

# HUMAN SEXUALITY

Religious Education & Family Life

GRADES 4/5/6

**PARENT HANDBOOK**



CALGARY CATHOLIC  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

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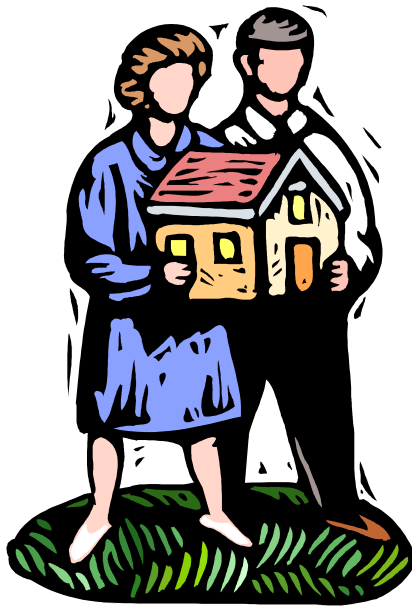
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# ***INTRODUCTION***



**NOTICE TO PARENT OR GUARDIAN  
OF RELIGIOUS PERMEATION**

The *School Act* requires a school board to give notice to a parent or guardian when courses of study, educational programs, institutional materials, instruction or exercises include subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion.

All of the schools in this district are Catholic Separate Schools, the essential purpose of which is to fully permeate Catholic theology, philosophy, practices and beliefs, the principles of the Gospel and teachings of the Catholic Church, in all aspects of school life, including in the curriculum of every subject taught, both in and outside of formal religion classes, celebrations and exercises.

Every course of study and educational program, all institutional materials, instruction and exercises will at all times include subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion.

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## **Parents' Prayer**

*Dear Father of us all, we come humbly before you seeking your wisdom and courage. You have entrusted us with your precious children to nurture and guide, and we ask for your help in being the parents we are called to be. We are grateful for the many joys we continue to receive as parents, and we are challenged by the awesome responsibility we have been given. Help us to be wise and loving, especially as we teach our children about your wonderful gift of sexuality. Grant us what we need to guide them, through word and example, in your ways of loving. We ask this through your Son, Jesus. Amen.*

### **'Male and Female He Created Them'**

“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them...God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.”

*Genesis 1:27, 31*

“Sexuality is a fundamental component of personality, one of its modes of being, of manifestation, of communicating with others, of feeling, of expressing and of living human love. Therefore, it is an integral part of the development of the personality and of its educative process: ‘It is, in fact, from sex that the human person receives the characteristics which, on the biological, psychological, and spiritual levels, make that person a man or a woman, and thereby largely condition his or her progress towards maturity and insertion into society.’”

*Educational Guidance in Human Love,  
John Paul II, Rome, 1983*

“Man and woman have been *created*, which is to say, *willed* by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman. ‘Being man’ or ‘being woman’ is a reality which is good and willed by God: man and woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator. (Cf. Gen 2:7, 22) Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity ‘in the image of God’. In their ‘being-man’ and ‘being-woman’, they reflect the Creator’s wisdom and goodness.”

*Catechism of the Catholic Church #369*

## ***Role of Parents***

“The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to find an adequate substitute. It is therefore the duty of parents to create a family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow men which will promote an integrated, personal, and social education of their children. The family is therefore the principle school of the social virtues which are necessary to every society.”

*“Parents are the first and most important educators of their children, and they also possess a fundamental competency in this area: they are educators because they are parents.”*

*The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*

This Parent Handbook is provided to assist you in talking with your child about sexuality issues, and to provide you with information regarding the human sexuality curriculum in grades 4, 5, and 6. We, as educators, may be the experts in the classroom, but only you have the relationship of love and trust with your child that is the basis of all our work. We depend greatly on your special knowledge of your child, at all stages in his/her development, in order to help us properly provide for his/her educational needs.

Our children develop their values from what we do, but they also develop their values from what we say. Therefore, as parents, we must use each teachable moment to talk to our children about our values. Sexuality education is an ongoing process.

**Sexuality is not just sexual intercourse.** Sexuality has to do with being female or male and the similarities and differences we share. Sexuality looks at how we view our bodies and our relationships with each other; how we grow and change over the years; who we are as women and men (girls and boys); and, of course, how we reproduce. Sexuality is an important part of being human.

**As parents, you are already teaching your children many things about sexuality, and you have been since the day they were born.** Children learn from:

- the way they are touched by others;
- the way their bodies feel to them;
- what your family believes is okay and not okay to do;
- the words that family members use (and don't use) to refer to parts of the body;
- watching the relationships around them;
- who does what chores, and so on.

They are also picking up a great deal from outside the family whenever they watch television, listen to music, talk with their friends, and interact with the world around them.

## ***Role of the Family, Parish, and Community***

Parents, as primary educators of their children, have both the right and the duty to nurture, guide, and prepare their children for the obligations of living and learning outside the home. The Religious Education program in the school supports parents in their efforts by modeling and teaching the truths of the Catholic faith. If this education is to be successful, parents must cooperate actively with the school, be kept informed of the Religious Education program, and support the Religious Education efforts of the school by making use of the structures offered for parental involvement in the school. Good parent-teacher relations contribute to a well-rounded experience for the child.

Ultimately, Religious Education takes place within a community living out its faith in a space and time not limited to the school. Religious Education is the work of a lifetime, aimed at enriching the faith life of students at each stage of their development, and leading them to an eventual adult understanding to which they are able to respond fully.

## ***Religious Education Program Philosophy***

As Catholic Educators, we have a philosophy. It emerges from our faith and it is expressed in our concept of and relationship with God, human beings, our environment, and society. Our philosophy is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

As religious educators, we represent the Church. Thus, our teaching cannot be limited to our own thoughts and opinions. We speak for the Church community, its history, and its divine authority to teach.

“The activity of a Catholic school is, above all else, an activity that shares in the evangelizing mission of the Church; it is a part of the particular local Church of the country in which it is situated, and shares in the life and work of the local Christian community.”

*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School  
The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education  
Rome, 1988*

Regarding the teaching of human sexuality:

“The role of parents is so vital in the basic education of children that no other agency can adequately replace it. The Church and school can only assist and support parents in fulfilling their responsibility for developing moral attitudes and Christian values.”

*Guidelines for Family Life Education  
Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1987*

## ***The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality Catholic Principles***

1. Parents are the primary educators in the area of human sexuality.
2. Pope John Paul II stated, “The family is the primary but not the only exclusive educating community.” He emphasized the importance of parents and educational groups to strive for the “formation of a perfect educating community.”
3. Each person is created unique in the image and likeness of God.
4. All life is valuable and worthy of respect from the time of conception and in every age and condition.
5. The role of Catholic Education is to present “Human Sexuality as a sacred mystery and in accord with the doctrinal and moral teaching of the church.”
6. Sexuality, including the genital experience, is to be valued.
7. Sexual intercourse has a two-fold purpose: unitive and procreative.
8. “Only information proportionate to each phase of their individual development should be presented to children and young people.” As educators, we must make good judgment calls. “The principle of decency” must safeguard the virtue of chastity. “Therefore in passing on sexual information in the context of education for love, the instruction must always be ‘positive and prudent’ and ‘clear and delicate’.

### ***Alberta Learning Guidelines (Directive 4.1.2)***

- Every school operated by a board shall provide human sexuality education to students in grades 4 through 9, and in at least one senior high course required of all students.
- Human sexuality education shall be taught within the normal school day.
- Human sexuality education may be offered through different instructional structures. The goals and objectives outlined in the health curriculum are prescribed, but may be offered through family life or religion classes.
- Parents shall be advised prior to the start of human sexuality instruction of their right to exempt their child from this course component.
- Parent information nights to meet the teachers and ongoing chances for parents to review learning resources and teaching concepts are strongly recommended.
- Schools will provide alternate learning experiences for those students who have been exempted from human sexuality instruction by their parents.



