Sexuality across the lifespan

for children and adolescents with developmental disabilities

An instructional guide for parents/caregivers of individuals with developmental disabilities
Special Thanks to the Life Span Holistic Sexuality Education
for Children with Developmental Disabilities Advisory Panel

Nila Benito
Florida Developmental Disabilities Council &
Florida Center for Inclusive Communities

Herman Travis Fishbein, Ed.D
UM-CARD

Cary Hepburn
Juvenile Welfare Board

Karen Higgins
PARC

Matthew P. Janicki, PhD
Center on Intellectual Disabilities
University at Albany

Peggy Johns
Pinellas County Schools

Philip McCallion, PhD
School of Social Welfare
University at Albany

Terry Millican
Florida Developmental Disabilities Council

Virginia Wart
Paul B. Stephens School

Debora Wichmanowski
Chasco Elementary School
SEXUALITY ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

by: DiAnn L. Baxley and Anna L. Zendell

Sexuality education for Children and adolescents with Developmental disabilities.
An Instructional manual for Parents / Caregivers of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

First Edition 2005

Sponsored by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Developmental Disabilities and the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.
### CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful Hints for Educators</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting for Different Learning Styles</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Tips to Keep in Mind</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOPIC 1:</strong> Similar or Different</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suggested for grades K - 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOPIC 2:</strong> Changes in Your Body</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suggested for grades 6 - 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming an Adult</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suggested for grades 9 - 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOPIC 3:</strong> Beginning Social Skills</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suggested for grades K - 8 and beyond</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Social Skills</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suggested for grades 9 - 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOPIC 4:</strong> Dating</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOPIC 5:</strong> Sexual or Physical Abuse</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADDITIONAL RESOURCES</strong></td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary of Terms</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Overview of Sexually Transmitted Diseases</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AN ANNOTATED RESOURCE LIST</strong></td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BACKGROUND/OVERVIEW MATERIALS</strong></td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for Parents/Caregivers</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for Educators</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

As a parent or caregiver of any child or adolescent, addressing the subject of sexuality can be daunting. Add to the mix a physical or cognitive disability and you may find yourself feeling totally unprepared.

We are all sexual beings from the day we are born. Sexuality is the exploration of ourselves—our physical bodies, our emotions, self-worth and image, and our interactions with others. It is one of the most basic human instincts, and no matter what level our learning abilities, it is a natural part of being human to have the desire to discover what our bodies are all about. It is the ability to learn the responsibilities and consequences of the various aspects of sexuality that will help us to know where to draw boundaries and discover what is expected of us in relationships.

This Instructional Manual and its accompanying Resource Guide are designed to help parents and caregivers assist individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities in their exploration of self and sexuality. It is the author's hope that by using these resources, both parents and caregivers and family members will gain a deeper appreciation of this sensitive subject, and that when the person with a disability reaches adulthood he or she will be better prepared to live and participate as independently and safely as possible in the community.

While this Instructional Manual was designed to address a wide range of concepts, you know your child best. Not every child will be ready or able to learn about all the subjects. Please speak with your child’s teacher(s) and use your discretion to determine what is appropriate for your son or daughter’s age and maturity level.
Helpful Hints for Educators

As a parent or caregiver, you have the responsibility of teaching your family member about growing up and becoming a sexual being. There is a myth that individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities are "sexless" beings (meaning without sex). This is a false assumption; it is important that you take this duty seriously. It is also important that sexuality be preserved to children in a positive and gradual way. Since each person is unique with different abilities and learning styles, you and your parent or caregiver will be best positioned to determine when and how much information your family member needs in order to explore his or her sexuality fully and safely.

This can be a difficult topic to talk about. The instructional guide will help you with that. Your child's educator can also be wonderful allies in this process. A complete instructional guide for educators is also available, which should be helpful in building consistency in teaching your child about sexuality across settings. As a rule, however, that educators are often limited by school administrative and policies in how much information about sexuality they can teach. It will be important to know your school's policies on this issue.

There are some things to keep in mind while you and your family member learn about sexuality:

1. It is normal for all children to express a curiosity about sex.
2. It is helpful to look for opportunities to discuss the subject. For example, your family member may ask questions regarding relationships. If your family member is successful, you may find him/her watching a particular scene or show involving being relationships more than other shows. These are good times to discuss sexuality in a positive way. You may find your family member talking about sex in a positive way.
3. You may find that you are uncomfortable talking about sexuality with your family member. Most parents/caregivers feel that way. You may also think you are ill-equipped to discuss the issue. Rest assured that even some of the best sexuality educators are not always sure of their knowledge of sexuality. You are an adult and may have had many experiences. You may not have all the technical terms, but having personal experience is a great starting point in teaching.
4. Your family member will need to be aware of many aspects of sexuality, such as relationships, dating, and communication. Your goal is to make sure he or she can have healthy relationships and learn to care for himself or herself. Educators will contribute to his or her learning.
5. It is important to use the correct language. The correct names for body parts will better prepare your family member for living safely in the community. There is a very high incidence of sexual abuse among individuals with developmental disabilities. We all hope it never happens, but it does. Teaching your child to speak or point to the correct body parts when the need arises will help him or her understand and respect these differences.
6. Your family member must not always agree when discussing sexuality. You can talk about sexuality in a positive way. You may not be his or her style. Even if it disagrees, keep it positive. Do not just tell your family member down. Rather, teach that sexuality involves responsibility. You can discuss the consequences of negative behavior. You may see physical or emotional consequences. Use reasons and give examples. Sick family members should have a positive attitude.
7. Talk, talk, talk. The best relationships involve open communication. You have learned how to communicate with your family member. Use this method to teach about sexuality. Remember, it is not just about sex. Sexuality is about the importance of self-worth and potential responsibility in all types of relationships.
8. There are exercises in this manual for you to do with your family member. They break down into small steps. It is important to remember when teaching any aspect of sexuality whether it be social skills or relationships, it is important to understand the steps involved. This will help your family member.
9. Use as many resources as possible to teach these tasks. The best strategy is a combination of teaching, role modeling, and practice. Try a variety of methods to help your family member.
10. We all need positive reinforcement. Whether working on a task, throughout this manual you are encouraged to keep it positive and acknowledge a job well done. This will help your family member.

Adapting for Different Learning Styles:

When working with an individual with intellectual or developmental disability, it is important to try out several methods for explaining the process of maturation and sexuality. Taking full-length photos (fully clothed, of course) of your son or daughter from different stages of their life, and passing them on a picture board can help your child to see the changes that she has already gone through. Continual use of this tool as she grows older is beneficial in teaching the changes in her body and how it changes with age. The more natural you can make it, the better prepared your child or daughter will be to deal with the many changes she will experience. This manual is designed to give you a variety of methods to use as a tool in teaching your family member.

