

# Resource Reviews

To help support parents

with

## Sex and Relationship Education

### INTRODUCTION

Good sex and relationships education (SRE) should properly begin as soon as children start asking questions. The earlier one begins to talk with children about sex and relationships, the easier it is. Children are interested and enthusiastic learners - Mostly it seems it's the adults who need to overcome their giggles and embarrassment.

### THE ROLE OF PARENTS/CARERS IN SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION

Parents have asked many schools how they can best support their child's learning about sex and relationships. This approach is in keeping with the Government's, "Sex and Relationship Guidance"<sup>1</sup>

"Research shows that children and young people want to receive their initial sex and relationship education from their parents and families, with school and other adults building on this later...

Parents are key people in

- Teaching their children about sex and relationships
- Maintaining the culture and ethos of the family
- Helping their children cope with the emotional and physical aspects of growing up
- Preparing them for the challenges and responsibilities that sexual maturity brings

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<sup>1</sup> Sex and Relationship Guidance July 2000. DfEE Ref:0116/2000

However many parents find it difficult to talk to their children about sex and relationships. In particular, fathers rarely take responsibility for giving sex and relationship education to their sons."<sup>1</sup>

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) suggests that parents might want to do the following:

#### "TALK

- To your children. Ask them about lessons at school. Say what your views and values on Sex and Relationships are. Answer their questions.
- To your school, especially if you have concerns. Initially talk to your child's tutor or class teacher.
- To other parents, especially from your community and those with similar beliefs to yourself.

#### LISTEN

- To your children, their questions and wishes.
- To your child's teacher: Clearly understand the school's values, policy and approach to SRE.
- To the opinions of other parents and how they managed this with their children."

#### NB

Answer only what's asked. You don't need to go into too much detail - but don't worry - most children 'switch-off' when they've heard enough. What they don't need/want to know tends to go over their head.

Don't make it too biological - please talk about love and feelings, they're most important.

## RESOURCES

### Where do you begin?

To help you we have compiled a selection of relevant materials and really useful books, which could be used by you as parents/carers to support your children's learning.

The books have been chosen for their accuracy of content as well as being inclusive, well illustrated and easy to use.

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The resources chosen represent a range of what is available and are not a definitive list of all resources about sex education.

### **Background Reading (for parents of children aged 3 -11)**

- "Flight of the Stork: What children think (and when) about sex and family building" by A.C. Bernstein. A series of interviews which help us understand how children aged 3 - 12 think differently about things as they grow. Offers helpful suggestions on how to explain sex, birth, adoption and I.V.F. to children in ways they will understand. A book for parents/carers to provide background reading rather than for reading with children.
- "What's Happening to My Body?" by Lynda Madaras. Frank advice on puberty and its emotional and physical changes. It is aimed at young women but also includes information about boys' development. Likely to be better for parental reading rather than to pass directly to a young person.

### **Our Bodies and Where Babies Come From (For use with children aged 3 -7)**

- "Wash, Scrub, Brush: A book about keeping clean" by M.Manning and B. Granstrom. Aimed at children between 5-7, this book teaches about personal hygiene. Reasons for being clean are given e.g. when discussing showering "as we get older we produce scents that can smell very strong".
- "My Amazing Journey: A first look at where babies come from" by P. Thomas. A simple picture book, which explores the conception and birth of a child. It includes advice to adults on how to use the book and questions for children to encourage discussion.
- "The World is Full of Babies" by M. Manning and B. Granstrom. Storybook for children aged 2-7 that helps them understand that they are part of the animal kingdom and can follow a pattern of development compared with other species. The story starts in the womb, comparisons are made with different gestation times as well as how different babies are born.
- "My Body Your Body" by M. Manning and B. Granstrom. This book aims to show children aged 4 - 7 the different facets of their bodies. It contrasts what is familiar and what is strange and links are made with the animal world.
- "How Did I Begin?" by M. Manning and B. Granstrom. An introduction to the facts of life for young children. It includes illustrations and simple explanations, which invite lots of discussion. A word of warning, you may need to explain that Mum's aren't "put to sleep" for a Caesarean in the way that pets are!

- "Where Babies Come From" by Rosemary Stones, with illustrations by Nick Sharratt. The text is sensitive and accurate and uses absolutely correct terminology throughout. It contains thoughtful, multi-cultural illustrations. The book explains that there are different names for the genitals but "It's a good idea to learn the correct names." Fathers and older brothers and sisters are given recognition for the help and support they can give and the trials of dealing with new babies are recognised too. This book provides a good basis for open communication between adults and children.
- "Mummy Laid an Egg" by Babette Cole. This illustrated book takes a novel turn by having the children put their grandparents and parents right about all the myths that say where babies come from. It provides factual information in a totally "story book" form. The amusing drawings illustrating human bodies explain intercourse at a simple level, which acknowledges the humour of sex.