***School Act***  
***Section 50.1(2)***

Pursuant to section 50.1(2) of the *School Act*, you as a parent/guardian may request that your child be excluded from the above-identified instruction, without academic penalty, by having your child either:

- a) leave the classroom or place where the instruction is taking place or where the instructional material is being used for the duration of that part of the instruction; or
- b) remain in the classroom or place where the instruction is taking place without taking part in the instruction or use of instructional material.

In order to exercise this option, you must sign and return the exemption form (Appendix A) page 28 to your child's teacher on or before the date of the instruction indicated on the letter sent to you by your child's teacher. If this form is not returned before that date, your child will be included in the instruction.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this instruction, feel free to contact your child's teacher/principal. Thank you for your continued support

# ***Teaching Human Sexuality in the Calgary Catholic School District***

## ***Guidelines for Teachers***

1. Parents are their children's primary educators.
2. All teachers new to teaching human sexuality in the Calgary Catholic School District must take the "Teaching Human Sexuality" inservice prior to teaching this component of the Family Life Program.
3. Human sexuality is taught in the spring in grades 4 – 9 when rapport has been developed between teachers and students.
4. A letter must be sent home to parents in September, informing them that human sexuality will be taught in their child's classroom later that year, and listing the topics that will be addressed. A second letter must be sent home one month prior to instruction, listing the topics and dates of instruction. Parents have the right to exempt their children from human sexuality instruction. Schools will provide alternative learning experiences for those students who have been exempted.
5. All resources must be approved by the district. Always check the reference for appropriate Catholic content and that information given is compatible with Church teachings.
6. Check the Approved & Not Approved Organizations & Agencies on the Religious Education and Family Life ePD site before booking guest speakers.
7. Preview DVDs. All DVDs at I.M.C. have been approved. If you are using digital materials from other sources, they must be approved.
8. Students in combined grades must be taught human sexuality according to their grade level curriculum only.
9. The school nurse is available as a resource for teachers. The school nurse does not teach curriculum and cannot be asked to teach students human sexuality.
10. Stay within the curriculum guidelines. If the resources go beyond the curriculum for your grade level use only the applicable material.
11. For further information, support, resources, and other help, please contact the Religious Education & Family Life Consultants.

# ***THE CURRICULUM***



# ***The Human Sexuality Curriculum***

## ***Introduction and Background***

Alberta Learning mandated that all schools must implement a new Program of Studies for Health and Life Skills from kindergarten through Grade 9, beginning in September of 2002. Of particular concern to Catholic school districts in our province was the human sexuality component of the Program. In response, Bishop Henry formed a committee to rewrite the grade 4 through 9 human sexuality lessons for use in all Alberta Catholic schools. The committee was to rewrite this component so that our children develop a full understanding of and an appreciation for the awesome gift of their sexuality from a Catholic perspective.

Respectful of their role as primary educators of their children, parents were asked to provide feedback on the new curriculum. Beginning in May 2003, and continuing through February 2004, the Calgary Catholic School District invited parents to take part in focus groups to discuss their common concerns and insights. These sessions provided invaluable feedback and direction, including requests for support of their role as primary educators of their children. Parents also provided written feedback following a pilot of the new curriculum in March 2004, and again following full implementation of the curriculum in the district in May and June 2004.

Parents consistently provided the Calgary Catholic School District with three general recommendations:

- Provide parents with the support they need to fulfill their role as primary educators of their children.
- Continue to teach human sexuality as a comprehensive unit in the Religious Education Program only.
- Create revisions to the curriculum that reflect the concerns and suggestions provided by parents, teachers, and students of this district.

In response, the Calgary Catholic School District has committed to increasing communication with parents through information letters and evenings that provide parents opportunities to more closely examine the curriculum and have their questions and concerns addressed. As well, this Parent Handbook is a direct result of parental request for more support. Parents always have the option of contacting their child's teacher with their questions and concerns. They also can contact the District Religious Education and Family Life Consultant.

The concerns of parents, teachers, and students have been heard, and the curriculum will reflect the feedback the district received. The Calgary Catholic School District will also continue to honour the overwhelming number of parental requests to teach the human sexuality curriculum as a comprehensive unit in the Religious Education program only.

## ***Health and Life Skills Alberta Catholic Schools: Human Sexuality Outcomes Grade 4 – 6***

Prior to teaching this unit, teachers must have taken part in a district “Teaching Human Sexuality” inservice. Letters must have been sent home, informing parents that this instruction will take place in their child’s classroom and inviting parents to call with questions or concerns. This unit is taught in the spring when rapport has been developed between teacher and students.

Teachers are reminded in the introductory pages of this curriculum that “discussing topics on sexuality with young people can be very challenging. It is important to create the climate in which sexuality issues are to be discussed.” **Ground rules** need to be re-established, with emphasis on **mutual respect**. As part of their lesson preparation, teachers are invited to read and reflect on the Scripture texts and church teaching included in the Theological Background of the section for the teacher in the lesson plan. Each lesson begins with a **prayer** and a discussion of a Scripture passage.

“Many young people are very interested in the topic of sexuality, but are not always comfortable asking questions. To facilitate student questions, it is recommended that teachers use the ‘**Question Box**’. The ‘Question Box’ encourages students to ask questions while maintaining confidentiality.

- Remember, teacher responses must always reflect our Catholic tradition.
- Answer questions that reflect the context of the curriculum outcomes. It is important that teachers focus on age appropriate material and use correct terminology.
- If some students need questions answered that go beyond the curriculum outcomes, do not hesitate to refer these questions to the parents, who are the primary educators.
- If you are uncertain as to how to answer a question, let the students know. Research the question and then provide correct information to the student.”

(From: Health and Life Skills Alberta Catholic Schools  
Human Sexuality Outcomes Grade 4 – 9, p.3)

### ***The Nature and Needs of the Learner***

Central to all curricula are the needs of students, and the special way they learn. The Religious Education program, taking this into account, is designed to facilitate an education that builds upon the student’s physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and faith development. The goal of Religious Education is to meet students’ developmental needs at the present time, and equip them to be open to respond to the message of revelation in an authentic, personal way.

## **GRADE 4**

### **Grade 4 Outcome:**

**The student, as a child of God, will describe physical, emotional, spiritual, and social changes that occur during puberty.**

Catechetical Focus:

- We marvel at the complexity of the human body and how God has created its parts to work as a whole.
- God is the author of what makes us male and female.
- God's call to growth involves changes physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Note to the Catechist:

- Puberty means many physical, emotional, and social changes for students. Students begin to question the world around them as they mature in their identity and faith. The students need to know that these changes are normal and not to cause concern.
- During the next few years, their bodies will be rapidly changing at different rates. It is important to develop sensitivity for each other that boys and girls are aware of and understand the changes that occur in each other and that these changes occur at different rates.
- In response to feedback given by parents, menstruation and the reproductive process will not be discussed in depth in the Grade 4 program. Questions related to these processes should be directed to parents.
- Students will be asking many questions. Teachers should be prepared to deal honestly and tactfully with each of the questions.

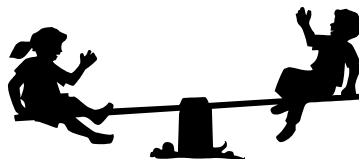
Scripture References:

- Psalm 139: 13-15
- Genesis 1: 27-31
- Jeremiah 1: 5
- Isaiah 49: 1, 14-15

Catechism of the Catholic Church References:

- #355 – 357
- #369

(These passages highlight the goodness, the dignity and equality of the human person who has been created to respond to God's call to love and reflect God's goodness and wisdom to the world.)



## Grade 4 Student Handout

### Puberty: A Time of Change

A marvellous thing happens sometime between the ages of 8 and 18. Our bodies change from head to toe. During this time we experience social, emotional, spiritual and physical changes. This time of change is called **puberty**.

Puberty is the bridge between being a child and becoming an adult. As you cross over this bridge, your body and your feelings change a great deal. You may begin to view your life and your relationships differently. You may have new friends at school and you might find that your parents have given you more responsibilities. These are called **social changes**.