If you are concerned about your family member's understanding of sexuality, you can use this tool to help keep track of the changes in his or her body and how it changes with age. The more natural you can make it, the better prepared your child or daughter will be to deal with the many changes she will experience. This manual is designed to give you a variety of methods to use as a tool in teaching your family member.

Another reason for having open communication with your family member is to let him or her know that you are there for him or her. It is good to have him or her to know that you are there for him or her. It is good to have him or her to know that you are there for him or her. It is good to have him or her to know that you are there for him or her. It is good to have him or her to know that you are there for him or her. It is good to have him or her to know that you are there for him or her. It is good to have him or her to know that you are there for him or her.
Some tips to keep in mind while teaching sexuality to your family member:

1. Throughout this manual, there are references to using pictures to help your students understand what you are trying to teach. It is true that "a picture is worth a thousand words." Using pictures of family or friends when describing various types of relationships will help make the concepts more realistic and relatable for your students.

2. There are exercises in this manual for you to do with your family member. They are broken down into small steps. This is important to remember when teaching any aspect of sexuality, whether it be washing the public area or having appropriate social interactions. We all learn best by learning small steps. You will also need to revisit many of the steps over and over again. You will be reminded throughout this manual of possible skills to revisit.

3. Use as many resources as possible to teach the task. The brain is a marvelous thing. Different parts are responsible for processing differing media input such as spoken language, visual, touch, or smell. Tapping a variety of media formats will help you discover which one or which combination works best for your family member.

4. We all need positive reinforcement when working on a task. Throughout this manual you are encouraged to keep it positive and acknowledge a job well done. This will help your family member see sexuality as a positive experience and make learning about it more fun.

5. Reach out to others for help. If you don't know the answer, find someone who does. There are professional organizations able to help. Your local, state, or national parent who has already gone through the process and ask them what they did.

Alike or DIFFERENT?

For the parent or caregiver
These activities can be used to help children demonstrate progress toward understanding the differences between males and females.

Knowledge and understanding:
- Identifying body parts: includes being able to recognize and use correct terms
- Identifying the ways all people are alike and different

Attitudes and values:
- Demonstrating an appreciation of people with different attributes

Self-management skills:
- Observing differences and similarities between themselves and others

Interpersonal skills important in school, family, and social situations:
- Practicing taking turns when speaking and listening
- Sharing
- Listening carefully and clearly expressing oneself
- Following rules

Monitoring and assessment:
This activity will provide parents/caregivers with an opportunity to assess whether their family member can:
- Use correct terminology or identification for body parts, including some sexual organs
- Discuss physical similarities and differences between boys and girls
- Recognize how they are alike and different from other people of their age
- Work together to demonstrate developmentally appropriate communication and listening skills.

Notes:
Multiple learning activities may need to be used to meet the learning needs and interests of children. Talk to your family member's teacher to find out what learning method works best in school and then use that method at home to discuss sexuality. Share with teachers what you are teaching at home to help build consistency across settings.

Links to the Resource Guide:
Below are corresponding references to the accompanying Resource Guide. The selections were chosen to help you find additional information that you can obtain to help you and your child through this learning process.

- Resources for Parents/Caregivers pages 9 & 10
- Diversity: Inclusion in Sexuality Education page 12
- Train-the-Teacher Materials pages 13 & 14
- General Sexuality Education Curriculum pages 10 & 16
- Materials in Support General Sexuality Education by Gender Level pages 16-18
- Materials in Support Teaching about Feelings/Emotions page 18
- Materials to Support the Teaching of Gender-Specific Issues pages 22-24
- Abuse Prevention Curriculum pages 25-29
- Materials to Support Abuse Prevention: pages 29-30
PREPARATION

The following resources can be used alone or in combination to meet the specific needs and interests of the family member:

- Anatomically correct dolls
- Skeletons
- Mirrors
- Dress-up area
- Scissors
- Puppets of anatomically correct bodies
- Books and stories about the human body (see Resource Guide)
- Create an activity/collage table: Include butcher’s paper, art paper, card, pencils, felt, popes, ropes, pipes, brushes, textiles, wool materials, clay and glue
- Prepare a learning center
- Dolls (anatomically correct, multicultural, a boy and a girl)
- Puzzles with correct body part labels
- Dress-up clothes for male and female
- Prepare three different sized and shaped boxes, with different wrapping. Have exactly the same contents in each box
- Cut out two paper dolls with exactly the same paper clothes on
- Create an example board that has pictorial examples of all terms being addressed in the lesson

Procedure

ACTIVITY: It is important in these activities that you emphasize observation and understanding, not the completion of the activities.

1. Assess your family member’s understanding of the concepts of alike and different, demonstrating where needed by using like and different objects. When the concept seems to be understood, the following game can be used for reinforcement. Sit across from them. Ask them to describe (verbally or through pointing) an example board of different types of clothes and body parts: include the correct terms for each item and require one thing that is the same and one that is different. For example, “You see a boy and I am a girl.” Then have your family member describe one thing that is alike, such as, “We are both girls” or “We both have pants on.”

2. Using the worksheet on the next page, or anatomically correct dolls, ask your child to identify what is alike and different on each. Cover the picture on the next page, except for the heads, and then uncover them so that the child can see the difference. Keep the example board handy if she is unable to respond verbally. If your child does not know the correct terms for the body parts, then discuss the correct terms using verbal and pictorial reinforcement. Use correct names such as penis and nipples, not nicknames. If your family member uses a nickname that is heard elsewhere then acknowledge that “Yes, there are a lot of names for these body parts, and here are the correct names.” Choose people like to teach both nicknames and correct terminology, so that children will know if someone says something inappropriate to them. Use your best judgment. If your child is mature enough to learn both, that is ok. Flash cards with both slang and correct terminology are often used in those situations. Be aware, however, that much of today’s slang for body parts is abusive and vulgar; so you will want to use discretion. Many schools have anatomically correct dolls. You could partner with the school and even perhaps borrow the dolls. You could also ask the school nurse or social worker to do this exercise with your child.

3. The song “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes” can be modified to introduce the new body parts.

4. Using dressed paper dolls or cloth body dolls, have your family member identify which doll is a boy and which one is a girl and why. Have him/her remove the clothing to discover the correct gender.
List of words to be learned

Head, Arms, Legs, Skin, Face, Hands, Fingers, Lips, Eyes, Nose, Elbows, Breasts, Pubic Area, other terms as you feel necessary (see worksheet on next page).

Note: It is vital that children are very observant and notice the differences in bulges or bumps in clothing between adults and children, beginning them in the differences in bodies and the correct terms will help them to better understand themselves when they reach puberty.

Other activities (with adult supervision)

1. Have your child paint, draw, or create representations of a boy or girl.

2. Draw your child create a life-size figure of him or her on paper. Have him/her fill in the face, clothes, etc. Hang it in the room and have him/her discuss the similarities or differences between him or herself and other family members.

