



Family Planning Victoria Podcast 'Doing It'

Transcript for

Episode 7 - What is Sex?

This podcast is for parents and carers of school aged children so that we can share what goes on in our relationships and sexuality education class and help support these sorts of conversations at home.

Contributors

Speaker 1- Anne Atcheson and

Speaker 2 Athi Kokonis

Anne: [00:01](#) This podcast contains discussion about adult topics. Use your judgement if there are little ears around. Welcome to doing it. This is a podcast made by the Family Planning Victoria schools team. We're trying to answer the question for young people about how do you do it, meaning what sex is and for grownups, how do you do it? As in how do you talk to young people about sex and bodies and growing up? My name is Anne and I'm part of Family Planning Victoria schools education team. We go to schools and run classes for all year levels on bodies growing up, puberty, sex, reproduction. This podcast is for parents and carers of school aged children so that we can share what goes on in our relationships and sexuality education class and help support these sorts of conversations at home.

Anne: [00:52](#) Our first series of podcasts is about puberty, which is something we generally start talking about with students from about grade three or four by grade five six students should be getting lots of information about puberty. Sex gets talked about in class alongside puberty because puberty is a maturation of the sexual organs, In preparation to make a baby. It makes sense to discuss these together. Explaining what sex is to children is really tricky for most adults. Adults might feel like it's too private or want to shield children from the things about sex at a scary. If children learn about sex at a young age, they do not think sex is for them. It's a good idea to introduce the idea of sex as something

that's supposed to be a positive, normal, good part of an adult relationship. Family Planning Victoria recommends that you talk to your child about sex as early as you can.

Anne: [01:47](#) There's no reason why you couldn't tell a child how a woman got a baby inside her belly. Just tell them. Students could be talking about sex and reproduction in class by about grade three or four. That's when family planning Victoria would be introducing discussion about sex into a class. It's likely that they're talking about sex in the playground before then. By the end of primary school, students should be able to understand human reproduction and understand that sex could be a part of an adult relationship, Athi has been delivering sex and sexuality classes to all sorts of people for a long time, let's hear some wisdom from Athi? So Athi, thank you for letting me ask you questions. My first question for you is, what is sex?

Athi: [02:35](#) Well, sex is a big topic. I mean, most people want to talk about sex as being something that's a man putting his penis inside a woman's vagina, but I think we need to talk about sex as being broader than that. So I would say to children sex is something that two people do together that's romantic and sexy feelings. And it's a way of them feeling very, very close together, putting their bodies close together. So it's everything from doing lots and lots of private kisses, um, to touching each other. And sometimes if one of the people has a penis they might want to put it inside the body of the other person. So it's about using all of your body and encouraging young people to think that it's broader than just penetration and it doesn't always make a baby. No, that's right. That's right.

Athi: [03:35](#) That's probably one of the biggest lies we tell young people that sex is just for making babies. If that were the case, why would the world be so obsessed with it? Not only obsessed with it, but why would there be shame associated with that and sex is used in the media to sell everything from cars to shoes to deodorant, and if it was just about making babies, it wouldn't feature as such an important thing in all our advertising in our TV programs, in our movies, and kids know that so they know that there's a secret that adults are keeping from them.

Athi: [04:33](#) What do we know about how much young people are having sex? Well, the statistics are really quite interesting. If you look at the stats from archers, which is the Australian Research Center for Sexual Health and society, they started collecting data from year tens and year twelves in 1992 and they do a survey with students every five to six years and what you can see from the stats is they haven't really changed that much. Not

dramatically. Not the amount that you'd think they would have changed because society has changed so much and I think one of the reasons for a slight change is in 1992 children started school at four and then they actually turned five in their first year. Nowadays, children are five when they start school, so they are 18 they've turned 18 well before they get to year 12 what that means is that the stats for year 10 and 12 you would assume would change and get a little higher for the number of young people that have had sex, which is the case by about three to 5% over that time.

Athi: [05:53](#) In terms of age, it's not that different. No, no, it's not that different. And if you think about it, an 18 year old 30 years ago could marry and have children and no one would blink an eyelid while they're still able to get married. And now we blink at that. We certainly have some ideas about why that might not be the best case scenario. It's a misnomer that society in the past has actually been less sexual, sexually orientated in the 1800, the legal age for consent and marriage was 13 in England. And then they actually changed it to 16 and then in the Victorian era they changed it to 18 and now it's gone back again. So if, so, we tend to think that the world is a really terrible place now. But I don't think that's the case. If you look at the statistics and you talk to young people and if you think back, if a parent thinks back to their own experiences at the same age, it's actually not that different.

Athi: [07:03](#) No, no, that's right. And that's what I tell students sometimes that, you know, um, when their parents talk to them, they're being influenced by what the mass media says. And so they're frightened for their children. But in actual fact, their parents grew up in a time where yes, they didn't have computers and so forth. But in terms of sexual experience, there was a similar sort of level. So what do you think adults are really worried about for their children? What sort of messages are they getting? Adults vary just as young people do in their ideas. But one of the most common fears that I hear from parents is that somehow their child's innocence will be spoiled or their lives will be ruined by, um, a sexual experience that wasn't positive. And, um, and I, I can understand that. Of course, I can understand that however, they're more likely to have, uh, uh, a sexual experience that's not positive.

