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# ***Myths About Sexuality Education***

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There are a number of confusions about sexuality education, one of which is defining it as “sex education”. The word “sex” is used in our culture to mean sexual intercourse. “Sexuality” is a much broader word and its meanings include sexual values and decision-making, biology, emotions, gender identity, sex roles, relationships and feelings. It’s often difficult to talk with our children about sexuality, in part because most of us didn’t have parents who discussed it with us. Therefore, we lack models of positive sexuality educators. Also, we may believe some of the following myths.

## **Myth #1 *Kids will pick up what they need to know just by being around.***

Kids will pick up the commercial and exploitive messages that are in the interest of the advertising industry to promote. They will also pick up a lot of misinformation from their uninformed peers. If adults don’t talk about sexuality, children will pick up the message that there is something wrong with feeling comfortable about sexuality. In short, they will have the same kind of information that we had when we were kids, only with more commercial exploitive content.

## **Myth #2 *If you talk with kids about sexuality, they will go out and experiment with sex.***

This myth does not stand up against current research. Recent data shows that adolescents who are well informed and comfortable in talking about sexuality with their parents are most likely to postpone intercourse. And, if they do have intercourse, they are more likely to behave responsibly – showing respect for themselves and their partners and taking care to prevent unwanted pregnancy.

## **Myth #3 *We aren’t providing any sexuality education if we don’t talk about it.***

Our children learn from us by observing. We become models of how to be men and women, to have relationships, show affection, resolve conflict. In these ways, we are the primary sexuality educators of our children. When we avoid talking about sexuality we give them the message that this topic is not proper to discuss, to learn about, to have questions about. Our silence carries just as much weight as our words.

## **Myth #4 *If I don’t feel completely comfortable talking to my child about sex, it’s better not to say anything at all.***

It is natural to be uncomfortable, and indeed it’s likely that almost all parents in our culture will sometimes be uncomfortable talking about sexuality. However, we need not and ought not let this stop us from discussing sexuality with our children. It is true that children will become confused or will pick up mixed messages if we try to pretend we’re relaxed when we aren’t. The best idea is to acknowledge our own discomfort (i.e. “This is hard for me, but I really want to talk with you about...”) and then proceed to discuss the subject anyway. Also, talking about sexuality becomes much easier with practice.