3. Give the opportunity for independent learning time via storybooks, magazines, or videos.

4. Help your child find pictures in magazines or newspapers of people with different attributes (long, short hair, nose, mouth), and help him/her make a picture book at home for use for reinforcement. Talk with your child’s teachers or other professionals and encourage them to discuss correct terms with your son or daughter. These terms, along with pictures, should be included in the picture book.

Links to the Resource Guide

Below are corresponding references to the accompanying Resource Guide. The selections were chosen to help you find additional information that can help you see your child through this learning process.

Grades K-2
Teach-A-Body Anatomically Correct Dolls, page 18
Bare Naked Book, page 17
Body Buttons and Nouns, page 17

Grades 3-5
A Kid’s First Book About Sex, page 17
Where Do I Come From?, page 17
CHANGES IN YOUR BODY

Activities and Discussion Points
These activities can be used to help girls and boys demonstrate progress towards understanding the changes in their bodies as they mature into puberty. The first several pages are for you the parent/carer to use as an instructional resource. Following are several pages for you to do together with your family member.

Knowledge and understanding:
- Identifying body parts – includes being able to recognize and use correct terms
- Identifying that all people are alike and different
- Understanding the difference between males and females
- Understanding the changes in their emotions

Attitudes and values:
- Valuing their own bodies and understanding that the changes in their bodies and emotions are important and natural

Self-management skills:
- Observing differences and similarities between themselves and others

Interpersonal skills:
- Learning how females differ from males
- Understanding and exhibiting appropriate behavior
- Learning how to express feelings regarding emotions

Growing up:
Growing up is a natural part of life. Our bodies go through many changes. It is important to understand that everyone grows and matures at different rates. Topics for discussion could include the following:
- Differences in height and weight from person to person. Note: Being overweight can have detrimental effects on health and self-image, so this is a good time to start emphasizing healthy eating and exercise.
- Use correct terminology or identification for body parts, including some annual events, menstruation, and menses
- Discuss the physical differences between boys and girls such as: usually, but not always, boys have more muscle strength than girls and are therefore stronger; voice changes; obvious body changes (breast growth), hair on legs, under arms, on the face (for boys) and in pubic area; boys' shoulders may get broader
- Recognize how students are alike and different from other people their ages

Notice: Multiple learning activities may need to be used to meet the needs, interests, and cognitively and maturity levels of children.
What happens as we grow? Hints for parents or caregivers

When your child may begin to feel growing pains (pain in muscles and joints) as early as 2, but who is most likely to feel it around 5-10 years old. These pains occur mostly behind the knee, in the ankles, or elbows, but may also occur in the arms, legs, shoulders, elbows, and groin. The pain usually occurs in the late afternoons and early evening. If your child is able to communicate feelings of discomfort to you it is important to encourage him/her to do so. If your child is not able to communicate his/her feelings, being aware that these changes are occurring will help you to notice signs of discomfort in his/her behavior. Remind your son or daughter that this pain is natural and seek out professional advice on ways to ease the discomfort. This is a time of life with many mood swings and hormonal changes. It is important to stress the normality of this. Be sure to remind your son or daughter how all additional help, such as seeing a counselor, to help him/her through this emotional time. Remember to use small steps in teaching concepts of puberty. This would include teaching a young girl how to put on or change a sanitary napkin or pad.

What happens during puberty? (For Girls)

Breast growth: Discuss the correct terms for breast parts

- The nipple and areola get larger and darker in color.
- The breasts enlarge.
- The breasts may feel tender or sore.
- The nipples will be more sensitive and when cold, touched, or sexually aroused they may become erect.
- Pubic area
  - Much of a girl's changes are on the inside. Pubic hair will start to grow.

Menstruation: also known as Period

- The ovum, or female egg, is the female reproductive cell (see is shown).
- The ovary, the part that holds the hundreds of thousands of eggs.
- The sac is where the eggs are. As puberty begins, the ovum begins to mature and move toward the outside of the ovary.
- Ovulation - this is when the ovum pushes through the ovary and travels through the uterine tube.
- Uterus - the body of the body where a baby would grow. During this time blood builds up in the lining of the uterus. When there is no fertilization of the egg, the egg and the blood are washed out of the body.

LINKS TO THE RESOURCE GUIDE

Below are corresponding references in the accompanying Resource Guide. The sources were chosen to help you find additional information that can help you and your child through this learning process.

Grades 4 - 5
A Big's First Book about Sex, page 17
Where Did I Come From?, page 27

Grades 6 - 8
Changes in You... for Boys, page 17
Changes in You... for Girls, page 17
Janet's Get Her Period, page 22

*Pages 23-24 list many good resources for teaching about periods.
** There are two stories based on page 23, one for girls and one for boys, that teach about puberty. The cost is $1.45 each.
What happens during puberty? (For boys)

Circumcision: It is important to help your son understand the difference between being circumcised or not. During gym class or in the bathroom at school he may see that there is a difference. He explanation will help to allate any concerns.

Voice changes

- A boy's voice changes more noticeably than does a girl's. Often this leads to teasing by peers. You can stress that everyone goes through this, and that it is part of becoming a man. Having another male talk about his experience would be a good strategy.

Pubic area: Boys exhibit more external changes than girls do.

These changes will include:

- Pubic hair grows.
- Testicles - the equivalent of girl's ovaries, they contain male sex cells (sperm) and the male hormone (androstosterone).
- Scrotum - the pouch of skin that contains the testicles. When cold, the scrotum shrinks to draw the testicles closer to the body for warmth.
- Sperm duct - this tube transports sperm from the testicles to the penis.
- Seminal Vesicles - glands that produce a fluid which gives sperm energy.
- Drip - to make this has two functions, one to carry semen out of the body and the other to carry the semen (a mixture of semen and fluid from both the seminal vesicles and the prostatic gland).
- Peeks - this becomes hard (as erogenous) during sexual excitement. Teenage boys will have many uncontrolled experiences of sexual excitement, which can lead to embarrassing situations. As a parent it is important to help your son learn appropriate behaviors during these times.

For example: If he is in school, he may need to excuse himself to go to the bathroom or learn to engage himself in other activities until the erection goes away. If at home, he may need the privacy of his room, or if your family does not believe in masturbation, you want to find ways to help him learn to engage in other activities until the urge goes away. It is natural for most teenage boys to experience with masturbation. Your son needs to learn that there is an appropriate time and place for this.

What is puberty?

AN INFORMATION SHEET FOR GIRLS

Growing up takes a very long time. The changes your body will go through take place very slowly. These changes that you will see in yourself and others are what is called puberty. Some of the ways in which girls and boys change are the same. However, there are other changes that are different for boys and girls.

