



Family News

Winter 2013

The Family Place
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Let's Talk About Sex!

It's hard to imagine talking about sex to our newborn sons and daughters. They're too innocent! Too cute! Too unsullied by negative body images! The longer, we wait, though, the harder it may be to offer a clear, unembarrassed understanding of the facts of life to our children. And what an important gift that is.

"The best advice I got was from Dr. Michael Lyons at White River Family Practice," says Cindy Pierce, Etna mom of three, innkeeper, and author of "Finding the Doorbell, Sexual Satisfaction for the Long Haul." "He told me it is important to talk to kids about sex in the first grade BEFORE they get information from the Internet or from a friend who has access to the Internet and who is talking about sex on the bus or at recess."

Pierce's children, now in the 5th, 7th and 9th grade, know they can approach their parents with questions, problems and clarifications - and they aren't embarrassed to do so. At least, two of them aren't. "The other one claims to be cringing with embarrassment, but interestingly enough she doesn't leave the room when it gets graphic and detailed. It took practice, but it is so much easier. The key was getting information to them before they were interested in sex or going through puberty, so it was very matter-of-fact."

Some parents feel uncomfortable with talking about sex or even accurately naming body parts out fear that their children will repeat their knowledge to other children, or, more embarrassingly, to other parents and caregivers. Pierce solves this dilemma by making it clear to her kids - from the beginning - that this was "Family Science" and it was not their job to share it with other families. "When I talked to my kids about this, I said 'Not all families talk openly about sex, and other parents might be upset if you talk about this in school or on the bus. Ask us anything, but every family has its own pace, and we need to respect that.'" Small children who push boundaries by naming body parts in public places often lose interest when they don't get a reaction from mom or dad. "You just have to trust the grandmother next to you in the checkout line may have raised kids and understands."

Teaching children the correct names of their body parts serves an important purpose beyond a foundation for a healthy understanding of sexuality. While all parents hope that childhood sexual abuse never gains a spot on our list of immediate worries, it's smart to have some basic tools in the toolbox.

The staff of the Windsor County Unit for Special Investigations state: "As parents, we should get into the habit of teaching healthy sexual development. It's part of human nature and we should take the embarrassment and discomfort out of it. And while we would hope that a child never experiences being abused sexually, knowing the proper names of body parts will help a child communicate with those in positions to help."

By teaching girls and boys the correct names for their sexual body parts, we empower them. We give them greater protection from a world that might want to hurt them.

While schools and pediatricians play an important role in sex education, parents and caregivers are often the first wave of learning. Pierce points out: "This is our job as parents."

For further reading:

IT'S SO AMAZING by Rovie H. Harris and Michael Emberly
IT'S NOT THE STORK by Robie H. Harris and Michael Emberly
IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL by Robie H. Harris and Michael Emberly



Our Mission

The Family Place Parent Child Center supports the positive growth and development of all parents by offering services that encourage families to build upon their strengths.



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UPPER VALLEY HAVEN
White River Junction, Vermont

“Force for the Future” Raising Hope for All Children

Keynote Speaker: Linda Mason

Wednesday, April 3, 2013
12:00 to 1:30 p.m.
Coolidge Hotel
White River Junction, VT

The Family Place is proud to partner with The Haven to present an opportunity for the Upper Valley community to learn from experienced and informed advocates about the challenges facing children living in poverty. We are also using this opportunity to honor retiring Executive Director Elaine Guenet for her 19 years of service to The Family Place.

\$40 per person; space is limited - RSVP by March 25, 2013 -
Call 802-649-3268 or register online at www.familyplacevt.org
or mail reply card and payment to:
The Family Place
319 US Route 5 South
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All proceeds benefit The Family Place

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You're invited to a free lecture hosted by the
Hartford Regional Building Bright Futures Council

Toxic Stress in Children: What Can We Do?

A science-based framework to guide parents, practitioners, and policymakers

Monday April 15, 2013
6:30-8:00 pm
Montshire Museum Community Room

**Speaker: Todd Grindal,
Fellow at the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University**

Contact Mary Nyhan at The Family Place (802) 649-3268 or
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