



## Raising Sexually Healthy Children

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### Introduction

Raising sexually healthy children does not mean introducing the concept of human sexuality right away or moralizing behavior before they even understand about their bodies. It is not about the swimming sperms and the waiting ova. Helping children develop healthy sexual behavior and attitudes is goes further discussing the biological, psychological and moral implications of sexual relations. Raising awareness begins with a healthy body sense, a proper view of sex and the value of intimacy, and openness in a relationship. It is rooted in the development of a healthy sense of self and self-care.

Children first learn about body sense through touch. The experience of touch and the development of intimacy begin from infancy. The important things that children experience about physical pleasure and pain: Touch is learned. The ability to pay attention to one's sensations, emotions, body shape, and movements, in the present moment, without the mediating influence of judgmental thoughts is referred to as body sense. Simply put, it is knowing and understanding one's body and all the natural processes. It is composed of sensations like pleasure, pain, warmth, comfort and emotions like happy, sad, or threatened [1-5].

During infancy the baby experiences sensual delight when parents massage the legs with oil, bathes them or sniff their neck or arms, rub their noses on their cheek or tummy and tickle their tiny little feet. The concept and understanding of care is established early in life. All the things that parents or caregivers do that give them a pleasurable sensation is teaching the child a valuable lesson about touch and about another person's touch. When, why and how it is done to them goes a long way to adulthood translating itself about who cares for her and how they respond to her needs.

Babies respond differently from one another. All baby boys and girls have reflexive sexual responses in place early on from infancy. Baby boys have more conspicuous sexual responses such as erections. As babies grow, they begin to understand their bodies more and identify how they behave and feel accordingly. Stereotyping behavior and or emotions as right and wrong contributes to misinformation of the body's natural responses, deprives them from developing appropriate behaviour and contributes to the lack of understanding of affectionate expressions and gestures. Babies observe and learn from their parents' responses. Babies are extremely sensitive to non-verbal communication and touch. Being aware of the child's responses to your touch is also important.

Fixating on right-ness and wrong-ness is relative to culture, religion and tradition. Love and care transcends all cultural expressions of affection. What every child needs to learn is to develop sufficient sensitivity to see for them what is appropriate in any given situation. It transforms into the capacity for intimacy that crosses all cultural barriers and levels of social classes [6-10].

Parents or caregivers need to convey age appropriate information that a child can handle; not just the technical aspects of sexual behavior but provide proper guidance and maintain an open communication. It is necessary in developing skills for managing peer pressure later in life.

The first lessons on Intimacy are nurtured by how parents or caregivers are able to relate appropriately to a child. The ability of the caregiver to respond to the needs of the child lays the foundation for communication, connection and emotional clarity. Infants identify with their parents' style of caregiving.

### Gesture Teaches the Baby a Profound Lesson

Expressions of love and trust are naturally observed from the day babies are held in their parents' arms. Activities such as the experience of feeding, bathing, the manner by which a parent cuddles or feeds, hums a lullaby or puts an infant on the bed play a significant role. Bonding with a child encompasses a degree of comfort and satisfaction creating a sense of spiritual and emotional connectedness. It sends an important message about touch and intimacy. Every gesture teaches the baby a profound lesson on gentleness and unconditional love.

In adulthood, intimacy is more than physical connection and or sex. Bonding between couples includes the feeling of being emotionally and spiritually connected. It encompasses a degree of comfort, passion, romance and a feeling of closeness and exclusivity with a particular partner which is referred to as emotional intimacy. It is essential in nurturing physical intimacy and spiritual and emotional bonding.

How parents regard their children is a big factor. Children learn the facts of life concomitant with love, empathy, respect, trust and commitment. The important thing is to incorporate these values into your discussions. Raising confident children helps them learn how to be compassionate and kind in future relationships. Traumatic and abusive childhood experiences tend to linger and influence how children respond in future relationships. There is a significant difference between gentle caring and abusive parenting.

The essence of body space is learned when parents show respect for the child's need for boundaries. Respecting the child's space from infancy is necessary. Most common example is when a child does not want to be kissed or wants to dress up on their own. That desire must be respected. When parents respect the boundaries set by the child they learn to respect their own personal space and boundaries. In effect they learn how to say "NO". They learn not to allow other people to dominate their personal space or needs which results in being attentive to their own needs first [11-18].

Body space awareness refers to recognizing and establishing healthy boundaries. Not all babies want to be cuddled as much as other infants. Not all infants are open to being carried by different

people at a time. Infants have different temperaments needing to be recognized and respected.

## Setting Boundaries Helps a Child Understand the Importance of Body Space

What is the sense of privacy?

Running and roaming around, rolling or lying on the floor totally naked are some of the things that a three year old would enthusiastically and exuberantly do. Toddlers love to barge in wherever you are or follow you everywhere. Children can be taught by showing them certain things that can be done in private or public places. It is fostered when parents respect the child's need to use the bathroom on their own [18-21].

In doing so, the child will understand what privacy means. Where there are boundaries the concept of space is identified. Learning about boundaries, space, and privacy can now be introduced to children.

As the child grows up they need to be given more independence and more decision-making power. Setting standards that are appropriate for children is necessary at certain age levels and the best way to convey good values to children is to spend time with them. Creating structure helps to make them feel safe. Consistency makes children feel stable and secure.

Setting a good example helps children identify the value of touch and see the difference of intimacy versus sexual pleasure alone. Forming happy and loving relationships are first seen from their parents' hugs and passing kisses. The manner how couples relate and express feelings and gestures of affection with one another largely determines how children will. Kindness and thoughtfulness are seen and felt. Children learn how to ask and respond appropriately in relationships over time.

Raising sexually healthy children is treating them with respect and empathy. Gender related concerns include avoiding stereotyping behaviour for boys and girls. It could lead to unhealthy understanding and the lack of confidence and comfort in discussing sex related matters. Often begins with how to call their body parts. Parents must be comfortable with the appropriate terms used. Withholding the proper names of the genitals implies it as taboo.

Intimacy includes the capacity to express emotions with clarity and ease. Young boys who grew up in homes with least physical and emotional closeness experience difficulty with intimacy and inability to express affection in a non-sexual way. Discomfort in forming and maintaining relationships. Sexually healthy boys are able to recognize his own feelings. Foster empathy and teach boys and girls they have a right to say wait or no. Encourage boys to express their full range of feelings including tears, pain, fear, humiliation, failure and rejection as well as love, joy and need. Appreciate and affirm them when they are kind, gentle and considerate of others.

Low self-esteem and poor body image are common problems with women. Bodies are beautiful regardless of figure. Whether boys or girls sexual problems can be prevented by helping children revel in their body. Girls have a right to say "NO" to unwanted advances including those of her parents. Empower a child by respecting boundaries. A child who is obliged to submit to hugs and kisses may grow up to be a woman or a man who cannot refuse or say no. In families where effective communication occurs, children show greater confidence. Poor parent-child communication only hinders the child's

ability to understand sexual matters. A child gains a better understanding and the ability to understand true intimacy.

A child who develops a strong sense of self and respect for one's body sense and recognizes space tends towards respecting the feelings and bodies of other people. Children develop learning thoughtfulness, respect and courtesy along the way which flows in all aspects of behaviour in adult relationships.

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