How girls change:

Height

Girls start growing taller faster than boys do. But they also stop growing before boys do. Look at your mother, father, and other adults. You will see that the men may be taller than the women. This is normal. It is important to remember though that no two people grow at the same rate or in the same way. You will each grow at your own rate so don't compare yourself to anyone else.

Physical changes

Breasts - You may notice that your hips get wider. This is a normal part of being female. You will also notice that your breasts will get bigger. Only girls get breasts. Boys do not get breasts. At first your breasts will just be small mounds. After a long time they will get bigger. As they get bigger you will need to start wearing a bra. Girls wear bras to give their breasts support. This is an exciting time for you, and buying your first bra is something most girls look forward to.

Hair - The hair on certain parts of your body will start to grow less. This is one thing that boys and girls have in common. For girls, you will find that you will get hair under your armpits, around your pubic area, and on your legs. Hair growing on these areas of your body is a normal part of growing up. You will notice that your armpits will start smelling funny. This is also part of growing up, but it occurs that you will need to start wearing deodorant. Deodorant is something that keeps you from smelling under your armpits. This sweating is what causes your armpits to smell funny. Many girls shave the hair from under their armpits and on their legs. Your parents can help you with deciding whether you will shave your armpits and legs. Even if you do shave your armpits you will still need to wear deodorant.

Menstrual or Periods

When girls mature, they change on the inside as well as on the outside. Somewhere between the age of 10 and 14, girls will start their menstrual cycles, or what is often called a period.

Here is what you can expect. Every month an egg is released from your ovary (see diagram on page 33). When the egg is not fertilized it dies. Then the blood that was building up as a lining in your womb leaves your body. This blood is no longer needed, and your body knows to remove it. This is what we call your period.
The blood comes down through the vagina, which is between your legs. You will need to wear a sanitary napkin or tampons to keep the blood off your clothes. Deciding whether you will wear a sanitary napkin or tampons is a private matter. You should discuss this with your parents or your doctor. Your period will last between 4 and 7 days. You may also want to keep extra sanitary napkins or tampons at school in case your period comes while you are there, or you can ask to see the school nurse, who may have a sanitary napkin to give you.

You may notice some changes just before your first period. Girls have certain hormones in their body that cause them to grow. Some girls experience more pain in the lower pelvic area than others. Some girls have more urge to go to the bathroom often. Some girls experience only a little pain. Others experience a lot of pain. There are medications that can help for this pain. It is important to tell your parents or teacher that you have pain so they can help you.

Having your period is a very private thing. Girls should only talk to their parents, close friends, doctor, or other trusted people about it. This is not something that you should tell about to strangers or others you do not know very well.

When you start your period your parents, family members, someone else who takes care of you, or perhaps the school nurse will help you learn about how to use a sanitary napkin, pad, or tampons. These are needed to catch the blood that leaves your body. Blood is no longer needed by your body so it is ok that it is getting rid of it.

Pads and tampons come in many shapes and sizes. What one you use will depend on how much you bleed and what feels most comfortable for you.

How boys change:

**Height**

Boys start growing taller a little later than girls but also grow until they are a little older. All boys grow at different rates. Some boys will be very tall and others will be shorter. How tall you grow depends on how tall your parents, grandparents, or other relatives are.

You will also notice that you will grow a little broader. You will see the muscles on your arms, chest, and legs get bigger and stronger too.

**Physical Changes**

**Muscles** You will also notice that you will grow a little broader. You will see the muscles on your arms, chest, and legs get bigger and stronger, too.

**Voice** You will notice that your voice will start cracking when you talk. It may sound a little like a frog. This is normal. Your voice is becoming deeper.

**Hair** You will see some little hairs starting to grow in your ears, armpits, and pubic area. At first it will look like the fuzz on a peach. As you get older, however, it will change and become thicker. It is common for men to have hair on their faces and necks. Some men may choose not to shave and will grow a beard or mustache. You need to learn how to trim a beard or mustache, though, to keep it neat.

**Penis** Your penis is another part of your body that will grow. It will grow longer and thicker. Your testicles (often called balls) will get bigger too. The penis is usually soft and flaccid. Now that you are getting older you will have more erections. An erection is when your penis gets stiff and hard. Erections are very private things and not something to talk about with anyone but your parents or your doctor.

Sometimes you will get erections in a public place like school. This can be embarrassing. You do not want to be embarrassed when this happens. This is not the right thing to do. Touching your penis should only be done when you are alone in a very private area. Try to think of something else, like your favorite TV show, and it should go away.

**Wet dreams** Boys have dreams at night that cause erections. This is normal. Sperm (a milky colored substance) is secreted through the opening of your penis. Sperm contains sperm, which is how an adult man helps to make a baby. You will not know that you are having a wet dream. Keep clean by your hands so you can clean it up when you wake up. Be sure that you also launder your bed sheets and nightclothes, or else there will be very a strong odor later in the day.

Above are some examples of sanitary napkins and tampons. There are many styles available so each person has to find what works best.
More on puberty for both girls and boys

Personal hygiene:

Bathing. Your body is going through so many changes. Some of these changes will make you sweat more. Your hair will get greasy and you may get acne or pimples on your face. It is important that you keep your body clean. You should bathe or shower every day. When you do, make sure you wash your hair with shampoo. Girls may also want to use conditioner on their hair to keep it healthy. You need to also wash your skin very well with soap. You need to especially wash under your arms and in your pubic area. Washing your face every morning and every night will help clear up pimples. There are also creams that you can use to help dry them up. Talk to your parents about using these creams.

Mood swings. Mood swings are when you are happy one day, angry the next day, or very sad on another day. Sometimes you may feel all these feelings in one day. Girls are more likely to get strong mood swings, but boys can get them, too. You get mood swings because of hormones. Everyone has something called glands in the body. Some glands make these chemicals called hormones. The hormones that cause mood swings also cause your body to change as you grow up. Mood swings are caused by the increase or decrease in these hormones in your body.

When you are feeling these hormone changes, you may find it difficult to say how you are feeling. You may yell at your parents or others. When you feel this way it is important to take some time by yourself. Listen to music or look at a magazine. Then when you feel ready it is important to talk to your parents about how you are feeling.

Self-image. Your body is, or will be, going through so many changes. Sometimes it is hard to understand what is happening. You may look in the mirror and see something you don't like. You may look at your friends and wish you looked like them. It is normal to be uncomfortable at this time in your life. Everyone has these feelings, including your brothers and sisters, friends, and your classmates.

There are some things you can do to feel better. Keep clean. Wear clothes that fit you well and are in fashion. Try a new hairstyle. All these things will help.

Independence. Part of getting older is being able to do more things. You will see classmates or friends doing more things without their parents. You may feel you want to do this, too. It is important for you to learn to do more things on your own. Talk to your parents about how you may do this.

Sexual feelings. Puberty and growing up is nature's way of preparing people who love each other to make babies when they are ready. Having a baby is not something that everyone does though. It is a very important decision and should take a lot of planning.