You may find that your emotions change quickly - laughing with your friend on the phone one minute and snapping at your little brother the next. Your feelings might be hurt very easily when someone says something or because of something that happens. You might even discover some emotions you didn't realize you had. These new experiences are due to **emotional changes**.

Sometimes you might find yourself questioning why certain things happen. Why did my friend's bird die? When animals die, do they go to heaven? Such questioning is a sign that you are growing spiritually and so we call this **spiritual development**.

During puberty everyone's body changes. People get taller and some get wider. Boys begin to look like men and girls begin to look like women. Many more wonderful changes happen! We call the growth and development that takes place in our bodies, **physical changes**.

### What Happens During Puberty?

Puberty means you're in for plenty of changes, but it is simply your body's transition from childhood to adulthood. Puberty begins when a very important hormone is produced in our bodies.

There is no exact moment when this hormone is released in everyone's body. We are all different and our bodies will grow and change at different times and in different ways, so no one experiences puberty in the same way and at the same time as someone else. We have to remember this so that we always treat our friends with respect and care.

It is important to learn about the many changes of puberty now, so that when you do go through these changes, you will be able to identify what is happening to you.

**The Physical Changes:** The most noticeable changes during puberty are the physical changes. Puberty causes us to grow taller and gain weight. We have new hair growth, our voices deepen, and acne may develop on our faces and backs. We often find that we need to bathe more often because our sweat and oil glands become more active causing perspiration (sweating) and body odour.

Boys, sometimes develop larger muscles during puberty and their shoulders will broaden. Their lung capacity and blood flow will increase which means that they are likely going to be able to perform better at sports. Hair will begin to grow on their faces, under their arms, possibly on their chests, in their pubic area (between the legs), and their leg hair will get

darker and coarser. The penis will eventually get larger and boys may experience more frequent erections (the penis becoming firm and larger).

Girls' bodies change shape, too. Their hips will widen, and their breasts will grow larger. Hair will begin to grow under their arms, in their pubic area (between the legs), and the hair on their legs will get darker and coarser. During puberty, girls will begin to menstruate. This is the cycle that females experience monthly.

**Emotional Changes:** Along with the many physical changes boys and girls experience, there are many emotional changes. We become more concerned with the way our bodies look. We may feel awkward or embarrassed about the way we look, especially if we are growing and changing not at the same time as our friends. Because of the increased levels of hormones in our bodies, we sometimes become grumpy and we really can't explain why. Usually, we become more emotional and we react to situations more intensely than before. Sometimes, it is very difficult to control our emotions.

**Social Changes:** Our relationships also change during puberty. We tend to look to *our friends* for companionship and advice on things like style and entertainment. What others think of us can be a major concern. For some people, it is really important to fit in. *Our family* is important to us because they guide us in making decisions and they offer us love and support, even though we may try to gain more independence from our parents. Also, we may look to *other adults* in our community as good role models.

**Spiritual Changes:** As we grow older, we become more aware of the world around us. We may ask: Who am I? What is happening to me as I enter this time of change? Why do our bodies need to change? Why do I need to take on more responsibility? Even the way we think, and our interests, will change during puberty. We will be able to think about what might be and not just about what is. As questions start to arise, we need to talk about God's plan for us. It is important to discuss these questions with parents, grandparents, teachers, your parish priest, or other trusted adults. It is through their guidance that we grow spiritually.

Puberty is an exciting time of growth and change. Remember that you are not alone. All your friends will experience the changes that you will, and you can look to the important adults in your life for advice and support.

Enjoy crossing the bridge from childhood to adulthood.





## **Tips for Parents of Grade 4 Students:**

- Begin the conversation at home before instruction begins in your child's classroom. You may need to bring it up, as some children never ask about sexuality.
- The Grade 4 human sexuality program focuses on the changes experienced during puberty. Take the opportunity to talk about these changes at 'teachable' moments. (Menstruation, reproduction, and the reproductive systems are not covered until Grade 5.) Children need to know about the physical changes of puberty before they begin to develop sexually.
- Don't try to cover everything at once, but also don't worry if you think you have said 'too much'. Your child will sift the information, or let it pass – perhaps catching a phrase here or there to ask you later. Keep the conversation going when everyday opportunities arise to talk about sexuality. Children need to be able to talk with you more than once about this topic as they develop and mature.
- Use the Student Handout, "Puberty: A Time of Change" (above) with your child as a follow-up to classroom work. Your child will receive a copy of this handout as part of this unit of instruction.
- Answer questions at the time your child asks. Listen carefully to the question to make sure you understand what she/he is asking.
- Keep the language simple and age appropriate.
- Use correct terms. It is confusing to children to have cute names for some body parts and not others. Teach your children the fact that these private parts are off-limits to others, except a doctor for medical reasons.
- Check out what they already know. They may hear comments or words that they don't really understand. Show your willingness to discuss these by asking what they can tell you about puberty, for example. This encourages communication and also you may correct any misinformation that they have.
- Let your children know what you think, and what standards of behaviour are all right in your house. It is also important to let them know what is socially appropriate/inappropriate, and what to do if they have difficulties or questions. As children mature it is also important to help them understand that other people's standards may be different from theirs.
- Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know" or to let your child know that you're embarrassed. You can say, "I feel a little uncomfortable, but this is important to talk about. Let's find out some answers together." Consult trusted, reliable sources for accurate information.
- Don't be afraid to laugh with (never at) your child. This topic doesn't have to be so serious that you can't enjoy your conversations together.
- Don't forget to stay connected with the source of all life and love. Pray for wisdom, patience, and humour as you embrace your important role of primary educator of your children.

## **GRADE 5**

### **Grade 5 Outcome:**

**The student, as a child of God, will identify what it means to be male and female and describe the creative process involved in the gift of life.**

#### Catechetical Focus:

- We marvel at the complexity of the human body and how God has created its parts to work as a whole.
- God is the author of what makes us male and female.
- God's call to growth involves change.
- Human life begins at the moment of conception and must be respected and protected at all stages of development until natural death.

#### Note to the Catechist:

- In this lesson, students are introduced to the wonderful creative process in the gift of life.
- We discuss the human reproduction system, including menstruation, in wonderment and awe. Human beings, male and female, are pre-designed for relationship that brings forth life.
- When introducing the reproductive system, we keep the terminology simple using age appropriate language.
- Students will be asking many questions. Teachers should be prepared to deal honestly and tactfully with each of the questions.

#### Scripture References:

- Psalm 139: 13-15
- Genesis 1: 27-31
- Jeremiah 1: 5
- Isaiah 49: 1, 14-15
- 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31
- Ephesians 5: 25-29

#### Catechism of the Catholic Church References:

- #372
- #2270
- #2274

(These passages give emphasis to the dignity of life. All life is to be protected from the moment of conception to life's natural end. Left to ourselves we feel incomplete. We are most alive when we live out, in love, our relationship to both God and others, most especially in marriage and family life.)

#### Recommended Resources:

- DVDs: "Just Around the Corner for Boys" & "Just Around the Corner for Girls"  
(**Parents:** These videos are available at the Calgary Public Library)

- Book: The Wonderful Way Babies Are Made by Larry Christenson (ISBN 0 – 87123-627-3)
- CD Rom: Life Begins (Available through Quality Multimedia <http://www.lifebegins.com/> ) – Teachers can only use those sections that are relevant to the Grade 5 outcomes.
- Guest Presentation: Calgary Pro-Life To book a free presentation, please call 403-243-0691 or email [respectyou@calgaryprolife.com](mailto:respectyou@calgaryprolife.com).

## Grade 5 Student Handout

# The Gift of Life

The male and female bodies are marvelous creations of God. It is through the reproductive systems that we are able to share in the creation of new human life. Our bodies are gifts to be respected and cared for, so that when we are married and able to have children, we can do so.

