and ten years old.

**By Whom?** Either parents if possible, or best possible person.

*Preparation and Build-up:*

1. Meet with your spouse to strategize and organize.
2. Build-up: Tell child, *"When you turn 9 you are going to learn the most awesome and amazing thing in the world."*

***Key Messages***

**1. You are a loved gift that came from the love between Mom, Dad, and God.**

**2. Human beings are the most awesome and sacred things in the world.**

*"So, Mary, what do you think is the most awesome and amazing thing in the whole world? . . (Entertain lots of possibilities, until you can conclude that people are the most amazing things on the planet) . . . Why do you think people are the most amazing thing God creates? (Elicit responses aimed at "because they are smart, they can be our mends," etc) There are lots of things we "love", like ice cream, horses, and roller coasters. But people are unique and sacred. Only people can really listen, understand, love, and be friends. People really are the most awesome and amazing things in the world*

**3. People are created primarily to share in God's love.**

*Why do you think God decided to create people in the first place? Yep, God created people because God is all about love and so God created people out of an overflow of love. In fact, that is how God created everybody. God created every person who is alive to love lots of people and be loved by lots of people. .*

**4. God invites some people to love through a vocational path of singleness.**

Talk about how single people and those in religious communities live a life of love. Mention the freedoms and the burdens that come from this vocational path.

**5. God designed it so that some people share in a unique vocation called married life.**

*God also made a very special relationship for just two people to have. Way back in the beginning of the Bible, there is a story of God creating two different kinds of people in God's own image and likeness. Do you know what those two kinds of people are? Black and white? Short and tall? Nice and mean? Actually, the two kinds of people God made are males and females. That is why you probably have noticed that, while all people are unique, boys are often different than girls. So God told us that, when a male and a female get married, something really special happens. They have a chance to experience a really special form of love. How do Mom and Dad show each other that they love each other? Yep, pretty much all the same ways that other people do. But God gave married people an extra special way to show each other love. This is a way of hugging and kissing and sharing their bodies that is so amazing and powerful that the Bible calls it becoming "one flesh." Most people today call it "making love". It's like moms and dads almost feel like they are the same person. It is unbelievably wonderful.*

**6. Lovemaking by a husband and wife is where babies come from.**

*But that is not all. You know how we said people are the most amazing thing in the world? If that is so, then learning how people get created would probably be the most amazing and awesome thing in the world to learn, right? This is a good place to pause and find out what your child already knows about where children come from. "Do you remember where Michael (any child recently born that your child knows) came from? (the hospital, his mom's belly, etc.). You are right. Babies come out of their mom. So how did they get in Mom's body? If you are not comfortable continuing to talk freely you might choose to purchase one of the recommended books that are designed to be read to children and insert reading that book about here. Otherwise, continue:*

*Dad: Well, Mary, here is where it all comes together. God made it so that moms and dads who really love each other can mix with God's love and make a miracle- a new live person. Isn't that pretty exciting? Well, when moms and dads have that really special way of hugging and kissing, that "one flesh" kind of love, or "lovemaking" that is wonderful and amazing, God's love sometimes "overflows" and creates a new person inside the mom. Now we want to tell you how a husband and wife do this. It might not sound to you as wonderful as mom and I have been telling you it is. That is because you aren't old enough and married yet to think it sounds fun. The important thing for right now is that you know what it means when moms and dads have one flesh. This is another way of saying "when moms and dads make love 'I.*

*Mom: Sometimes when a husband and wife are all alone and when nobody is around they have a very special kind of "special time" with each other. Usually after spending a long time talking, cuddling, and kissing they feel so close that they decide to do something really exciting and special. They take off their clothes and snuggle and kiss for a long time. Then the husband puts his penis inside of his wife's vagina. It feels really wonderful and makes the husband and wife feel really close with each other. When this happens a liquid comes out of the husband's penis. It doesn't have any pee in it, but it does have something called sperm. Sperm are so small you can't even see them, but they move into me. Sometimes there is an egg waiting inside the wife. When the sperm and the egg come together, a new baby is created; it starts to grow on the inside of the woman's uterus. This is a place inside of a woman's body next to her stomach. If it stays healthy, then it grows up into a baby about 9 months later.*

- 7. Lovemaking is a special gift given to husbands and wives to help them stay close.**  
Emphasize that this very special and unique way of giving and receiving love is a gift God gave uniquely to married couples.
- 8. Lovemaking and having children are designed to happen in families.**