As you grow you may start feeling sensations that feel nice. Boys will get erections. Both boys and girls will find it feels nice to touch parts of their bodies. It is a normal part of growing up. But remember it is a very private thing. You should not touch yourself in front of anyone else.

Part of growing up includes keeping yourself safe from harm. It is normal for you to touch yourself in private or in your bedroom. You should not let someone else touch you. If someone tries to touch you in a private way you need to immediately tell your parents or an adult who knows your parents. It is also not right for you to touch someone else.

You may find that you start to like another person. Your friends or classmates may say they have boyfriends or girlfriends. You may feel that you cannot stop thinking about this person that you like. This is all normal. You need to remember though that the person that you like may not feel the same way about you. This too is a normal part of growing up. If you feel you like someone who does not feel the same way about you, talk to your parents, teachers, or other people that you really trust about ways to deal with the situation. Even though it is normal, it still hurts.

Public and Private

As you become more aware of your body as a sexual being it is only natural that you will feel that touching yourself or your private parts feels good. Touching yourself this way in ANY public area is NOT OK. It is important to understand that people have different concepts of what is public and private. Below are things you and your parents or another trusted adult can do together to help you learn what is meant by public and private.
House Rules:

DISCUSS THE HOUSE RULES REGARDING DRESS:
1. Where is it Ok to be without clothes on?
2. Where is it Ok to be with just underwear on?
3. Where can I get dressed and undressed?

DISCUSS THE HOUSE RULES REGARDING TOUCH:
1. What are the rules about me touching my body?
2. What are the rules about me touching my private parts?
3. Where in the house can I touch my private parts?

DISCUSS THE HOUSE RULES REGARDING PRIVATE AREAS:
1. What are the private areas in our house?
2. What are the areas in our neighborhood?
3. What are the private places in our community?
4. Are there private places in my school?
5. What are the private places in my school?

DISCUSS WHERE PUBLIC PLACES ARE IN OUR HOUSE, NEIGHBORHOOD, COMMUNITY, AND SCHOOL:
1. What are the public places in our house?
2. What are the public places in our neighborhood?
3. What are the public places in our community?
4. What are the public places in school?

DISCUSS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE REGARDING EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES:
1. What are the house rules about other people's privacy, e.g., knocking on the door, using other people's things without asking?
2. Where is it Ok to undress, take a bath, look at a newspaper/magazine, get dressed, or hug a friend?
   (Discuss answers for each of the following locations):
   a. At home?
   b. In the neighborhood?
   c. In the community?
   d. In school?

DISCUSS WHO ARE TRUSTED INDIVIDUALS TO TALK TO ABOUT PERSONAL FEELINGS, ISSUES, AND NEEDS.
BECOMING AN ADULT

Activities and Discussion Points
These activities can be used to help girls and boys demonstrate progress toward understanding the changes in their body as they mature into young adults. These activities are designed for you and your family members to do together.

Knowledge and understanding:
- Identifying body parts; includes being able to recognize and use correct terms
- Understanding the importance of personal hygiene (self-care)
- Understanding the difference between male and female
- Understanding the changes in their emotions
- Talking about masturbation
- Having a positive self-esteem
- Understanding the development of a baby

Attitudes and values:
- Valuing their own bodies understanding that the changes in their bodies and emotions are important and normal

Self-management skills:
- Obeying appropriate social behaviors

Interpersonal skills:
- Learning how to respect other individuals
- Understanding appropriate behavior

Self-care:
The older we are, the more important it is for us to do as much independently as possible and being responsible for our behaviors. As parents, it also means helping our children learn how and when to ask for help. Following are several important lessons to teach your family member:
- To feel good about oneself, one needs to take care of oneself. This means washing the hands after using the toilet, brushing one's teeth, eating good food, exercising in any ways possible, and for girls, menstrual self-care. As you teach your child these basics, talk with his or her teachers to find out what they are doing at school to teach your child. Then you can work together in teaching your child self-care.
- It is important for you to use the correct terminology for body parts, including sexual organs, menstruation, and emotions.
- Taking care of one's health is also important. This is the time to teach your child how to take a good look at her or his own body. If your child has changes that do not seem right, then she needs to learn how to tell someone about it in a way that will be understood. Likewise, if you see any worrisome changes in your son or daughter's body, be sure to talk to a doctor.
Preparation

The following materials and resources can be used alone or in combination to meet the specific needs, interests and maturity level of the family member.

Procedure

Activity: Your family member is now in high school and is observing the rituals of “dating,” “going steady,” “talking up,” etc. He or she may also be involved in a health education class where s/he is learning about intercourse, pregnancy, and babies. This is the time to really stress the importance of appropriate sexual behavior. S/he will undoubtedly be curious about relationships and what his or her body is feeling when s/he is near someone s/he finds him/her. This is also a great time to reinforce your family’s faith beliefs and values about sexuality with your son or daughter in a way s/he can grasp.

1. Assess your family member’s ability to understand the various concepts about relationships. Remember to use as many different teaching formats as possible. For this age group the exercises in the Social Skills section (pages 42-43) are a good place to start. Ask him/her to describe (verbally or through painting or in a picture book) what s/he is feeling (not the sample picture book in the back of the manual). Give your son or daughter time to express him or herself. S/he may have a hard time at first expressing feelings, but the more practice s/he has, the better s/he will get at it.

2. Reinforce the correct names for body parts if your child uses slang in describing their feelings.

Note: Multiple learning activities may need to be used to meet the needs, interests, cognitive capacities and maturity levels of your child. It may help to also find out what your child’s school is doing to teach these concepts, and partner with them in teaching about becoming an adult.

Self-esteem

This is the age when adolescents and young adults struggle with their self-esteem. They are under a great deal of pressure at school to “fit in.” Strong friendships are formed that may last forever high school. This is also the time when hobbies and outside interests are explored. Parents are going to dances, athletic events, and joining clubs. Give your family member opportunities to join activities with your group. It is important to give your child many opportunities to share what is going on outside the home. It is also important to see your child’s strengths, interests, and desire to achieve.”

1. This is also the time when hobbies and outside interests are explored. Parents are going to dances, athletic events, and joining clubs. Give your family member opportunities to join activities with your group. It is important to give your child many opportunities to share what is going on outside the home. It is also important to see your child’s strengths, interests, and desire to achieve.

2. Reinforce good grooming skills and hygiene. Encourage your child to try some activities with a few close friends that s/he feels comfortable with.

The following two pages give you some sample activities to help you gain information about your family member’s self-esteem. Give s/he looks up to as role models, and how he or she relates to them. Use the method of communication that works best with your family member to modify the activities.

If you feel your family member is experiencing extremely low self-esteem you should talk to him or her to see a qualified professional. Depression often starts in the early years, so it is important to monitor your child’s self-esteem to be sure that s/he is developing into a healthy adult who values him or herself for whom he or she is.