#### **For use with children aged 7 - 11**

- "Let's Talk About Where Babies Come From" by Robie H. Harris and Michael Emberley. This book is about sexual health and reproduction. 'The Bird' and 'The Bee' lead the reader through written explanations and clearly drawn pictures. The format varies between comic strip and prose in short chunks, which are easily digested. The author appreciates that people may be curious, embarrassed and confused and takes us on a journey to discover the truth.
- "Looking at Your Body - Reproduction and Growing Up" by Steve Parker. This is an illustrated guide with helpful and interesting explanations of how unborn babies develop, birth and growth to adulthood. The photographs are multi-cultural but the illustrations are Euro-centric. This book would be suitable for children 8 -12 years of age.
- "Understanding the Facts of Life" by Susan Meredith. Full of useful and detailed illustrations explaining how our bodies work, reproduction, birth, puberty and growth. It is aimed at children 10 years and over.
- "Hair in Funny Places" by Babette Cole. A picture book format for 9 -13 year old children that provides factual information about the changes that take place at puberty. The story is told through a wise teddy bear, called, "Ted" who discusses both physical and emotional changes that take place.

- "Have you started yet?" by Ruth Thompson, is a book for older junior and secondary school girls. It is about menstruation aimed at young women aged 9 -17. Subjects covered include bras and breasts, sex organs, coping with PMS and a whole lot of 'What if...' questions. Boys may also find the explanations useful.
- "Periods" by Charlotte Owen. A book in the format of questions, statements and explanations. 'It makes you feel like you are talking to a friend, not just reading a book,' - a young woman.
- "Everything You Ever Wanted to Ask about Periods" by T. Kreitman, F. Finlay and R. Jones. This is based on questions asked by girls and includes personal stories about their experiences. Covering questions such as: How do you know when your periods are about to start? What will it really be like?, Who do you tell?, What do you use?, Are you different now? A reminder to parents of the anxieties of approaching and going through puberty.
- "Living with a Willy" by Nick Fisher. This book should engage the most 'street-wise' of young men. It deals with many issues including size, circumcision, erections, hygiene and sex. Curious males (and females) will benefit if this book is left lying around for them to peruse at their leisure.
- "The Puberty Book" by Wendy Darvill and Kelsey Powell. A humorous and accurate account of puberty for children and teenagers. It is clear and easy to read, illustrated with black and white line drawings.
- "It's OK to be You! - Feeling Good About Growing Up" by Claire Patterson and Lindsay Quilter. The subject is introduced by a series of cartoon characters interspersed with factual information about puberty and growing up. The book also contains much quirky humour.

### **Other useful books with younger children up to the age of 10**

- "Billy and the Baby" by T. Bradman and L. Breeze. A book about a young boy whose parents don't want him to feel left out with a new baby on the way. An introduction to where babies come from and family changes as a new sibling arrives.

- "Talking with Children about Illness and HIV" by Children With AIDS Charity (CWAC). Explains sensitively how to talk with children about HIV and illness and provides examples of the sorts of questions children and young people might have and how to answer them. It works from their level of understanding.
- "Care of Henry" by Anne Fine. A book to be used to prepare for the arrival of a new brother or sister - Hugo and his dog Henry have to choose whom to stay with while Mum has a baby. It also addresses decision-making and its consequences.
- "Ruby" by M. Glen. Ruby is the story of a teddy bear whose paw is marked with an "S". Ruby thinks the "S" stands for 'special' and is devastated to find out that "S" stands for 'seconds'. Ruby escapes with the other "S" toys to find an owner. The book looks at issues around difference and acceptance within relationships.
- "Nothing" by M Inkpen. A little creature lies in the attic, alone and forgotten. It can't remember its own name, then the door is flung open...And so begins "Nothing's" search to discover who he really is. A storybook that looks at family cycles and identity.
- "A Huge Bag of Worries" by V. Ironside. A safe way to reassure children that everyone has worries but it's better to talk to someone about them. In storybook form it helps children identify who they can turn to with their worries and develop skills in asking for help.

**For use with children aged 10 and over.**

- "What do you know about relationships?" "Let's Discuss Love, Hate and other Feelings" and "Let's Discuss Sex and Sexuality" by Pete Sanders and Steve. Young people portrayed in photographic illustrations. Subjects are sensitively and carefully explored using text, case studies and illustrated story lines and comic strip formats.

"Self-Esteem for Boys - One hundred tips for raising happy and confident children" by Elizabeth Hartley-Brewer. This book provides useful background reading in helping children through puberty to a happy fulfilled life. It concentrates on difficult and vulnerable stages in a boy's development.