Athi: [08:07](#) If they're not given enough information, they're more likely to make bad choices if they don't understand what those choices are. So protecting by not giving information doesn't help. Ignorance doesn't protect anyone. Whereas a mindful discussion about your feelings about your values, about

expectations can actually lead someone to make a better choice. I think we also need to remember though, that unwanted sex is different from a sexual experience. It wasn't fabulous. It's about going into the sexual experience and making that choice for yourself. And if it wasn't great, well you can just chalk that up experience. However, having an unwanted sexual experience is sexual assault and so that actually has an impact. So we need to be really clear about that. You know, you don't need to have 20 orgasms in a sexual experience. What you need to do is feel that you made a good choice for yourself, that at any time if you'd wanted to stop or change your mind, the other person would have respected that.

Athi: [09:22](#) And the following day you wake up and go, okay, I feel okay about that. It wasn't great, but my life's not ruined. Whereas we tend to think that if, particularly for girls, that if a girl has an experience with someone that wasn't that Nice, somehow her life is ruined when that's not true. That's absolutely not true. And we need to move on from that idea that girls experiences with sex make them less valuable the more they have. And with boys it's inverse. The more experience they have, the more valuable and manly manly they out. We need to really move beyond that. So what could go wrong if you talked to you a young person about sex and sexual experiences, what could go wrong? One of the things that happens with parents is they are in denial about the curiosity of young people and the desire of young people.

Athi: [10:26](#) And I think in denying that it actually limits the conversation. However, parents are allowed to say, no, I don't want to discuss my sexual experiences. And I think that's important for parents to know that it is private. However, I think talking about, um, you know, making mistakes without graphic detail of course, but talking about making mistakes, talking about when things were positive, talking about situations that a young person might find themselves in and expanding sex away from that idea of it's just making babies, it's about all these other things as well, that it actually can feel really, really good. You know, um, and, and expressing that to the young person and how sometimes because it feels so good, your body wants to take over from your head. And so talking about how that can happen, but it's not a disaster. Um, and I think if you have that level of interaction with your young person, which of course starts from the time they're very, very small, naming the body parts, right?

Athi: [11:35](#) And talking about puberty and so on. By the time you get to talking about the, uh, shall I put it as juicy stuff around sex, your

young person is more likely to come to you when they have had an experience that wasn't so positive, they're more likely to unpack that with you. Or one that is positive. Well, that's right too, because that's what you want to know as well. You want to know that they're happy and that they're well and they've made good choices for themselves. So what messages do children get about sex from the world, from the media? That's It's fantastic, but it's also shameful that it's deadly, but it's also positive and needs to be achieved. That it's male centered, that it's Hetero normative, that it's confusing, but at the same time, fabulous. It gets kids get mixed messages just like adults do.

Athi:

[12:37](#)

And it creeps into language really, really early. You get young kids say things something sexy when, I mean it's good. Yes, that's right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, um, it's, it's quite confusing in that respect. Um, so they do need a sounding board and I always think parents are the best sounding board because you're there with them all the time. The thing about being a sexuality education teacher is that if I say something to a class and I'm not there until the following week, they've had a whole week to think about it. And if they've got questions, they have to try and remember them for the next session. At the end of three or four sessions we've left as educators, but parents are there and so they can use you as a sounding board. And once you've established that relationship of trust, then they've got that for life.

Athi:

[13:31](#)

And our classes, uh, really to support conversations at home sometimes say, Oh, you've told me everything I need. We know that's not true. There's got to be more questions. And you want them to set up that conversation at home as well. That's right. That's right. Six months can be an incredibly long time in the young person's life. And during that time they will grow, they will change, they will hear new things, I will see new things and they will experience new things. And so they need someone there as that sounding board throughout their lives. Um, so you want to set up earlier that you are that person. That's right. Yeah. What do you want children to know about sex? That it's a normal part of being human. That um, we as animals though are more complicated than most other animals because for most animals it's, it is just about making babies.

Athi:

[14:30](#)

But for us, we engage with our body, with our heart and without thoughts. So it encompasses our values, our attitudes, our feelings as well as our body. Excellent. Do you always say that in the class? I do. I do. And I, and I tell students that everyone worries about the body stuff, particularly with adolescents, they're always talking about or teach them about

contraception, teach them about stis. But in fact we need more time to talk about feelings and values and attitudes. And if you've got your head and your heart working well, or at least you know what's going on in your head and your heart to some degree, you'll make much better choices for your body. So in actual fact, private parts, you look after them better when you know what's going on. Yup. And what they're called. Yes. Well that's true. That's true. Absolutely right. Aw thank you so much I knew you were very wise. Oh yeah. Thank you. Thanks for talking Athi.

Anne:

[15:34](#)

(Music). He's a summary of things you might want to keep in mind when you start talking about what sex is to your young person. First thing is that sex is only for grown ups. It's for someone whose body and mind are grown up. Grown ups have sex either because they want to make a baby or sometimes just because they want to. The kind of sex that makes a baby is when a penis goes into a vagina and then sperm comes out. But sex could be other types of talking, touching, kissing as well. Sex is supposed to happen in private and there must be consent every time sex happens. Sex isn't for people who are in the same family. If you're interested in other resources to help talk with young people about how babies start and what sex is, There's some books that we can recommend.

Anne:

[16:28](#)

A one is what makes a baby by Cory Silverberg, It's a really gentle introduction, to the idea that the sperm and egg join and that's how a baby starts. Mommy laid an egg by Babbette Colel is a really great picture book for younger children. Ah, that explains sex to make a baby. Also the amazing true story of how babies are made by a, Fiona Katasukus. Athi mentioned the Australian Research Center, in Sex, health and society there from the Trobe University. They publish research about sexual behavior of young people. The most recent research we have says that around a quarter of year 10 students are engaging in sexual intercourse and around half of year 12 students. If you want more information about family planning Victoria, you can go to our website, FPV.org.au or you can also check us out on socials, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. If you're interested in the podcast, please subscribe or look out for the next episode. Thanks so much for listening.