“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27

### A New Human Life

A baby is a very special gift to a mother and father. God created the male and female bodies to be able to join together so that sperm cells may leave the father’s body and enter the mother’s body. There the sperm cells, may meet an egg cell. If a sperm cell and an egg cell join, then a new human life begins. This gift is called conception. A baby begins to develop in the mother’s uterus, which is also called a womb. For nine months the baby has a home in the mother’s womb. The baby is then born, and the mother and the father continue to play a special role in the nurturing of this new little miracle, the baby.

The whole process in which life is created and nurtured is miraculous. God has pre-designed the bodies of both a man and woman to participate in the wonderful creation of life. Let us look at how the body of the man and woman are designed to bring about new life.

### Changes in Puberty

Puberty is a time of change and development that all boys and girls experience in their pre-teen and teen years. In boys, puberty usually occurs between the ages of 10 and 17. In girls, puberty usually occurs between the ages of 9 and 16. This is the time that boys will become more like men and girls will become more like women.

Hormones are the source for puberty. Puberty begins when a tiny gland at the base of the brain, called the pituitary gland, begins producing the hormone, testosterone, in boys and the hormone, estrogen, in girls. These hormones are responsible for the changes that take place in our bodies.

Many changes occur during puberty. The most significant change is the development of the reproductive system. Through the reproductive system, humans share in God’s creation. Children are created through the love of a husband and wife.

When the reproductive system has developed, young men and women are physically able to produce a baby even though they are not yet ready to be parents.

Boys begin to produce sperm cells and girls produce egg cells. These are the reproductive cells that can unite to form a baby. Our bodies are created either male or female, and together they can work to create a new life. The male reproductive system produces and transfers sperm cells to the female reproductive system, which releases egg cells or ovum and provides a safe environment for the creation and development of a new human life.

## **Tips for Parents of Grade 5 Students:**

- See Tips for Parents of Grade 4 Students.
- Use the Student Handout, “The Gift of Life” (above) with your child as a follow-up to classroom work. Your child will receive a copy of this handout as part of this unit of instruction.
- The Grade 5 Program focuses on the reproductive systems, menstruation, and reproduction. There are a number of excellent resources that can help you begin the conversation with your child on these sensitive topics:
  - Angel in the Waters by Regina Doman. A beautifully illustrated, simply written book from the perspective of a child in the womb. Available from Amazon.
  - Book: The Wonderful Way Babies Are Made by Larry Christenson (ISBN 0 – 87123-627-3); Available from Amazon. “Here is a book that will help you teach your children about families, babies, and sexual intimacy. It is designed as a tool for parents to use in passing on to their children an attitude of joy and wonder at God’s gift of life and sexuality.” (NOTE: This book is used in the Grade 5 Human Sexuality unit.)
  - Our Power to Love – God’s Gift of Our Sexuality by Dr. Ruth S. Taylor, Ann G. Nerbun, & Fr. Richard M.”. “This book is a new approach to sexuality education for adolescents and parents, incorporating the physiology of sexual maturing with Pope John Paul II’s theology of the body.” Available from Family Honor, Inc. <http://familyhonor.org/store/>
  - Video: “Just Around the Corner for Boys”. Marsh Media, [www.marshmedia.com](http://www.marshmedia.com) . Available from the Calgary Public Library (DVD J 613.955 JUS). NOTE: This video is approved for Grade 5 classroom instruction.
  - Video: “Just Around the Corner for Girls”. Marsh Media, [www.marshmedia.com](http://www.marshmedia.com) Available from the Calgary Public Library (DVD J 613.953 JUS). NOTE: This video is approved for Grade 5 classroom instruction.

## **GRADE 6**

### **Grade 6 Outcomes:**

**The student, as a child of God, will explore the stages of human development from conception through birth.**

**The student, as a child of God, will explore positive and negative choices that impact the development of human life.**

**The student, as a child of God, will discern life choices that can lead to blood-borne diseases and examine our Catholic response to those who suffer from them.**

**(Please note: students will also review puberty and the reproductive systems as part of the introduction to this unit.)**

#### Catechetical Focus:

- We are created in God's image.
- As Christians, we appreciate our uniqueness, demonstrate sensitivity towards others, and understand that each person is worthy of love and respect.
- We marvel at the complexity of the human body and how God has created its parts to work as a whole.
- Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.
- We see Christ in one another. We are all children of God.

#### Note to the Catechist:

- The focus of this lesson is to help students recognize that new life begins at conception.
- We learn from our Catholic faith tradition the “consistent ethic of life”, which teaches that from the womb to the tomb, life is to be respected.
- To foster a respect for the life of the unborn, we identify the stages of development during the nine months of pregnancy.
- Students will identify blood-borne diseases, the means of transmission, and life choices that can lead to blood-borne diseases.
- As Catholics we treat all people who suffer from disease and affliction with compassion and respect.
- We find in Scripture that Jesus was often moved by compassion and healed people of their afflictions. Note that the Jewish people of Jesus' day kept a distance from people who suffered from blindness, leprosy or paralysis, etc. Sickness and disease was seen as a sign of one's sinfulness; hence people with disease lived in isolation. Jesus touches the sick, heals them, and forgives them.

#### Scripture References:

- 1 Corinthians 6: 19
- Ephesians 2: 10
- 1 Corinthians 12: 26
- Colossians 3: 12 – 17
- Ephesians 5: 1 – 2
- Matthew 25: 36
- Isaiah 49: 1
- Mark 12: 30 – 31

#### Catechism of the Catholic Church References:

- #1730 – 1731
- #2342
- #364
- #1823
- #1829

(These passages give emphasis to being created as beings with a free will. We have the power to make free choices that can lead to life to the fullest or to death and destruction. If we use our intellect and our free will to make life-giving choices we will experience what happiness truly is. Being human, we have the ability to freely reason and choose our actions. We are, however, responsible for the choices we make. Our freedom allows us to grow and mature in truth and goodness. It takes effort and time to become the person we are called to be. Also, we are created in the image and likeness of God and we regard our bodies with dignity and respect. Our bodies are a temple for God's Holy Spirit. Jesus calls us to love one another. Loving actions demand that we be merciful toward one another.)

#### Recommended Resources:

- CD Rom: Life Begins (Available through Quality Multimedia <http://www.lifebegins.com/>) – Teachers can only use those sections that are relevant to the grade 4 - 6 outcomes.
- Guest Presentation: Calgary Pro-Life, especially in conjunction with outcomes on fetal development and respect for life from conception. To book a free presentation, please call 403-243-0691 or email [respectyou@calgaryprolife.com](mailto:respectyou@calgaryprolife.com).
- Video: “Puberty for Boys: Amazing Changes Inside and Out”
- Video: “Puberty for Girls: Amazing Changes Inside and Out” (For Review of Puberty in the Introduction to this Unit.)
- A number of other district-approved videos on puberty are available for teacher use through the district Instructional Materials Centre.



## Grade 6 Student Handout:

### God's Gift of New Life

In marriage, a man and a woman share a special love relationship with each other. You may see a couple holding hands, kissing one another or cuddling. These are signs of affection that a couple shows for one another. The bond of love the married couple shares is capable of bringing forth new life. This is all part of God's great plan.

The possibility of life begins with a love relationship between a husband and a wife. There are times when a husband and a wife show their love for one another through sexual intercourse. It is in sexual intercourse that a husband and wife can express deep love for each other as they join their bodies, minds, and hearts. Through sexual intercourse, a husband and wife can truly give the gift of themselves to each other. It is a way for them to strengthen their love and commitment to each other and their marriage.

During sexual intercourse, the husband's penis becomes erect in order to fit inside the wife's vagina. This very special closeness causes enjoyable physical and emotional feelings for both the husband and wife. The husband's body releases millions of sperm into his wife's body. These sperm cells swim through the wife's vagina, into the uterus then into the fallopian tubes in search of an egg cell to fertilize.

If the sperm finds an egg, then one sperm will be able to join with the egg; the two cells become one. This is the moment of conception and new human life begins. God has fashioned the body of the husband and the wife to create new life. Not all instances of sexual intercourse result in conception, but there is always the possibility.