If I Could Choose To Be……

Choose 5-10 of the following statements to discuss with your students, including the last two statements. You may need to make a picture book showing examples of the questions you pick. For instance, for the first question, have a book of animals available for your students to look through and then point to the ones they would choose.

If I could choose to be……

An animal, I would be

A cartoon, I would be

A dress, I would be

A bird, I would be

A tree, I would be

A shell, I would be

A tool, I would be
A song, I would be ________________________________
A TV show, I would be ________________________________
A snack, I would be ________________________________
A color, I would be ________________________________
A movie, I would be ________________________________
An insect, I would be ________________________________
A car, I would be ________________________________
A friend, I would be ________________________________
A parent, I would be ________________________________

Why do I want to be like that adult?

What person my age would I want to be most like?

Why would I want to be like that person?

What are the things I like most about myself?

What are the things I don’t like about myself?

**Reflections of Myself**

What kind of person am I? Example: kind, quiet, funny...

Who do I think I can become?

What adult do I want to be most like?

**Masturbation**

It’s that dreaded "M" word. Masturbation is probably one of the most uncomfortable words for any person to use. Yet masturbation is incredibly common, especially among young people learning about their own bodies. What you teach your family member about masturbation will depend on family values and faith beliefs. Keep in mind though, that your family member may trymasturbation whether or not you choose to address it.

Unfortunately, there have been many cases where individuals with I/DD have been denied the right to express their sexual urges in appropriate ways. This led to those who were denied those urges often causing physical harm to themselves. Help your family member find appropriate ways to deal with his or her sexual feelings.

The scenario below represents a very common occurrence. There are many ways to deal with such a situation. Two possible reactions are described. Which you choose will likely depend on your faith, beliefs and values. Keep in mind that these are only suggestions, and you should use your best judgment in how you will approach these types of situations. Take time to learn if your child is masturbating at home, at school or in public, and then discuss the appropriate responses to these types of situations. Having this conversation will help in prevent potential tensions between home and school and confusion for your child, should someone be receiving contradictory messages from home and school.
How to talk to your family member about masturbation

SCENARIO: You walk into your living room and see your family member masturbating. Clearly s/he is not alone in the house as this is inappropriate.

**Repetition 1:** In a calm voice, tell him or her to stop what s/he is doing. (Do not say things like “stop doing that, it’s bad.”) Then take your child into the privacy of his/her bedroom and have a discussion about what s/he was feeling when s/he started to masturbate. Use the term “masturbate,” as s/he connects it with what s/he was doing. Acknowledge these feelings as being normal. Introduce to what an orgasm is. (If your family member is a male, explain that he may see a white sticky substance come out of his penis. Likewise, if your family member is female, explain that she may feel very wet around her vaginal area.)

Next discuss what was inappropriate with the location where s/he was masturbating. It might be helpful to make a separate picture book (using real photos) showing places where masturbation would be inappropriate and places that are not. Draw a stop light showing red means the picture of inappropriate places and green shows the places that are appropriate (bedrooms, bathrooms). You will want to include pictures of the school bathrooms under the inappropriate column as s/he can learn to tell the difference between “home” and “school” bathrooms. It is easier, just teach one appropriate place, such as the bedroom to start. You may have to restrict him or her to the bathroom and go over the picture board many, many times.

**Repetition 2:** In a calm voice, tell him or her to stop what s/he is doing. (Avoid saying things like “stop doing that, it’s bad.”) Then take your child into the privacy of his/her bedroom and have a discussion about what s/he was feeling when s/he started to masturbate. Use the terms “masturbate,” as s/he connects it with what s/he was doing. Acknowledge these feelings as normal. Then talk about what was inappropriate about masturbate. Tell about ways s/he can take this or her mind off these feelings and avoid the urge to masturbate. For example, your son can do a little ride or go on the computer. If you have a daughter, she may enjoy the computer and could do this to take her attention off how she is feeling.

If you notice that your family member’s penis or vaginal area is red and sore looking it could be because s/he is masturbating. You could go teaching your family member to use a lubricating gel or cream. There are several good ones on the market.

If you feel that your family member is uncooperative sexually, talk with your doctor. There may be a hormone imbalance or other medical condition which is causing an uncooperative sex drive.

**Note:** You may want to use pages 24 and 25 as reference for this discussion.

**Intercourse**

Intercourse, making love, and having sex are all terms your family member will have heard by now. If he may even have asked you about it more than once. So how do you talk to your son or daughter about what happens during intercourse? It is important that you use correct terms. Keep it in a family member is unlikely to ever be in an intimate relationship, it is important that s/he knows exactly what intercourse is. Explaining it using correct terms will help your child describe it if someone teaches him or her in an inappropriate way. There is some suggestion on how to describe it:

Sexual intercourse starts when a man’s penis enters the woman’s vagina. The man and woman assume in a way so that the man’s penis slides in and not at the vagina. This movement should feel good to both the man and woman. After a period of time, which could be a couple of minutes or longer, the woman ejaculates (orgasms) at the man’s penis. The man and woman will have what is called an orgasm.

When the man and woman have an orgasm they may feel the muscles of their bodies getting tense (tightens your arm muscle as they can feel what you feel). It is a very good feeling though and not a bad feeling. If you have discussed masturbation with your family member and you know s/he masturbates, it will be easier to explain orgasms during intercourse.

If you are unsure how to best discuss intercourse, you might consider talking to the school nurse or health/sex education instructor, for guidance.

**Safe Sex**

If your family member is likely to be sexually active in adulthood, now is the time to start talking about safe sex. This may be a hard subject for you to think about, but persons with I/DD are marrying, having their own houses, and even raising families. You know your family member best. Introduce the concept of safe sex the same way you did for masturbation or intercourse. You will need to decide how much emphasis you are going to place on abstinence and safe sex/birth control methods. For abstinence, the "saying NO" pages later in the guide will be helpful to you. When teaching about safe sex, if possible have pictures or actual items of various birth control methods. For your son, teach him how to use a condom the same way this is taught in school with a banana. For your daughter, it is best to discuss the various forms of birth control with your OB/GYN. There may be specific medical conditions which would keep your female family member from using certain birth control methods. The OB/GYN would be able to steer you both to the one that is the safest and easiest to use.

**Condom Use**

For sexually active individuals, condoms are one of the most common methods for safe sex. Before teaching your students about condom use, be sure that they, a school nurse, or other health professional from the school talks with their parents. Some parents may not want you to teach condom usage due to their faith beliefs. Come up with alternative ways to emphasize safe sex, such as abstinence. Once you and your students’ parents are agreed on teaching about condom use, there are some important points to teach your students.

