

Sex Education: Why Promote Chastity

The impetus for sex education in the schools is allegedly to reduce the epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases and teen pregnancy. If that is really the case, sex education has failed miserably, because during its hay day, those problems have increased exponentially.

There is another goal, however, motivating many proponents of the currently popular curricula: to liberalize sexual attitudes. Sometimes attempt is made to tie these two together in claiming that teens fail to use birth control basically because of their inhibitions. Therefore, they say, even though the trend so far is in the wrong direction, what we really need is much more of the same.

For the most part, however, proponents of contraceptive focused sex education claim to share the parents' concern for simply keeping teens out of trouble. I propose that the current approach is based on absent data and fallacious reasoning, compounded by faulty comprehension of human nature. Chastity, which is sexual abstinence before marriage and faithfulness in marriage, and the programs that teach this approach, are the only things that really work.

Am I talking through my hat? Or is the only supporting print found in publications of the religious right? In 1986, Planned Parenthood commissioned a Harris poll on "Comprehensive Sex Education" which was defined as basic reproductive education and information on birth control and abortion.

Among a representative sample of 1000 teenagers, there was a 44% increased likelihood of a student having intercourse if he or she had been through comprehensive sex education as opposed to no sex education at all. There was a 53% increased likelihood of intercourse if the student had comprehensive sex education as opposed to basic reproductive sex education.

This was a finding of astounding importance. Yet it was not even noted in the text, although unmistakably found in the published data by readers. The finding is not isolated and, despite squirming by the authors, the criticism has never been successfully answered. Yet there was no call for a moratorium on comprehensive sex education programs.

But this makes no sense, you might say. Knowledge is good, isn't it? I have to respond that the effect is real and there are at least three possible explanations for what is happening: 1) Some Sex Education material is sexually stimulating. (Why does pornography sell?) Someone who says graphic material is not a "turn on" is either very repressed or very jaded. 2) All options are portrayed to be safe if you use the right technology. 3) The expectation by the professionals is that adolescents will all be sexually active and they convey this expectation to the kids.

Further, some of the key figures in the sex education movement have made no secret of their goals. Margaret Sanger, Founder of Planned Parenthood wrote this: "Through sex, mankind may attain the great spiritual illumination which will transform the world, which will light up the only path to an earthly paradise." (The Pivot of Civilization, NY Brentano's, 1922, p.270)

Mary Calderone, Founder of SIECUS (Sex Information and Education Council of the US) wrote: "Change is the new reality... The unchanging... is unreal, constraining, a false goal." "(Children) must become familiar with change, feel comfortable with it, understand it, master it, control it." "If man as he is, is obsolescent, then what kind do we want to produce in his place and how do we design the production line? -- that is the real question facing ... sex education." ("Sex Education and the Roles of School and Church," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences 376, March 1968, p. 57).

Sociologist Ira Reiss claims that the first sexual revolution did not go far enough because people are still feeling guilty. In An End To Shame: Shaping Our Next Sexual Revolution, he envisions a guilt-free society in which no sexual expression is prohibited and everybody feels wonderful. Isn't that just great? Maybe he will entitle his next book, Psychopaths in Wonderland

Another clue that opponents of chastity march to a different drummer is the response to programs that actually work. Planned Parenthood and the ACLU have complained in various forums that sexual abstinence before marriage is a religious concept and does not belong in the public schools. (Of course, so is teaching against theft and murder. Are we to stop that too? And, on the other side of the issue, promiscuity is a doctrine of the religion of Satanism. But it is not nearly as fashionable to persecute them.)

These groups have also claimed that the chastity programs promote a stereotypical view of the family as mother, father and children. (Sounds like the complainers need a good sex education course, folks. That /S where babies come from, remember?)

Sex Respect, a successful curriculum emphasizing marriage is being attacked by SIECUS and Planned Parenthood (who claim that they also want sexual abstinence for teens). They do not question its effectiveness, but state that it works by promoting *fear*. I wonder how they feel about warning little children not to run in the street?

Most of the thought questions in Facing Reality, a high school sex, drugs and alcohol curriculum, were ruled illegal in Shreveport, Louisiana, in 1993 by Judge Thaxton, because of a statute that prohibits quizzing students on subjective personal views. (There, for all time, goes the essay test!)