From the moment of conception, there is a new human life developing in the mother's body. The mother is **pregnant**. This is a very special gift of love for the husband and wife. Precious is this new life and in need of protection and respect.

This new human life is very hard to see at first. It may look like a tiny dot. But the one cell soon begins to divide; it becomes two cells, the two cells become four, then eight cells, then 16, and so on. The baby keeps growing. All this is taking place in the mother's fallopian tube.

It takes three or four days for the developing human life to travel through the fallopian tube into the mother's uterus, or womb. The cells are continuing to divide and the baby continues to grow. Each cell has a very specific purpose. The cells in a person's body carry within their core the person's **genes**. Genes are small information sources. They carry information about the colour of eyes, the shape of a nose, length of feet, the colour of skin, and the gender or sex of the person. So, in that one cell - the one that was created by the union of the egg and the sperm - all the information about the new baby was known. This is a miracle of God's creativity.

Once the baby has made its way into the mother's uterus, the baby will attach itself to the lining that has been prepared to support this new life. This is called **implantation**. A mother's uterus has been created to protect and nourish her baby. The baby is surrounded by fluid inside the **amniotic sac**. The baby stays in this fluid for the full nine months. Nourishment is provided to the growing baby by the **placenta** that is a collection of blood vessels built up at the place where the baby implants itself. The baby is attached to the placenta by an **umbilical cord**. This is the tube, which provides the oxygen and food to the



baby. The umbilical cord is where the baby's belly button will be after birth. The baby will continue to grow and develop in the mother's uterus, for almost 40 weeks until birth. The **pregnancy** will last for almost 9 months.

When the baby is about 4 weeks old, the heart is beating, other major organs are beginning to develop, and the head and spine are starting to take shape. The baby is only about half a centimetre long or half the size of a pea.

At eight weeks, the baby is now about 2.5 centimetres in length. Facial features, arms, legs, hands, feet, fingers, and toes can be seen. The nervous system is responsive and many of the internal organs begin to function.

At 12 weeks, the baby is now almost 8 centimetres long. The muscles begin to develop and sex organs develop. Eyelids, fingernails and toenails form. The digestive system is working and the baby can open its mouth and swallow.

At 16 weeks, the baby is now about 12 centimetres long. The baby blinks, grasps things, and moves his or her mouth. Sometimes the baby will hiccup. Hair grows on the baby's head and body. The baby is moving about in the mother's uterus and the mother can begin to feel the baby's movements.

After 24 weeks, the baby can now inhale, exhale and even cry. The baby's eyes have completely formed, and the tongue has developed taste buds. Most everything that a baby needs to survive after birth is present at this time. For the next three months the baby will continue to grow, gain weight, add strength and develop more fully.

About 38 weeks after the baby's life began at conception, the baby takes up most of the space in the womb. The baby may feel the need to leave its comfortable home in the mother's uterus. The baby is ready for birth.



## Grade 6 Student Handout:

# Twins

Do you know someone who is a twin? Do the twins you know look alike or do they look different? Are they the same gender? Have you ever wondered how twins come to be?

There are two types of twins: fraternal twins and identical twins.

Fraternal twins do not look alike. Fraternal twins can also be different genders. Fraternal twins occur when the mother's body releases two eggs at the time of ovulation. If these two eggs become fertilized by two sperm cells, two babies begin to develop and grow. Because there are two different egg cells and two different sperm, the babies have their own unique features and may also be of a different gender.

Identical twins occur when the woman's body releases an egg cell at the time ovulation and the egg is then fertilized. The fertilized egg then divides into two separate parts. Since it is the same egg cell fertilized by one sperm, the babies look identical in features and gender.

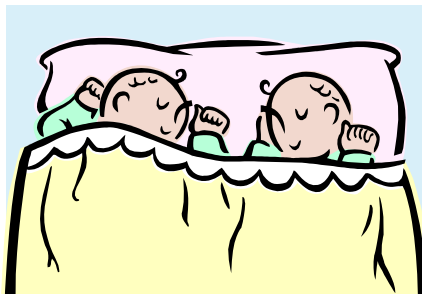
The mother and father may not know for sometime that they are expecting twins. Sometimes the doctor can tell if there are two or more babies by listening to the heartbeat of the growing baby. Ultrasounds can also tell if the mother and father are expecting more than one baby. An ultrasound is a device that takes a picture of the baby growing in the womb.

A mother and a father will be very busy with one baby, but if they have twins, they will be especially busy. Remember, babies cry a lot and do not sleep through the night so parents of newborn twins often need the help of friends and family.

Are there twins in your class?

Are they fraternal or identical twins?

Have you asked them what it is like to be a twin?



# Teacher Information on Blood-borne Diseases

## Blood-borne Disease

Blood and other body fluids are often the source of many infectious diseases. Contact with blood or body fluids of someone carrying such an infectious disease could result in transmission. The common blood-borne diseases are HIV infection and AIDS; Hepatitis B and C.

## What is HIV/AIDS?

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is an infection caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). The virus is spread through contact with blood or body fluids of an infected person. The virus enters the body and begins destroying a special kind of white blood cells called T cells. T cells play a very important role in protecting the body from infections and disease. HIV, however, damages and destroys T cells and the infected person then becomes vulnerable to infections that the body cannot fight off. When the immune system becomes too weak to fight off infections and diseases, we say the person has AIDS. AIDS can eventually lead to death.

## How do you get HIV?

- Sharing intravenous needles or being punctured by a needle may result in the virus being spread.
- Unclean body piercing or tattooing implements may also exchange blood from an infected person to another.
- Helping someone who is bleeding may exchange blood of an infected person or other body fluids, if and only if, the helper has a large open wound.
- Sexual intercourse exchanges body fluids and possibly blood.

## How do you Prevent HIV?

- Take great caution when coming into contact with blood or body fluids.
- Don't share needles.
- Practice abstinence.

## What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis means "inflammation of the liver". Hepatitis is caused by the hepatitis B virus, which is found in the body fluids of an infected person. The only way to know if you have the hepatitis B virus is to get a blood test from your doctor.

Some people will get sick. Some symptoms of the virus are: loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, jaundice, skin rashes, pain in the joints. These symptoms can begin 40-160 days after the person comes into contact with the hepatitis B virus. The illness may last for up to three months.

A person may have the virus and not experience any symptoms, however, they are still capable of passing the virus to others. Presently there is no cure. Approximately 90% of people with hepatitis B will get well and develop lifelong immunity. The remaining 10% of the people are will develop liver problems.

## How do you get Hepatitis B?

The hepatitis B virus is spread when blood or other body fluids from a person with the hepatitis B virus comes in contact with another person's blood or body fluids. The virus can be spread in the following ways:

- Sharing intravenous needles or being punctured by a needle may result in the virus being spread.
- Unclean body piercing or tattooing implements may also exchange blood from an infected person to another.
- Helping someone who is bleeding may exchange blood of an infected person or other body fluids, if and only if, the helper has a large open wound.
- Sexual intercourse exchanges body fluids and possibly blood.
- At birth, the baby can contract the hepatitis B if the mother has this virus in her blood or body fluids.

### **How do you Prevent Hepatitis B?**

- Take great caution when coming into contact with blood or body fluids.
- Don't share needles.
- Practice abstinence.
- Get the hepatitis B vaccination.

### **What is Hepatitis C?**

Hepatitis C is a liver disease that is caused by the hepatitis C virus. The virus enters the liver cells to make copies of itself, which then infect more cells. In a few cases, hepatitis C infection is acute, meaning it is cleared spontaneously by the body and there are no long-term consequences. Unfortunately, in the majority of cases, the infection becomes chronic and slowly damages the liver over many years. Over time, this liver damage can lead to cirrhosis (or scarring) of the liver, liver disease, and liver cancer. The **symptoms** of hepatitis C are not always visible. Unlike other forms of viral hepatitis, hepatitis C infection usually does not result in jaundice. When symptoms do appear, they may include tiredness, stomach pain, and rash. Because hepatitis C infection often has no symptoms, many people do not know they have hepatitis C and may be infecting others. The only way to know whether you have hepatitis C is to get a blood test for hepatitis C.

