



Teaching the Way of Love

Parenting With the Heart of Christ

For parents whose
children are
approaching puberty.



Sex education, which is a basic right and duty of parents, must always be carried out under their attentive guidance, whether at home or in educational centers chosen and controlled by them. (Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality #43)

Most parents consider human sexuality to be one of the most difficult (if not the most difficult) subjects to talk about with their children. The mere thought of having to discuss the facts of life and love with one's children seems terrifying because the stakes are so high. What is said, or not said, directly impacts their children's future relationships and marriages.

Over the past 40 years, many parents have been lulled into believing that their children are learning the facts of life and how to make good relationship decisions at school. They have become content – and a bit relieved – that the “experts” in health and science classes have done this job for them. Unfortunately, many parents soon realize that essential information about what is truly right and good has not been taught. They become painfully aware that the value neutral approach used by the school was too complex and lacked any moral direction.

This is the reason why the Catholic Church has tirelessly taught that parents are the primary educators for their children in matters of love and life. She understands that human sexuality education involves much more than one discussion about body parts. She knows that youth will approach the responsibilities attached with puberty (hygiene, sexual attraction and self-control) based on what they learn in their homes. She recognizes that a proper understanding of human sexuality can only happen when moms and dads take the lead in this education. But, how can parents meet this expectation when they have no idea how to begin?

Even though human sexuality education appears complex, there is an approach that will make the task

much easier. It is called the KISS principle. The KISS principle was coined by Clarence “Kelly” Johnson who was a lead engineer for the Lockheed Corporation in the 1940s. At that time, Lockheed designed the most sophisticated planes and jets the world had ever known. As the chief engineer, Johnson had to find ways to explain the complexity of these jet engines to every mechanic in the field who would have to fix one. He challenged his fellow engineers to come up with step by step directions that explained each aircraft. Breaking down each engine's design into small, straightforward parts made it possible for Lockheed to advance aerodynamics throughout the world.

Explaining human sexuality can also be simplified when it is broken into manageable parts. A sound understanding begins with an explanation of and respect for the human body that God created in two genders; male and female. It expands with information about God's plan for growth and development; that males and females grow from infants into adults. It continues with an appreciation of fertility as a gift from God. And it culminates in a detailed explanation of and reverence for the unique and profound way that God physically unites a husband and wife to make a baby.

Parents need not fear educating their children in God's wonderful plan for the creation of life through the love of a husband and a wife. The necessary information can be clearly provided with great dignity at the appropriate time when a simple, three step approach is followed. The first step includes the development of respect for one's body. The second step is the understanding of the physical and emotional changes that occur when a child becomes an adult. And the final step is the appreciation for the gift of fertility and its holy expression within marriage. Let's take a more detailed look at these three steps.

From the DVD (WATCH THE CLIP THAT CORRESPONDS WITH THIS SEGMENT.)

Every child is _____, therefore every child should receive _____ instruction.

Each time you talk about human sexuality with your child you must include the _____ dimension.

Connect human sexuality with _____.

Information about human sexuality must be provided with great delicacy but clearly at the _____ time.

The stair step approach includes three steps.

Step One: teach your child about the _____ changes that will occur and tell them your _____.

Step Two: teach your child about the gift of _____.

Step Three: explain the intimate details of _____.

Continue the Discussion

Read and reflect on the following questions and examples.

1. Did you learn about human sexuality in a simple or complicated way? Explain.
2. How does the stair step approach make the sharing of information about human sexuality more simple?
3. How do your children benefit from learning this information from you first?
4. Why is it important to share this information with your children over several conversations?
5. What are some concrete ways that you can reduce your anxiety or fear about sharing this information with your children?

Make a Plan

Like the stair step approach the plan for this activity involves three steps. The **first step** is to learn (or relearn) the basic facts about the reproductive system and answering the questions below. You can do that by watching the DVD clip entitled Growing in the Way of Love – A Fertility Appreciation Workshop. This presentation is designed for parents and ***should not be viewed by youth***.

Date that I watched the DVD clip. _____

What is the purpose of puberty?

What gift do we receive as a result of puberty?

What does the term complementary mean?

In what ways do the male and female reproductive systems differ?

Life begins at conception. How many days pass between conception and implantation?

The **second step** is to go through the parent child packet that is designed to help you in your actual discussion with your child. This packet can be found in the appendix of this workbook and an additional copy of it can be downloaded at <http://www.twl4parents.com/parent-child-packet>. We recommend that you complete the packet in this workbook first and then work through the copy that you download with your child.

Date that I completed the parent child packet. _____

The **final step** is to share this information with your child when he or she is ready. Remember to download an additional workbook for your child to complete under your guidance. Share this information over the course of several conversations.

Date that I will begin sharing information with my child. _____

Points that I should emphasize when I share information with my child.

1. Fertility is a gift that is given to us during puberty.
2. When a person is fertile, they are capable of creating a new life that will last forever.
3. Men have constant fertility. Women's fertility is not constant.
4. God designed males and females to be different from one another on purpose. The differences between them allow them to give and receive love in a very special way and to create new life.
5. The differences between males and females are meant to be complementary.

With the creation of man and woman in His own image and likeness, God crowns and brings to perfection the work of His hands: He calls them to a special sharing in His love and in His power as Creator and Father, through their free and responsible cooperation in transmitting the gift of human life: "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it. Thus the fundamental task of the family is to serve life..."

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Bishop of LaCrosse
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