**Note:** Even when used correctly, condoms are not 100% effective.

- Only use latex condoms (unless your student is allergic to latex).
- Inspect the condom package for a safety seal. The safety seal is an air bubble in the package. If this is not there the do not use the condom.
- Condoms have expiration dates. Check the date on the package.
- Open the package using only your fingers. Anything sharp can damage the condom.
- Do not apply the condom before putting it on the penis.
- Place the condom on the tip of the penis, leaving the end to keep air out.
- Unfold the condom all the way to the bottom of the penis.
- If the condom breaks throw it away and do not use it.
- Do not use oil-based lubricants like Vaseline or baby oil— these damage the condom.
• Condoms are used only once.
• There are also condoms for females, although these are a little more difficult to use. In this case, pictures of condoms for both males and females.

It is important to emphasize several key issues:

First, sexual intercourse should be between two consenting adults (both people want to have sex). In the state of Florida, the minimum age for legal sexual consent is 16 if the partner is under age 24, and 18 if the partner is over age 24. Having sexual intercourse with someone who is not of consenting age is illegal and can result in arrest, and possibly even jail time.

Second, abstinence is still the safest way for your family member to prevent pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and other potential health and legal problems. Remember to talk with your family member about ways to say NO to sexual activity. More will be discussed on this topic in the section on parenting (page 10) that discusses the egg and sperm. The sperm that comes out of the man’s penis into the woman’s vagina holds the sperm. Some of this sperm stays inside the woman. If the woman has an egg in her uterus then the sperm may join with the egg and a baby grows. The next few pages show the progression of the growth of a baby.

Embryo

Fetus

The female egg cell and male sperm cell unite (A). Cell division begins (B). Cells continue to divide (C). The division continues until a cluster (D) is formed.

Seven to eight days after fertilization, the cluster of cells attaches itself to the lining of the uterus. In about ten to fourteen days, the cluster begins to "specialize" and later becomes organized into various tissues of the body, such as skin, muscle, bone, nerve, blood, and glands. By this time the baby is ready to be born, it will have billions and billions of cells. Up to about the twelve week, the developing baby is sometimes referred to as an embryo. After that, it is sometimes referred to as a fetus.
1st Trimester:
The fetus is about 1'' long and weighs about 1/4 oz. Heartbeat may be heard through the stethoscope. Movement can be felt.

2nd Trimester:
The fetus is about 4'' long and weighs about 2 lbs. Central nervous system develops so that if born now the baby could survive.

3rd Trimester:
The fetus is about 17'' long and weighs about 3 lbs. Neural tube formation

Approximate Fetal Growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of Pregnancy</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Length (Head to Heel)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1/2 oz</td>
<td>1-1/2 inch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>6 oz</td>
<td>1-1/2 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>2 lbs</td>
<td>10 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>3 lbs</td>
<td>10-1/2 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>3-1/2 lbs</td>
<td>12 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>6-1/2 lbs</td>
<td>14 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>7-1/2 lbs</td>
<td>15 inches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4th Trimester:
The fetus is about 20'' long and weighs about 6-1/2 lbs. Cartilage in nose and ears develop; rapid weight gain.

Birth:
A baby enters the world and starts breathing air for the first time.
Medical Concerns

People with 1/3/2 are subject to the same illnesses and diseases as the rest of us. Your family member's abilities may not include the ability to care for his or her own personal care needs. If s/he is able to take care of their personal care needs (dressing, etc.) then s/he should learn to look for signs that something is not normal.

The more your family member knows about various illnesses and diseases, the better prepared s/he will be to live as independently as possible. It is important that your family member have regular medical exams, particularly if s/he is ontogenic. This is the best way to avoid serious illnesses and infections. Medications can also leave a person susceptible to secondary medical problems. An example of this is tuberculosis. They can reduce the good bacteria in a child's system, leaving her open to possible yeast infections. Left untreated, yeast infections can become very serious. Talk to your family member's physician about possible problems from medications. There are preventative measures that can be taken to avoid such infections as yeast. Regular medical exams are also another means for ensuring that your family member is not sexually active and/or has not been sexually abused.

BEGINNING SOCIAL SKILLS

Activities and Discussion Points

These activities can be used to help girls and boys demonstrate progress toward understanding what is needed to act in a socially appropriate manner as human beings in society. The following pages will give you ideas and activities for helping to teach your family member these important basic skills.

Knowledge and understanding:

- Learning
- Having conversations
- Asking questions or asking for help
- Introducing yourself or others
- Giving a compliment

Attitudes and values:

- Appropriate listening and conversation

Self-management skills:

- Sharing respect for self and others

Interpersonal skills:

- Learning how to talk to peers and adults
- Understanding and demonstrating appropriate and respectful behavior
- Learning how to express emotions

Social Skills: Hints for Parents/Caregivers

Sexuality begins and ends with developing good social skills and respecting oneself and others. Social skills are all about good communication. Listening, talking, asking questions, and being able to express oneself in the best of one's abilities. Give and receive love and affection are basic human needs. Children will use a variety of ways to express them. They need to be loved and have their wants and desires. As a parent or caregiver you can help your family member grow and learn about his or her sexuality by teaching good social skills. The following pages will cover basic social skills, the transition skills needed by everyone to interact in the best of our abilities in society.

Note: Multiple learning activities may need to be used to meet the needs, interests, maturity and cognitive levels of children.
Listening Skills

Exercise 1
A good way to teach listening skills is through general conversations or role playing. For this first exercise, sit or stand facing each other. Use a real life example of a situation that happened, such as you were not because, then take the following steps:

1. While you are talking, have your family member look at you making sure you both make eye contact.
2. Ask him/her to think about what you are saying. Ask him/her to acknowledge that s/he is listening by nodding or verbalizing "yes" or "uh huh.
3. If your family member interrupts, reinforce that s/he needs to wait before s/he tries to talk.
4. When you are finished, ask your family member questions about what you just said to ensure that s/he was listening. Again ask your child to acknowledge with a nod of the head or a verbal statement.
5. Now reverse the roles and have your family member talk about something that happened to him/her or how s/he is feeling, while you demonstrate appropriate listening skills.

Conversation Skills

Exercise 2
We all talk to people, but for some children beginning a conversation can be a difficult task. Add to that an intellectual or developmental disability that inhibits verbal communication and the disconnect is difficult in communicating with peers or adults is compounded. Learning a few simple conversational skills will help your child interact more easily and appropriately. During this process, reinforce the method your family member uses to communicate with you while teaching the skill set. Again use a role playing situation such as asking a friend from school to be a partner or a class assignment.

Following are suggested steps to the drill:

1. Great the attention by saying hi and/or shaking hands. Remember that children often have non-verbal handshakes and that our traditional handshake may be inappropriate to use with others late/earlier on, as you may need to teach your child several types of handshakes. Choosing the right time to approach the person is stressed during this exercise. This means learning not to interrupt the other person if s/he is talking to someone else.