### **How do you get Hepatitis C?**

The hepatitis C virus is spread when blood or other body fluids from a person with the hepatitis C virus comes in contact with another person's blood or body fluids. The virus can be spread in the following ways:

- Sharing intravenous needles or being punctured by a needle may result in the virus being spread.
- Unclean body piercing or tattooing implements may also exchange blood from an infected person to another.
- Helping someone who is bleeding may exchange blood of an infected person or other body fluids, if and only if, the helper has a large open wound.
- Sexual intercourse exchanges body fluids and possibly blood.

### **How do you Prevent Hepatitis C?**

- Take great caution when coming into contact with blood or body fluids.
- Don't share needles.
- Practice abstinence.

Never share objects such as needles, razors, toothbrushes, nail files, and clippers, which can be a means of coming into contact with blood or body fluids of an infected person.

## **Tips for Parents of Grade 6 Students:**

- See Tips for Parents of Grade 4 and Grade 5 Students
- The Grade 6 Program focuses on pregnancy and human development from conception through to birth, with a review of puberty and the human reproductive systems. Students also learn about blood-borne diseases as outlined in the Grade 6 Health curriculum. Some of these are transmitted through sexual contact and therefore this outcome is included in the Grade 6 Family Life unit.
- Children are naturally curious about pregnancy, especially if someone they know is pregnant. Teachable moments are provided by this curiosity and the questions children have at this time of their development.
- Children enjoy hearing stories of when their mothers were pregnant with them. Share what you can with your child about these memories.
- For those children who are adopted, share what you can about their birth parents and the adoption process. They need to know that they were no less wanted or loved.
- Use the Student Handouts, “God’s Gift of New Life” and “Twins” (above) with your child as a follow-up to classroom work. Your child will receive a copy of these handouts as part of this unit of instruction.
- The Teacher Background “Teacher Information About Blood-borne Diseases” is provided for your information in order to follow-up at home with questions and concerns your child may have. The classroom instruction includes a reflection on a Scripture passage, a discussion of the nature of viruses (such as a cold or flu) and how they can be transmitted, and a discussion of what blood-borne diseases are. Students, in small groups, research one disease and complete a handout on how it is transmitted, symptoms and effects, and prevention. Follow-up to this includes sharing of information learned and a discussion on how people who have a blood-borne disease might be treated by others. This is compared to examples from Scripture as to how Jesus treated those who were sick and how we are called to do the same.



## Appendix A

### STUDENT EXEMPTION UNDER SECTION 50.1(2) OF THE SCHOOL ACT

TO: Principal/Teacher of \_\_\_\_\_  
[identify school], of  
\_\_\_\_\_ [identify school board].

In response to the notice provided to me by my child's school  
\_\_\_\_\_ [name of School] of  
the \_\_\_\_\_ [name of school board] dated  
\_\_\_\_\_ [date of notice] indicating that instruction, course  
of study, or educational program in which my child is enrolled, or use of  
instructional materials in a course of study or educational program in  
which my child is enrolled, includes subject matter that deals primarily  
and explicitly with \_\_\_\_\_ [specify  
human sexuality], I, \_\_\_\_\_ [name of  
parent/legal guardian], in accordance with section 50.1(2) of the *School  
Act*, hereby request that my child,  
\_\_\_\_\_ [name of child] be  
excluded from the instruction, course of study, educational program or  
use of instructional materials identified in the notice.

I request that my child: (*check relevant box*)

- Leave the classroom or place where the instruction is taking place  
or where the instructional material is being used for the duration of  
that part of the instruction.

OR

- B) Remain in the classroom or place where the instruction is taking place without taking part in the instruction or use of instructional material.

I confirm that I am the legal guardian of

\_\_\_\_\_ [name of child] and have chosen to exercise my option to have my child excluded from the instruction described in the notice from

\_\_\_\_\_ School [name of school] on the dates indicated in the notice. I also confirm that it is my obligation to ensure that this form is returned to the school principal/teacher on or before the date of the instruction indicated in the notice. The child to whom this exemption notice applies is: \_\_\_\_\_

[name of child] Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Legal Guardian Date

# ***SUPPORTING RESOURCES FOR PARENTS***





# Social & Sexual Development in Children & Adolescents



The following information is a guideline for what to expect as children develop socially and sexually, and provides tips for parents and caregivers to promote healthy social and sexual development.

It is important to understand there is a **wide range of normal** when it comes to development. Although all children progress through the developmental stages following the same pattern, some children progress through them at a slower rate whereas others progress through them at a faster rate.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Stages of Social and Sexual Development in Children and Adolescents</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tips and Strategies for Parents and Caregivers</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ During <b>infancy</b>, healthy human sexual development is nurtured through the sense of touch, during rocking, feeding, and being held.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The love and warmth a baby feels helps him or her to develop <b>trust</b> and the ability to give and receive tenderness and affection in later life.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Toddlers</b> are curious about their own bodies and they begin to assert themselves socially.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Often parents are embarrassed by their children's curiosity with their genitals but parents can gently <b>redirect</b> their children's attention.</li> <li>▪ Help your child learn to appropriately express emotions and self control by <b>modeling</b> and gently setting limits.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ During the <b>early childhood years</b> children begin to learn about how people interact with each other by watching what happens between the people closest to them. Later on, their behaviours may reflect what has been modelled for them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Families express affection differently. In some homes, people choose to behave more formally with each other, while in others affection is freely shown with hugs and kisses. Be aware that these interactions are lessons your children are learning about how adults behave in close and personal relationships.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In the <b>pre-school and early school years</b>, children generally begin to ask more questions and become more curious about the body differences of playmates of the opposite gender. Children understand what it means to be male or female and begin to form ideas about gender roles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Answer questions calmly <b>using the correct words for body parts</b>. Treat their questions as you would any question about how something works.</li> <li>▪ Use <b>books and pictures</b> for your children’s level to help them to understand the points you are making.</li> <li>▪ If their curiosity leads to behaviour that is socially inappropriate, correct the behaviour. Reinforce with stories that describe the use of more appropriate behaviours.</li> <li>▪ Teach your children the differences between <b>personal boundaries</b> with family, close friends, acquaintances and strangers. It is important for them to understand at a young age that their body belongs to them, and that they have the right to tell others not to touch them.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Through the <b>early school years</b> children generally favour a social interest in the same gender, but it is also normal to favour the opposite gender.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At this stage, <b>activities and games</b> with other playmates will help your children to develop in their social world.</li> <li>▪ Give your children <b>tasks at home</b> that they are responsible for, and involve them in activities outside of the home to help build their self-esteem.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Generally between the ages of 9 and 13 children begin <b>puberty</b>. During this time they experience a great deal of change physically, emotionally, socially and sexually.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Before the changes begin, <b>talk to your children</b> about what they can expect to happen. Many books and videotapes are available to help parents share this information in a way their children can understand. Knowing ahead of time what will happen can lessen fears and confusion, and help them to build confidence and a healthy self- image.</li> <li>▪ <b>Listen</b> carefully to your children and allow them to express themselves and their feelings.</li> <li>▪ Help your children to recognize their strengths, focus on them and develop them.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Following the rapid changes of puberty, <b>adolescence</b> begins. This is a time of exploring and eventually solidifying identity. Young people attempt to form their own values and beliefs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parents make difficult decisions at this time about <b>how much independence</b> to allow their children. Based on your family beliefs and values and your children's ability, you will need to decide what you are comfortable letting your children decide for themselves. These decisions may include choice of clothing, hairstyles, friends and some activities that they do alone such as visiting the doctor. These are all opportunities for your children to express themselves as individuals, separate from you.</li> <li>▪ Continue to <b>have discussions</b> with your adolescents about the values that surround sexuality throughout the lifespan: true intimacy, self-esteem, caring and respect. Help adolescents set appropriate boundaries around relationships.</li> </ul>
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Adapted From: National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY). (1992). *Sexuality education for children and youth with disabilities* (Electronic Version). NICHCY News Digest, #ND17.

