

SEXUALITY EDUCATION: WHAT TO TEACH, WHEN

Adapted from Linda van Rooyen and Nelia Louw, *Sexuality Education: A Guide for Educators*, Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik, 1994), pp. 142-154, Linda van Rooyen and Matthew Ngwenya. *Sexuality Education: From Babyhood to Adolescence*, (Pretoria: Kagiso, 1997), pp. 21-23, and Medical Institute for Sexual Health, *Guidelines for Sexual Health Education K-12* (2007).

Birth to age 2 ½

Affective (emotional)

Accept the child's sex
Always refer to the child's sexuality in a positive manner.
Allow touching and examining of genitals
Praise the child as boy or girl

Cognitive (intellectual)

Use correct terminology for genitals (penis, vagina), indicating respect for private parts of body
Help child understand that his/her body is precious, should be kept healthy and clean

Ages 2 ½ - 6 years

Affective (emotional)

Speak to child about feelings, including anxiety and fear
Explain why he or she need not be afraid if they see and hear warnings about sexual abuse and AIDs
Allow curiosity about the opposite sex, giving normative guidance

Cognitive (intellectual)

Answer questions – only what the child wants to know and simple enough for him to understand
Use correct terminology – a baby grows in the mother's *uterus*, not her stomach
Differences between male and female: physiology, reproductive system, sexual intercourse, birth
Warn the child against sexual abuse

Normative (values)

Establish moral and ethical values: cleanliness, privacy and propriety, self-control
Respect for the privacy of others
Respect for his own and other people's bodies: not naked in public, no games with sexual organs
The principle of forgiveness
Honesty and openness: the child should tell an adult of anything that makes him or her feel uncomfortable
Responsibility and accountability

Ages 6 – 12 years

Affective (emotional)

Uniqueness of each individual
Similarities and differences between boys and girls
Support, praise, and encourage the child
Avoid overstimulation and too much emphasis on or exposure to sex: TV, reading matter, conversations.

Cognitive (intellectual)

Answer questions
Create opportunities to convey information
Human reproduction in more detail
Knowledge of sexual abuse (pedophile, assertiveness techniques, reporting, preventive measures)
Knowledge of AIDs, conveyed simply, to prevent anxiety and fear: how one can, can't get the virus
A child's choices should be guided by parents and other trusted adults
The onset and length of puberty differs for different individuals
Show a child that confusion is understandable

Normative (values)

Privacy and propriety: limits to nakedness, touching own genitals in public, sexual experimentation
Remain bodily pure and chaste
Respect for his own and other people's bodies
Self-control
Responsibility and accountability
Biblical norms

Ages 12 – 18 years

Affective (emotional)

Communicate with the child: verbally, body language, appropriate forms of physical contact
Respect child's privacy
Respect child's sexual development
Guidance about right and wrong

Cognitive (intellectual)

Discuss "growing up," the coming changes of puberty: physical, spiritual, mental, intellectual, emotional
Physical and hormonal changes during puberty can affect but do not control emotions
Recognize growing attraction to the opposite sex, but discuss lack of physical and psychological readiness for parenthood
People with a healthy body image recognize and accept variations in body shape and type
Sexual intercourse should take place only between a man and a woman married to each other
Realities of sex in an imperfect world: contraceptive use, abortion, teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse and rape, homosexuality, prostitution and other forms of deviant behavior, sexually transmitted diseases

Normative (values)

Respect for the holiness of life
Respect for his/her own and others' bodies
Self-control
Understanding the order of creation and being obedient to God's instructions to man and woman
Chastity and the negative effects of sexual promiscuity: warnings against being too intimate too soon
Responsibility
Total commitment in holy matrimony