



Newsletter – JUNE 2010

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What I would like the schools to help me teach my children

about sex for life.

JH is now in her 40s, and a mother of 4. She tells of how both her parents procrastinated and waffled when asked by their daughters about sex. She was in her late teens before her elder brother sat her down with her sisters, and spoke to them about the basics of sex. She related how when their prying father eaves-dropped on them and tried self-righteously to admonish the brother for “talking this kind of things” to her sisters, her brother was bold and confident enough to “tell my father off, and scolded him for shirking his responsibilities . My father meekly retreated.”

Lately, I heard that the (Catholic) Family Life Society’s program of “Family Education for Schools” were among those programs not accepted by the Ministry of Education for teaching in Secondary schools. This sets me thinking about what I would like my children, all children, to know about sex and family, before they are.... say 18 years of age.

Armed with hind-sight wisdom, this is my wish list.

First , all children should know the basic anatomy of human beings, learning the right names for the right body parts. This must take place at home as well as in early primary school. Too many children have gone into their teens still referring to their various body parts with names they learn as a baby, a little ashamed, and never felt comfortable with their own bodies. This, I think any parent can and should learn these, be comfortable, and then teach their young children.

2. I would also like to teach them the process of procreation ,- of insects, animals, and of humans, from sexual intercourse to the birth of a child. They should learn that procreation is a very strong natural instinct of all living things, essential for the survival of their species. That any specie still existing today means it had developed a viable procreation capability. Plants procreate. Fishes procreate, animals procreate, and they added to the diversity of this glorious world we live in. Schools can also help parent teach and reinforce this.

3. Then they should know about the mental and emotional aspects of sexual development into maturity, of growing into an



adult. They should be assured that research has shown that at puberty the human mind undergoes a major period of disjointedness, and then transformation, into balanced adulthood. Teenagers should also be told of the influences of hormones on the emotions of a person through the years. Emotion is also a very important element in a lasting human pair bonding relationship.

4. Respect of self

Young people should be taught early, the respect of self. Teenagers should be taught that we are human beings, we are not just animals. I would give the example of all animals mating on maturity as long as they can find a mate, usually without much regard to with whom they mate. In the wild, animals are known to be selective and would prefer not mating with their own family members. Domesticated animals, limited by mankind in their freedom and sexual activities, breed indiscriminately often with their parents and their siblings. Their only requirement is that the animal of the other sex is in heat. This is not the behavior of human beings. Here schools, parents and religious organizations should co-operate and teach this aspect of sexual education.

Christians, Muslims, believe that they are noble children of God.

Buddhists, Hindus, and Taoists believe that being born as human beings, they have attained a high level of re-birth, not to be easily thrown away, by behaving like animals.

Even atheists believe that they are nobler than animals, and aspire to lead their social lives as responsible social beings.

As human beings, in the same way as we are able to manage our feelings and control our tempers, we are able to manage our physical urges and not demand or expect immediate gratification. We are capable of controlling our sexual urges. Parents and their respective religious organizations are more suited to teach this. Schools should generally endorse and be supportive of what the students' families and respective religions have taught them.

5. I also feel that it is important that all children being taught the respect of the other person. A boy should learn that the girl he may take a liking to, or have an infatuation over, is somebody's child, sister and a person in her own right, with a future, to seek her own happiness for a life ahead. She is not a plaything to be taken advantage of physically, just to satisfy his own more basic urges. A boy or man does not have the right to force himself physically or coerce her psychologically regarding a relationship.....and vice versa for a girl/woman. Here again parents have the main teaching role.

6. Human babies have a long childhood of dependence on adults, and consequently need a long partnership between their natural parents to be able to mature into all-rounded adults. It is therefore important that one chooses one's partner with this long term relationship in view. To have an incompatible person as your long term partner will mean a very long and challenging life experience, not likely to be happy or easy. Successful societies have developed cultures honors and supports permanent pair bonding.

They should learn that as a social being - we have a responsibility to society. A union between a male and a female is not "a private affair between consenting adults". Society is involved. In all cultures, Taoists, Hindus, Muslims. Maori, when a young man and a young woman get together in marital union the families and often the whole community is involved, recognizing, accepting and supporting

the relationship. The sexual act is related to procreation and is a continuation of the society, the race, the culture to which the couple one belong.

7. I would like them to learn that the natural, most common, and most socially beneficial relationship between adults is between a male and a female –a heterosexual relationship. There are some individuals who, in search of higher spiritual life objectives, opt for life-long celibacy.

There are also some people who through life experiences found that a relationship with someone of similar sex less stressful, or more gratifying, and more suitable for their temperament and emotional needs. These relationships are physically unable to have off-springs of their own and the majority are unlikely to form lasting family groupings that will be assets to the larger society.

Similarly, medical science today has made it possible for a woman to conceive from anonymous donor sperm. Economic and social conditions also made it possible for her to be financially capable of bring up her own children. This “life-style choice” again is not ideal, nor is it beneficial to society in the long term. A child needs the love, affirmation and role models of both father and mother to grow into a balanced adult.

8. STDs. Young people should also learn about the various kinds of STDs, how they are transmitted, and the various ways how infection can be avoided and prevented. They should know the short and long termed costs, including social costs of these diseases. Here is a good juncture to also reinforce what the different religions teach about sexual promiscuity. Schools can teach this clinically without fear of being accused of bias.

It is our Asian way to teach our young and equip them for life with a set of “knowns”, “values” and rights and wrongs”. Later as they grow older, matured, they are free to explore, to put to test, to rethink what they have been taught and decide if they would like to internalize them. We do not leave our children to grow up “valueless”, “rudderless”, hoping that they will discover the rights and wrongs the hard way, by random bitter living experience. This method of learning will be too costly for them, and too wasteful a practice for most societies.

All our children, in the process of growing into stable, participating, and contributing adults, are entitled to this information, this education. A comprehensive program like this should be able to cut through all, but the most fanatic religious differences. Government of the people should not fear or backwards to pander to the imagined fears of a vocal non-religious minority.

Parents, schools, and Church (organized religion) must not shirk, but combine to provide our future generations with this education.

article bymark

The opinions expressed in the article are those of the writer, and not necessarily fully endorsed by the CFSM.

Reflection:

What else would you need to do, on your own and in cooperation with others, to educate your children for Christian life?