2. After greeting the person, it would be appropriate to make small talk, e.g., asking how s/he is.

3. Next use the skill learned in Exercise 1 to make sure that the person is listening to you—nodding or verbalizing that you are listening.

4. When it is clear that the person is listening to you, bring up the subject you want to talk about.

5. Say or ask what you want.

6. Then using the listening skills learned in Exercise 1, listen to what the person has to say back to you.

7. Respond back to the other person, letting him/her know that you heard and understood what s/he said to you.

8. Finish the conversation by saying thank you, good-bye, or another appropriate statement.

Giving Compliments

Exercise 3
Giving compliments to others is not something that is done often enough by anyone in today's society. Compliments praising or in psychological terms, positive reinforcements, are needed by everyone to help us feel good about ourselves and what we are doing in our lives. Teaching this skill at a very young age is the best way to instill it as a positive social skill. It will not hurt or make adults uncomfortable if they are given more often. Teach your child to remember compliments and give the compliments to others.

1. Choose a scenario.

2. Discuss the appropriate words (guises or body language) to give the compliment.

3. Discuss who would be the right time to give the compliment.

4. Practice giving the compliment.

Apologizing

Exercise 4
Apologizing is something else that we are not very good at. For any of you who have or do have pets, you know that they are wonderful at apologizing. As humans we could take a few lessons from them! However, you can help your family member learn this skill. Probably the hardest part of teaching this skill is helping your family member recognize when an apology is needed. You need to discuss recognizing hurt feelings. The best way to do that is by discussing a variety of situations when you have been hurt or when you have hurt someone. Choose a situation you are going to use for role modeling and the follow the steps below. Remember in many of the situations that you want to role model, it can be: TV shows, videos, and even in favorite stories. If you are not comfortable role modeling social skills such as apologizing, you can start out using these tools to get the messages across and then move into role modeling.

1. Make a decision whether you think you need to apologize.

2. Go over the various ways you could apologize.

3. Practice saying the apology.

4. Decide when it would be best to give the apology.

5. Approach the person and give the apology.

6. Wait and listen for what the person has to say back to you.

7. Respond back to the other person letting him/her know you heard his/her response.
Feelings
Your own feelings

Understanding how we are feeling and being able to express our feelings are other areas of communication that need to be learned. There are areas of communication that most of us have a difficult time with. Recognizing what we are feeling is the first step in understanding what we are and how we can best interact with others and our environment. Among the feelings we need to learn to recognize are: joy, happiness, love, sadness, disappointment, anger, fear, frustration, anxiety, other transient, excitements, evaluation, misunderstanding, and physical sexual feelings. As your family member moves into puberty, s/he will need to learn how to recognize what s/he is feeling in order to know how to act appropriately.

Making flashcards of all the feelings is a great tool to use when talking to your family member about what s/he is feeling. Another useful tool is to make a picture board showing photos of people expressing a variety of emotions. Write the corresponding feeling under each picture. This way you’ll have a tool for those individuals who may only be able to point to or look at the correct feeling. A sample “Feelings Worksheet” may be found on page 8.

You will need to explain what each feeling means many times so that your family member learns to differentiate between all the various feelings. Once your son or daughter learns the basics of these feelings, s/he will be better able to understand and communicate what s/he is feeling. You can help your family member understand what s/he is feeling by describing how you feel inside, when you experience each emotion. Remember though, that how your family member reacts internally to emotions may not be the same as how you react. Allow for individuality. The following is an example of how you might proceed to describe each feeling.

Exercise 5

1. Help your family member focus on what is going on inside his/her body. Does s/he feel a tightening of the stomach, or maybe buster flaps? Does s/he feel hot, cold or anything moving around? Is s/he shaking? Does s/he feel like s/he just can’t stop it? These are all feelings a person may feel when experiencing different emotions. If your family member doesn’t know what it means to have butterflies or tight muscles, show him or her. Tighten the muscles of your forearms and put a hand on it as s/he can feel it. For butterflies get a feather and lightly brush it back and forth on the inside of the forearm. (The inside of the forearm is more sensitive than the back of the hand.)

2. Once s/he can recognize how his or her body reacts, focus on an event that may have occurred to make him or her feel that way. You may have to go back that happened that day in order to hit upon the one thing that is still affecting him/her. Remember it may not be a big event. Sometimes it’s the things that affect us the most are the little things – like getting that first cup of coffee in the morning.

3. Once you have found the event, focus on naming what s/he is feeling. Use the flashcards or picture board to help identify and put a name to the feeling.

4. The last step is to practice communication of what s/he is feeling to you. Use the steps from Exercise 2 to help your family member do this.

Other people’s feelings

It is not only important to understand our own feelings, but also to understand other people’s feelings. Relationships, whether family, friend, romantic, or co-worker, take an ability and willingness to understand how the other person is feeling. It requires good listening skills and an ability to know how to respond appropriately if the other person’s feelings, such as anger or love, are directed at us. Developing skills to help understand how another person is feeling will also help to protect your child should someone react adversely for directed at you or her. The first step to recognizing other people’s feelings is understanding those feelings from your own point of view as demonstrated in the previous exercise. Go through the following exercise using role playing and the picture board, your own personal example, or a situation that has occurred recently where your family member did or did not react appropriately to another person’s feelings. The exercises below will help your family member recognize unwanted verbal and physical advances.

Exercise 6

1. Put yourself in the role of the other person. If the person was angry, then make yourself look angry physically. Have your family member look at you closely. Or, have the picture board and show him or her the picture of an angry person.

2. Say what a person who is angry might say when expressing this anger to another person. Have your family member use good listening skills (Exercise 1) during this time.

3. Have your family member discuss what s/he sees in the other person’s physical reaction, i.e., tight muscles, squared shoulders, squinting eyes, etc.

4. Help your family member put a name to the feeling s/he is seeing, i.e., angry or whatever feeling you are trying to demonstrate.

5. Discuss appropriate ways in which to show that your family member understands what the other person is feeling. This may include a “yes, no,” a simple touch on the arm, or in some situations moving away from the person and leaving him or her alone. In the case of unwanted sexual advances the appropriate course of action is to leave immediately and tell a trusted individual what happened.

6. Decide what response is the best and then have your family member practice that response.

Remember: The better the ability of your family member to communicate effectively and appropriately, the better self-image s/he will have. This translates into a better quality of life. Another reason for good communication skills is so that, should s/he need to report a person for unwanted advances (sexual or violent; verbal or physical), s/he will be able to be as accurate as possible in relaying the situation.

Links to the Resource Guide:

Below are corresponding references to the accompanying Resource Guide. The selection were chosen to help you find additional information that can help you and your child through this learning process.

Grades K - 2
The Way I Feel Board Book, page 18

Grades 3 - 5
The Way I Feel, page 18
What is a Feeling?, page 18

*Any of the resources as appropriate: pages 10 and 11