**\*\*\* Messages 9-12: Embracing the Fall with Love and Truth \*\*\***

- 9. We need God's help to live our sexual lives according to God's plan.**  
Clarify that we can only have pure and passionate sexual lives when we let God live at the center of our being.
- 10. God is at work loving and redeeming situations that involve married couples, divorce, adoption, and single parenting.**  
*This item should be tailored to the life experience of your child and family. Explore how your child feels about marriage, divorce, adoption, and single parenting. Discuss how God is always at work in every situation. Therefore, we are never in a position to helpfully judge another person.*
- 11. God is at work in the lives of people with homosexual attractions.**  
*Mary, odds are good you will, over time, start to feel attracted to different boys. Yet, while most of your sexual feelings will probably be for boys, it is pretty common to have a few curious thoughts and feelings now and then about other girls. That is really common, so don't worry about it. However, some girls will develop feelings for girls and have a hard time developing feelings of attraction for boys. Sometimes these girls want to and go ahead and get help and can find some feelings for guys. But sometimes they cannot. When this happens they are called "homosexual". Boys are sometimes called "gay", and girls are sometimes called "lesbian". This usually makes life pretty tough for those girls (or guys) for lots of reasons. Our job is to love and care for people, regardless of who they like or don't like. If you ever hear anyone teasing anyone by calling them "gay" or something, it is important to step in and stop it. This is never OK. We don't know why this happens but come talk to me if you think this is going on for anyone you know. OK?*
- 12. This information is sacred and meant for parents and kids to talk about only. So do not share this information with your friends. And be prepared for inaccurate information.**

***The "Little Talk": Befriending the Changing Body***

**What:** The goal of the Little Talk is to help your child befriend and become an expert on his or her changing body

**When:** At least several months after the big talk.

**By Whom:** All things being equal, the same-sexed parent is best. However, parents should use judgment here and pick the best qualified person available.

***Preparation***

Either pick up a book suited for early teens (see reading list), or identify the significant changes of puberty that you remember. You may need some help to get in touch with your own early adolescent experiences.

## ***The Little Talk***

Create your list of topics to cover, and be sure to include these issues:

For boys and girls: People are very different and grow at different rates (so choose not to compare your growth with others), acne, voice, and mood changes, how to cultivate Modesty, Assertive Boundary Setting, Pornography, Masturbation, Personal Hygiene, Heterosexual and Homosexual feelings.

For Boys: The basics of change and growth (tenderness, testicles, penis, hair, etc.), wet dreams, how to handle untimely erections.

For Girls: The basics of growth (breast, pubic hair, menstruation, mood changes, uneven is normal, etc.), practical matters (clothing, bras, underpants, planning ahead, etc.)

## ***Action Plan***

**Three things that I will do within the next three months are:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## **Resources**

Beyond the Birds and the Bees (G. Popcak, 2001) ISBN: 087973941x

This uses a strictly Roman Catholic approach emphasizing natural family planning.

Growing Up: It's a Girl Thing (M. Jukes, 1998) ISBN: 0679890270

A fun book that handles physical changes of puberty.

How Babies Are Made (A.C. Andry and S. Schepp, 1968) ISBN: 0316042277

A great book with very modest paper cutout illustrations to help with the "Big Talk". Especially good for younger "early adolescents". My favorite of this genre.

How to Talk to Your Child About Sex (L & R Eyre, 1998) ISBN: 1582380570

A good resource with practical "dialogues" that you can use to read to your child.

How to Talk to Your Kids about Sexuality (D. Scherrer and L. Klepacki) ISBN: 0781440750.

Geared towards evangelical readers, this book is up to date and easy to read. It is focused on helping teens to wait until marriage to have sex.

Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning (U.S. Catholic Conference, 1997)

ISBN: 1555864058. A good sourcebook that summarizes Catholic theology around both hot topics and developmental age.

Very theoretical, great source for catechists.

How Was I Born? (L. Nilsson, 1993) ISBN: 0440507677

Great pictures, as in A Child is Born. Gives 2 texts, one for older and one for younger kids. A nice book.

My Body My Self, for Boys (L. & A Madaras, 1995) ISBN: 1557044406

This book helps us zero in on key issues surrounding boys going through puberty. However, there is no moral system to be found. Recommended for parents only as a resource.

Noise (T. Tomeo, 2007) ISBN: 9781932927948

This is an excellent summary of the damage today's media does, and what to do about it.

The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives (D. Willard, 1988) ISBN:

0060694424. This and Renovation of the Heart are two of the best books about how spiritual disciplines can help transform us. I recommend you read these with available study programs; he is not easy to read and digest.