### **RESOURCES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS/DISABILITIES**

Many of the books previously listed could be used by parents/carers working with their children. There are however some specialist resources available, most of which address learning disabilities, and are not all written for parents/carers but could be adapted for their use.

- "Talking Together...About Growing Up: A workbook for parents of children with learning disabilities", by L. Scott and L. Kerr-Edwards. A book with practical activity based work; this is full of clear, relevant information. It includes topics on public and private behaviour, menstruation, masturbation, feelings and looking ahead to relationships. Also included are drawings showing body changes at puberty and advice on keeping safe. Best dipped into rather than followed from beginning to end.
- "Holding On, Letting Go: Sex, Sexuality and People with Learning Disabilities", J. Drury, L. Hutchinson, and J. Wright. A practical book which is specifically directed at parents and other carers. It addresses many stereotypes about disability and sexuality and balances the need for the safety of young people with the development of their choice and empowerment.
- "Sexual Health Education for Children and Young People with Learning Difficulties: A practical way of working" by K. Adcock, and G. Stanley. Although this is a workshop training manual, parents and carers will find information about personal relationships, staying safe, sexual health and sexuality.

- "Sexuality, Learning Difficulties and Doing What's Right" by G. Fairburn, D. Rowley and M. Bowen. A story-telling approach is used to explore the rights of people with learning difficulties to be informed about sexuality, to form relationships and to express their sexual nature. It provides an introduction to discussing the moral issues and they relate to practical decisions.

### **VIDEOS for Special Educational Needs / Learning Disabilities**

- "Janet's Got Her Period". A teaching pack and video for parents and carers of girls and young women with learning difficulties. Positive messages are clearly delivered. The package includes a book containing guidelines for menstrual management.

### **DETAILS OF BOOKS INCLUDED IN THIS DOCUMENT**

"What if...? - Common sense strategies for kids on worries, upsets and scares" by Sally Mumford and Emma MacImmon, published by Vermillion - Random House

"Flight of the Stork: What children think (and when) about sex and family building" by A.C. Bernstein, published by Perspectives Press .

"What's Happening to My Body?" by Lynda Madaras, published by Penguin.

"Wash, Scrub, Brush: A book about keeping clean" by M.Manning and B. Granstrom published by Franklin Watts.

"My Amazing Journey: A first look at where babies come from" by P. Thomas published by Macdonald Young Books.

"The World is Full of Babies" by M. Manning and B. Granstrom published by Franklin Watts.

"My Body Your Body" by M. Manning and B. Granstrom published by Franklin Watts.

"How Did I Begin?" by M. Manning and B. Granstrom published by Franklin Watts.

"Where Babies Come From" by Rosemary Stones, with illustrations by Nick Sharratt, published by Puffin.



"Mummy Laid an Egg" by Babette Cole, published by Red Fox .

"Let's Talk About Where Babies Come From " by Robie H. Harris and Michael Emberley published by Walker Books

"Looking at Your Body - Reproduction and Growing Up" by Steve Parker, published by Franklin Watts.

"Understanding the Facts of Life" by Susan Meredith, published by Usborne.

"Hair in Funny Places" by Babette Cole, published by Jonathan Cape Ltd.

"Have you started yet?" by Ruth Thompson, published by Macmillan Children's Books

"Periods" by Charlotte Owen, published by Hodder Children's Books.

"Everything You Ever Wanted to Ask about Periods" by T. Kreitman, F. Finlay and R. Jones published by Piccadilly Press.

"Living with a Willy" by Nick Fisher, published by Macmillan.

"The Puberty Book" by Wendy Darvill and Kelsey Powell, published by New Leaf.

"It's OK to be You! - Feeling Good About Growing Up" by Claire Patterson and Lindsay Quilter, published by Piccolo.

"Billy and the Baby" by T. Bradman and L. Breeze, published by Harper Collins.

"Talking with Children about Illness and HIV" by Children With AIDS Charity (CWAC), published by CWAC.

"Care of Henry" by Anne Fine published by Walker Books.

"Ruby" by M. Glen, published by Red Fox.

"Nothing" by M Inkpen published by Hodder Children's Books.

"A Huge Bag of Worries" by V. Ironside, published by Macdonald Young Books Ltd.

"Talking Together...About Growing Up: A workbook for parents of children with learning disabilities", by L. Scott and L. Kerr-Edwards published by the FPA.

"What do you know about relationships?" "Let's Discuss Love, Hate and other Feelings" and "Let's Discuss Sex and Sexuality" by Pete Sanders and Steve Myers all published by Watts/Gloucester.

"Self-Esteem for Boys - One hundred tips for raising happy and confident children" by Elizabeth Hartley-Brewer, published by Vermillion-Random House