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Children's Sexuality

By Rexanne Mancini

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We are all born as sexual beings. It is as much a part of our anatomy, our emotional and mental make-up as breathing. Whether we are acting upon our sexual drive at any given moment is beside the point. I think it's important to realize that children have sexual feelings, just not as developed as adult feelings. Whether these instincts remain healthy is quite another story. As parents, I believe we need to instill a healthy outlook in our kids about sex and their imminent sexuality.

The first inkling we have of our little ones being sexual is their first attempts at masturbation. This could take any form you can imagine but most parents notice our babies discover their genitals at about 10 months of age and maybe younger. Eureka! A new toy! Hopefully, we won't freak out about it. It is, after all, their toy! This is their body and it is their innocent need to discover how the various parts function, feel and react. There have been countless studies and articles written about masturbation. Clearly, it is a healthy form of sexual exploration and usually begins in early childhood.

So, that said, let's think about how we, as parents and caretakers, can deal with this sometimes-embarrassing issue.

Personally, it never bothered me when my toddlers began exploring their bodies. I'd gently point out that it wasn't appropriate to do in front of most people and certainly not at the dinner table but other than that, the issue was never really an ... issue.

I have witnessed other parents go through a variety of reactions to their baby's or toddler's wandering hands, from actually hitting a child for innocently touching their genitals to a mortified: "How could you?!" Gee, how could they NOT? Come on ... they're babies, they're exploring the world and themselves. Where is the shame, guilt or horror in this? Only in parent's and other adult minds, that's where. How on earth would a baby or young toddler assume that touching a part of their being is bad, evil, shameful or humiliating unless their significant care taker tells them so, whether in words, actions or obvious distress over the situation?

This brings us to the probable conclusion that our kids will grow into adults feeling ashamed, guilty and weird about their sexuality if we, as their predominant instructors of life, teach them to feel bad about

their natural curiosity.

I certainly understand that some adults are just not comfortable with this parenting issue or, down the line, discussing sex in a logical and rational way with their questioning adolescents. A good plan would be to enlist the help and guidance of a trusted family member or the child's pediatrician. Better yet, parents who feel uncomfortable should discuss this with their own doctor, trusted friend or family member and then have a back up plan to deal with the issue when it arises, which it most definitely will.

Rexanne Mancini is the mother of two daughters. She maintains an extensive yet informal parenting and family web site, Rexanne.com - <http://www.rexanne.com> –Visit her site for good advice,

award-winning Internet holiday pages and some humor to help you cope. Subscribe to her free newsletter, Rexanne's Web Review, for a monthly dose of Rexanne:
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Standing in the Gap

By Kimberly Chastain

I'm weary of saying No to my children. Not just the everyday No's. Don't hit your brother and No, you cannot have 5 pieces of candy. I am weary of the No I am continually saying to our culture. The world is bound and determined to take away my children's innocence. They want my children to grow up way too fast. They want my little girl to dress like an adult. They want my little boy to know things he is way too young to know. I'm weary of saying you can't go to that movie, because it is not appropriate for your age. No, you can't wear what everyone else is wearing, because it is not appropriate. The straw that finally broke the camel's back was when my son walked in while I was watching the news. He asked me, "Mommy is it true that men can marry men and women can marry women?" "Mom, if two women marry can they have a baby?" My son is 6. I don't want to be discussing sexuality with him much less homosexuality. So, I told him that no men can't marry men and women can't marry women (for now anyway) and that women with women cannot have a baby. (Don't get me started on explaining how they can). I should not be having these discussions with my children, but I'm being forced too. What happened to childhood innocence?

As I was thinking about my weariness I remembered the song and verse in the Bible about Standing in the Gap. I also realized that God cares more for my children than I do. He is there to guide me and support my weariness. He knows there is sin in the world. God wants me to rest in him and seek his guidance in these difficult times. He wants me to say No and set moral limits based on Biblical standards that differ widely from the world. He expects me to raise children who respect God and obey his commands.

The problem with being weary is it is so easy to give in. I have been there and I would guess you have to. Oh, okay you can see that movie or maybe you can wear that shirt. You know "Everybody else does." Please hear me clearly there is a big difference between raising naive children and innocent children. I just want my children to grow up in a reasonable time frame. I want them to know what is

appropriate for their age.

So, fellow Mom I ask that we stand together. That we stand in the gap for our children. That we constantly seek God's guidance and protection for our children. We can grow weary, but we can't give up. Our children need us to show them the way. They need to see living up to God's standards is very different than the world's.

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Kimberly M. Chastain, MS, LMFT is the Christian Working Mom Coach and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who specializes in helping Christian women make the most of their lives. She is the author of the on-line course, "I Can't Say No" and Pearls of Encouragement for Christian Working

Moms, a free e-book. If you suffer from "I Can't Say `No" Syndrome, visit Kimberly's site today for the details on an exciting email course that's sure to set you free!

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Standing in the Gap

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