

Healthy Sexuality = Abuse Prevention

“Show me a child who knows nothing about sexuality, and you’ve just introduced me to my next victim.”
~from a perpetrator of child sexual abuse

You may wonder, what does healthy sexuality have to do with child sexual abuse? Unfortunately, perpetrators target children who have little or no knowledge about their sexuality. Those children don't have the proper language to describe or understand what may be abusive types of touching and are not likely to be comfortable or have open communication with their parents or other adults about anything sexual. In addition, children that are taught (either implicitly or explicitly) that their private parts are dirty or shameful will be unlikely to tell someone if they are being abused and may feel even more shamed and guilty as a result of their victimization.

Nurturing healthy sexuality in children involves giving positive messages about bodies and sexuality in an age-appropriate manner while giving clear and accurate information. You may have received negative messages about sexuality as a child which you have carried into adulthood. It is important to realize that before you can nurture healthy sexuality in children, you may need to work through some of your own discomfort surrounding sexuality first.

Another reason why nurturing healthy sexuality in young children is important for abuse prevention is because many children are sexually abused by older children or adolescents. According to studies, 30-50% of abusers are under the age of 18 (Rogers & Tremain, 1984). Giving children positive messages about sexuality will not only prevent them from becoming victims of abuse, it will teach them to respect the sexuality of others. Abuse prevention programs such as Care For Kids also teaches empathy, a characteristic that perpetrators of abuse have been found to lack. In addition, to be able to recognize what sexual behaviors between children are potentially abusive, adults must first learn what behaviors are a normal part of childhood development.

What is healthy sexual development? What behaviors should my child be exhibiting and at what age? [Click here](#) to find out what behaviors are healthy from age 0 to 18.

What kind of messages did YOU receive about sex or sexuality growing up? Learn how to pass on POSITIVE messages to your children.

[Click here](#) for a worksheet on Growing Up Sexually Healthy



The New York Times Sex Ed for the Stroller Set

By JODI KANTOR
Published: November 17, 2005

[Click here](#) to view this article

If you are concerned about a specific child, or if you have questions about this material, call the Collins Center at (540)434-2272.



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*This resource is a project of the Collins Center, serving Harrisonburg & Rockingham County, VA
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Nurturing Healthy Sexual Development™

Nurturing Healthy Sexual Development™

A Program of Prevent Child Abuse Vermont

This training helps adult participants better understand the sexual development of children, and how to respond to children's sexual behaviors and questions in ways that promote healthy development. This training also recognizes that a crucial component of nurturing healthy sexual development is protecting children from sexual abuse. Participants will gain an understanding of the scope of child sexual abuse and the relationship between healthy sexuality and child sexual abuse prevention.

Participants will learn to:

- Identify normal sexual behaviors of young children.
- Respond to young children's sexual interactions.
- Respond to young children's questions about sexuality.
- Identify and report suspected child abuse.
- Make the connection between healthy sexuality and abuse prevention
- Identify appropriate and accurate sexuality information and education

To learn more about how to nurture healthy sexuality in children, a one-day program provided by the Collins Center is now available to groups of adults and other organizations. This training is particularly helpful for parents, early childhood educators and other professionals working with young children. If you are interested in scheduling a training or want more information about Nurturing Healthy Sexual Development™, please call the Collins Center.

Quotations from childcare and sexual violence professionals about Nurturing Healthy Sexual Development...

- "I learned the importance of teaching children the correct names for their body parts, knowing molesters target young children that have no sexual knowledge."
- "I would definitely recommend this training to all childcare professionals."
- "It helps me realize the benefits of sex positive messages towards children."
- "This training helped me understand the sexual developmental stages of the kids I work with. I think anyone working with kids needs this knowledge so they understand what behaviors are healthy and what warrants concern."

Answering Your Child's Questions About Sexuality

Tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics

The Preschool Years

The School-age Years

Teachable Moments

Other resources:

From Toni Cavanagh Johnson, PhD:
(available at www.TCavJohn.com)

Understanding Children's Sexual Behaviors: What's Natural & Healthy

Helping Children With Sexual Behavior Problems: A Guidebook for Professionals and Caregivers

Answering Difficult Questions: The L.A.S.T. Method

Click here for a program brochure

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