### **COMMUNICATION STARTERS**

Open communication is essential for healthy parent-child relationships. The following communication starters may help you to discuss various topics with your child.

- ❖ I have a concern about...
- ❖ After seeing that (T.V. show, magazine article, movie), I've been thinking about...
- ❖ What do you think about...
- ❖ How do you feel about...
- ❖ I'm not sure I understand you. Will you try to say it another way?
- ❖ Let me check this out with you. Are you saying that...?
- ❖ What we're talking about makes me feel pretty uncomfortable (embarrassed, angry, concerned).
- ❖ There's something important to me that I'd like to talk about with you...
- ❖ It would be really helpful to me if you'd tell me how you feel about...
- ❖ I've been thinking about our conversation last night (last week, last month) about...and there's some more I'd like to say.
- ❖ I have a different feeling about that.

### Children are Connected to the Media

- Media is anything that communicates meaning (e.g., TV, computers, music, videos, books, magazines, radio, and billboard).
- The average Canadian child watches about 22 hours of television per week (Strasburger, 2008).
- Children spend an extra 3 hours per day watching videos, using computers, or listening to music or some other type of media (Strasburger, 2008).
- North American children spend more time with the media than they spend in the classroom (Strasburger, 2008).

### Other Facts

- Research has shown that seeing sexuality in the media is linked to children and youth having sexual intercourse for the first time at an earlier age (Strasburger, 2008).
- Talking to children and youth about sexuality leads to safer behaviour. It also helps children and youth to resist peer pressure.
- Talking to children and youth shows them that parents are the best source of information about sexuality (Short & Rosenthal, 2003).

### For More Information:

#### Sexual and Reproductive Health Program

##### Education and Health Promotion Services:

Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre  
5th floor, 1213–4th St. SW  
403-955-6515

##### Clinical Services:

Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre  
5th floor, 1213–4th St. SW  
403-955-6500

South Calgary Health Centre  
31 Sunpark Plaza SE  
403-943-9510

Sunridge Professional Building  
406, 2675–36 St NE  
403-944-7666

### For Other Information:

- [www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/programs/sexualhealth](http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/programs/sexualhealth)
- [www.teachingsexualhealth.ca](http://www.teachingsexualhealth.ca)

Do you need someone to come and speak to your community group about sexual health? Professional sexual health educators can provide education programs free of charge on many topics including: sexual health, contraception, and sexually transmitted infections.

Call us at 403-955-6515 if you have any questions, to ask for pamphlets, or to book an education session.

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*This material is for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction, and/or treatment. If you have questions, speak with your doctor or appropriate healthcare provider.*

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## Sexuality and the Media: A Guide for Parents



### Connecting with Children

- The media sends messages about sexual values, relationships, stereotypes, and body image.
- Talking about beliefs and values gives children and youth the skills to interpret these messages and tell fantasy from reality.
- Talking about what you expect gives children and youth rules to live by.

### Tips for Talking

- Choose a good time to talk.
- Talk often.
- Ask children what they think. Try not to lecture your child.
- Listen carefully. Make sure you understand questions before you answer them.
- You do not have to be an expert. It is okay to say: "That's a good question, I don't know the answer." If this happens, work together to find the answer.
- Have talks with children and youth in an open, non-threatening way. Direct questions might discourage them from talking.

For more information, go to:  
[www.siecus.org](http://www.siecus.org)  
[www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm)

### Find a Teachable Moment

- This is an "in the moment" chance to connect an experience (e.g., what was just seen on TV, or heard in a song) to a family belief, value or expectation.

### Creating Teachable Moments

- Spend time talking, watching TV, playing games, or doing activities with your children.
- Use a joke, touching moment, or commercial break to talk about a subject.

### Sample Questions to Ask

- "How do you feel about...?"
- "What did you think about...?"
- "Do you agree with what that person said/did?"
- "What does our family believe about...?"
- "How does this situation compare to real life?"
- "Why do you think that the media presented this topic in that way?"

### Activities to Try at Home with Your Child

- *Choose a music video to talk about.*
1. Watch the video with the sound turned off.
  2. Talk about what you saw.
  3. Play the video with the sound on.
  4. Talk about the words and images. Did the words and images send the same message? If not, what were the differences? (Adapted from "Families are talking." SIECUS, 2001).
- *Choose an advertisement to talk about.*
1. What product is this ad selling?
  2. What does this product actually do?
  3. What do the images in this ad make you think that the product can do?
  4. What is the underlying messaging being given in this ad?
  5. How does this message compare to your own values and beliefs?
- (Adapted from [teachingsexualhealth.ca](http://teachingsexualhealth.ca))

"Television is not part of culture;  
it is our culture"  
*Michelle Lansberg*

## THE INTERNET

### SAFETY TIPS FOR KIDS

## Tips for Kids

*Reprinted with permission of the Ontario Provincial Police Child Pornography Unit.*

Never give out identifying information such as Name, Home Address, School Name, or Telephone Number in a public message such as at a chat room or on bulletin boards. Never send a person a picture of you without first checking with your parent or guardian.

Never respond to messages or bulletin board items that are:

- Suggestive
- Obscene
- Belligerent
- Threatening
- Make You Feel Uncomfortable

Be careful when someone offers you something for nothing, such as gifts and money. Be very careful about any offers that involve your coming to a meeting or having someone visit your house.

Tell your parent or guardian right away if you come across any information that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Never arrange a face-to-face meeting without telling your parent or guardian. If your parent or guardian agrees to the meeting, make sure that you meet in a public place and have a parent or guardian with you.

Remember that people online may not be who they seem. Because you can't see or even hear the person it would be easy for someone to misrepresent him- or herself. Thus, someone indicating that "she" is a "12-year-old-girl" could in reality be an older man.

Be sure that you are dealing with someone that you and your parents know and trust before giving out any personal information about yourself via email.

Get to know your "online friends" just as you get to know all of your other friends.

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

Make sure that the computer in your home is in plain view at all times when your children are using it.

Talk to your children about what they are doing on the Internet.

Become more computer literate. In today's day and age the children are learning about computers and most parents barely know how to turn one on. Get to know your computer, even have your kids teach you a little, it will be time well spent with your kids.

Use blocking programs for Internet use such as NetNanny (see next section). These programs are an excellent way to make the Internet safer for your children.

Note: Street proof your children on the Internet the same way you street proof your children in your community.

## Blocking Software

Parents have options when it comes to filtering or blocking information and sites their children may have access to. It is important to understand that these have limitations, and that parental supervision and involvement cannot be replaced.

## INTERNET SITES FOR PARENTS

[www.netparents.org](http://www.netparents.org)

[www.bewebaware.ca/english/default.aspx](http://www.bewebaware.ca/english/default.aspx)

<http://mediasmarts.ca/search/parent%20resources>

<https://www.common sense media.org/parent-concerns>



## BODY IMAGE: TIPS FOR PARENTS

*(The following is excerpted from an article appearing in Eating Disorders, 9:1-14, 2001, entitled "BRIDGE (Building the Relationship Between Body Image and Disordered Eating Graph and Explanation): A Tool for Parents and Professionals, by Shelly Russell and Sabine Ryder, Calgary Regional Health Authority.)*

A recent United States survey of female high school and college students shows that 15.4% of these students met the clinical criteria for an eating disorder (Cavanaugh & Lemberg, 1999). While 90% of people with eating disorders are female, male incidence of disturbed eating is on the rise (Andersen, 1999; Cavanaugh & Lemberg, 1999). A large number of girls and women and to a lesser extent men, while not meeting the criteria for an eating disorder, have subclinical symptoms (Shisslak et al., 1998). Further, large numbers of women and growing numbers of men have become dissatisfied with their body shape, size, or weight.