Why such trumped up and abstract charges? This is especially puzzling when looking at the data showing a marked improvement in attitudes towards sexual abstinence for unmarried teens. The change was most dramatic, amazingly, with those who had previously been sexually active and those considered high risk.

The short term return to abstinence was about 60% - 70% and longer term studies are underway. (See "Facing Reality: Abstinence Curriculum Evaluation Report, 1994-95," and "Choosing the Best: Abstinence Curriculum Evaluation Report 1994-95" by John Vessey, PhD, Mental Health Services & Evaluation Program, Northwestern University Medical School. Copies available from Project Reality, PO Box 97, Golf IL 60029-0097.)

Teen-Aid, another abstinence program has shown in its 1991 report that there was significant change in attitudes and intentions as a result of the course. ("The Teen-Aid Family Life Education Project: Year End 1991 Report, Teen-Aid, Inc., 1330 Calispel, Spokane WA 99201.) They also showed a great teacher variability with poor results by teachers who did not really believe in the program. That makes sense. If the teacher essentially says, "Well, I'm supposed to tell you to not do it, but what you really need is condoms," the kids will get that message loud and clear.

What is missing from the analysis of the politically correct camp? And why does it use such devious techniques to discredit the programs doing what most parents actually want? THERE IS A FAULTY UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN NATURE.

A commonly used 1991 Planned Parenthood text, Your Complete Guide to Sexual Health, opens with a statement of its values. "1. *Information and education*: We believe in the right of all people to have the most complete and up-to-date information possible to guide them in the choices they make regarding sexuality, fertility, and health care. 2. *Choice*: We believe in the right of each individual to make his or her own choices about sexuality and related matters. 3. *Responsible sexuality*: We

believe in the importance of responsible sexual behavior, which means that sexual choices and behaviors are not harmful to oneself or others."

The assumption is being made that information and freedom will lead to choices that harm no one. But does it really? What does observation and honesty tell us? It tells us that sexual behavior is often surrounded by incredible rationalization. Think about all the rape cases where "consent" is the prime issue debated. Think of all the abusers who say, "Sure I did it, but no one was harmed."

Another faulty assumption is that the only adverse things that can happen in a sexual relationship are pregnancy or disease. The truth is that the emotional consequences are probably most devastating. Sex is a powerful bonding force. If that relationship breaks up, as those based only on sexual attraction usually do, the effect can be devastating.

A study of the use of birth control by teens (DiCemente, Pediatrics February 1992) found that use of condoms with the third through fifth partners was down to 27.4% from 49.6% for the first.

Why might this be? You would expect them to become more sophisticated and prepared. They certainly know where to buy the things. I suggest that self esteem goes down and protective reflexes are replaced by an "I don't care" attitude. Some girls at that point really want a baby (who will stick around and love them since the guys apparently will not.)

Some people are left, after temporary sexual relationships, as the walking wounded. The wounds are deep but their effects may be mistakenly attributed to other causes by professionals who believe sex to be without negative consequence.

But doesn't the seasoned swinger learn to deal with these feelings? Yes, but those solutions are not very pretty, either. Prostitutes stop feeling. The ritually abused develop multiple personalities because "this cannot be happening to me." And to the swinger, capable of doing or saying whatever is necessary to achieve ones' desires and then walk away, I say this. Being a sociopath, means never having to say, "I'm sorry."

Many of the proponents of contraceptive sex education today are just plain deceived. They believe the lies and do not suspect the cover ups. They are doing what they think is right or are swayed by professional peer pressure. I do not think everyone is a plotter or schemer, but I ask everyone to stand up and declare their true colors.

If you find my data distasteful, are you only following expert opinion? Are you just hoping to avoid offending people who have made wrong choices? Are you really trying to free kids from guilt due to restrictive morality? Are you perhaps attempting to justify past personal behavior or teaching?

If you see reason to change, do you have the courage to say, "I was wrong." If you do not wish to change, will you admit your real goals and advertise that you are performing a social experiment based on liberalizing sexual mores. Let those families who agree opt in. But stop misrepresenting your goal as simply keeping kids from disease and pregnancy.

If you refuse to look at the data showing that abstinence education works and that contraceptive or combined abstinence-contraceptive education does not, admit that you are not being fair or scientific. If you do not have the courage of your convictions to honestly label what you are doing, then get out of the business of sex education.

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