Dieting, fear of fatness and binge eating have been reported in girls as young as 9 years of age (Mellin, Scully, & Irwin, 1992). Thirty to 40% of 9-year-old girls and 80% of 10 and 11-year old girls have dieted. Young girls have indicated in surveys that they are more afraid of becoming fat than they are of cancer, nuclear war, or losing their parents (Berzins, 1999; National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC), 1999). While females attempt to reduce their body size, males more often report an obsessional preoccupation with their muscularity to the point where their social or physical functioning may be severely impaired. For example, they may abandon social and family relationships to spend more time at the gym or take steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs even in the face of serious side effects (Pope, Olivardia, Gruber, & Borowiecki, 1999). We need to be concerned about a wide range of disordered eating behaviours and attitudes. It is not only issues that meet the criteria for an eating disorder that require intervention.

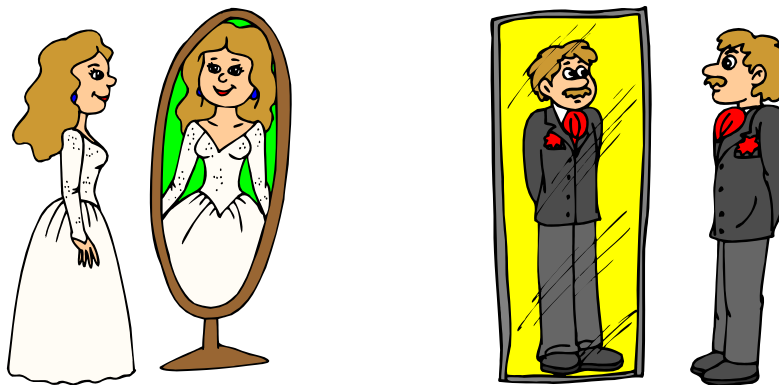
### Tips for Parents

Parents can help their children understand the importance of healthy attitudes and behaviours associated with body image and size. Parents should:

- Examine the ways in which their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours about their own body and the bodies of others have been shaped by common attitudes and prejudices. Educate children about the basic differences in body types and the importance of the *person*, not the *image* (Smolak & Levine, 1994).
- Examine closely their dreams and goals for their children and other loved ones. Are they emphasizing beauty and thinness, particularly for girls? Parents should avoid sending a message that says in effect, "I will like you more if you looked different." and accept and reinforce their children for qualities other than appearance.



- Learn about and discuss with their sons and daughters, (1) the dangers of trying to change one’s body through dieting or other body altering behaviours (e.g. steroids), (2) the benefits of being active, and (3) the importance of eating a variety of foods. Parents should avoid labeling foods as “good”, “safe”, “no-fat”, “low-fat”, or “bad”, “dangerous”, “fattening”, and practice being a good role model with sensible eating and sensible exercise.
- Take a look at the reasons they exercise and make an effort to be active for the joy of feeling their body move, not to make up for eating too much, or to change their body shape. Parents should consider how they view food in their life. Healthy eating is a part of normal daily living, and is needed to fuel our bodies so we can work and play.
- Be a positive role model and stop avoiding activities (such as swimming, sunbathing, dancing) simply because they call attention to their weight or shape. Similarly, parents should refuse to wear clothing or accessories that are uncomfortable simply because they take attention away from weight or shape or are currently “in fashion” (i.e., stiletto heels or body shapers).
- Make a commitment to help children think critically about the ways in which television, magazines, and other media promote mostly unrealistic images and try to provide children with a balance in the types of messages they receive from the media.
- Recognize the importance of self-acceptance – practice being their own best friend – and control self-talk by changing negative messages to positive ones (i.e., change “I’m so stupid” to “everyone makes mistakes”). Also, parents should make sure to take time for themselves – time where they can enjoy their favourite music, read a book, or spend time alone.



*(Sabine Ryder & Dr. Shelly Russell-Mayhew are Co-Directors of Body Image Works. Body Image Works promotes healthy body image and self-acceptance through creative resource materials. Their website is [www.bodyimageworks.com](http://www.bodyimageworks.com))*

## Resources

For further resources, contact the following:

- Calgary Catholic Diocesan Family Resource Centre, (403) 218-5505
- Calgary Catholic Diocesan Religious Education Office, (403) 218-5515
- Calgary Catholic Diocesan Youth Ministry Office, (403) 218-5503
- Calgary Catholic Diocesan Resource Library, (403) 218-5510
- Calgary Public Library
- Alberta Health Services

## CHURCH DOCUMENTS

### Documents on Sexuality and Family Life

The following references are useful in ascertaining the official position of the Church on a variety of topics dealing with Human Sexuality and the Family. This is not an exhaustive list and is in constant need of update. It will however serve as an appropriate starting point for these topics.

#### Pontifical

- 1968      **Humanae Vitae** (Of Human Life), Pope Paul VI  
1985      **To The Youth of The World**, Pope John Paul II  
1989      **Pornography and Violence in the Communications Media – A Pastoral Response**  
1995      **Evangelium Vitae** (The Gospel of Life), Pope John Paul II  
1996      **The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education Within the Family.**

#### Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education

- 1974      **Declaration on Abortion**  
1975      **Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics**  
1983      **Educational Guidance in Human Love and Charter of Rights of the Family**  
1987      **Instruction on Respect For Human Life In Its Origin And On The Dignity Of Procreation** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith)

#### Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

- 1979      **Catholic Moral Questions and The Canadian Bishops Statement on the Formation of Conscience**  
1983      **Curriculum Guidelines For Family Education and Guidelines For Family Life Education**  
1985      **Growth in Faith, In and Through the Family, or The Virtue of Chastity**  
1999      **Catechism of the Catholic Church** (Revised Edition)  
2002      **In Love for Life! A Reflection Paper on the Conjugal, Social and Religious Significance of Marriage**  
2004      **Marriage Matters**

## **Diocese of Calgary**

1988 Catechetical Commission on **Family Life**, Bishop Paul O'Byrne

## **Other Writings**

- 1980 Quinn, John R. Most Rev. **Pastoral Letter on Homosexuality**, Daughters of Saint Paul, Boston Mass.
- 1984 McCarthy, Edward A. Most Rev. **Instructions on Integrating Moral and Spiritual Values in Sex Education**
- 1987 **Guidelines for Family Life Education**, Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops
- 1988 Dunphy Richard, S J. **Aids, What The Church is Saying and Doing**, Liguori Publications, Liguori Missouri.
- 1997 **Always Our Children – A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers**, National Conference of Catholic Bishops

## **OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS**

Aquilina, Mike. Talking to Youth About Sexuality – A Parent's Guide. Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. 1995. (*“Education in human sexuality demands that our children know the facts of life. But even more important, it is crucial that our children are given a faith-filled and morally correct context in order to make sense of all the issues connected with human sexuality.”*)

Christenson, Larry. The Wonderful Way Babies Are Made. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers. 1982. (*“Presents in poetry and from a Christian viewpoint how God created the living things upon the earth so they could reproduce their own kind – including people.”*)

Doman, Regina. Angel in the Waters. Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press. 2004. *A beautifully illustrated, simply written book from the perspective of a child in the womb. Available from Sophia Institute Press, phone 1-800-888-9344.*

Popcak, Gregory K. Beyond the Birds and the Bees. Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2001. (*A guide for parents, with chapters on “The Ingredients of a Healthy, Holy Catholic Sexuality”, “Preparing to Talk to Your Kids About Sex”, “Talking the Talk”, and some on ages and stages of sexuality.*)

Spicka, Jana. The Locket and the Mask. Heiskell, Tennessee: Jana Spicka, Inc., 2002. (*A beautiful twist on the classic fairy tale of the toad and the kiss. “A gentle teaching tool for parents and teachers to reinforce the importance of personal honor and physical restraint until marriage.”*)

Taylor, Ruth S., Nerburn, Ann. G., & Hogan, Richard M. Our Power to Love – God's Gift of Our Sexuality. Columbia, SC: Family Honor, Inc. – DEPPA Publications Dept. 2000. (*“This book is a new approach to sexuality education for adolescents and parents, incorporating the physiology of sexual maturing with Pope John Paul II's theology of the body.”*)