

Human Sexuality

THE WHOLE FAMILY
SOURCE BOOK

Sharon Goldsmith, R.

HUMAN SEXUALITY:

The Family Source Book

By Sharon Goldsmith, R.N.

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*To Josh and Lainie
who taught me so much about life
and
To Oliver
who has always encouraged me to live my dreams
this book is lovingly dedicated*

Introduction

In 1973, when I began to collect the ideas related in the pages that follow, information about sexuality was practically unavailable. In the course of teaching breastfeeding classes to women and couples, I was repeatedly confronted with questions about sex: "Can an infant be traumatized by parental lovemaking?" "What should I do when my son plays with his penis?" "Is lack of interest in sex to be expected after childbirth?" The men and women asking these questions were highly educated and very resourceful. Not only did they attend childbirth and breastfeeding classes, they were part of the movement that brought about major changes in hospital policies regarding childbirth and breastfeeding. Today we take for granted a mother's right to experience an unmedicated birth and a father's right to enter the delivery area and assist his wife. In the early seventies, however, each couple had to struggle with the medical system in order to achieve a family-centered birth experience and establish lactation. I was struck by the fact that

these bright and conscientious men and women had so many questions about sex. I was also troubled by the realization that I didn't have the answers, nor did my physician husband.

Since the process of getting together in groups and sharing information worked so well with preparation for childbirth and breastfeeding, it made sense to me to try it with sexuality. I organized my first group of women—some with babies still nursing—and we began to share with each other our experience of sex. The idea was so fascinating, we decided to meet regularly and eventually we assigned each other topics to be researched and presented. It took us nearly a year, meeting once a month, to get through our first real "series," but we learned more about sexuality in that year than most people learn in a lifetime.

Naturally the women talked about the "group" and some had friends who wanted to join. I condensed the material into six sessions, developed "homework" called "Erotic Experiences," created a bound volume called the *Seminars on Sexuality Playbook* and the seminars began. It wasn't long before the women started requesting a similar program for their partners, as these men had been waiting up night after night to hear what happened at the meeting and were eager to participate in the latest homework assignment. In 1977, *Seminars on Sexuality* for couples was developed with an emphasis on sexual communication. The couples' seminars were followed in 1979 by a program for teens.

All of these classes continue, and are now conducted in Los Angeles by my colleague, Rona Lee Cohen. I couldn't begin to list all the people who have contributed ideas and assisted in various ways over the years, but I'm especially grateful to Dave Blakemore and Mike Kaplan for their encouragement and support.

Since classes of this type were unique to say the least, they peaked the interest of the local radio and television stations. I'll never forget Regis Philbin's face with I suggested on AM Los Angeles that parents could communicate a healthy sense of sexuality by telling their kids that they want to be alone so they can make love. His response was a flabbergasted, "Well why can't they just tell them they're going to have a hamburger?" It made me realize TV was my next frontier!

Three years later, after many guest spots, I was given the opportunity to do a nine week segment on a nationally syndicated women's show

and shortly thereafter became the host of “Human Sexuality”—the first television series of its kind. This was my chance to bring sex education into the living rooms of America on a scale far beyond what the seminars could ever do. I owe a great deal to Executive Producers Peter Berlin and Rob Fiedler, Supervising Producer E. J. Oshins and Producers Phyllis Claver, Marlene Daly and Jessica Schuman along with the rest of the “Human Sexuality” staff for creating a sensitive and informative show and for giving me the chance to assist them. Also, many thanks to Norman Horowitz for his efforts to revive the series.

The seminars had proved to be as much an education for me as for my students, and I learned as much from the television show as my viewers. I had to update all my information on relationships, childhood sexuality and sexual dysfunction and I was challenged for the first time to investigate sexuality in illness and aging. People wanted to know about the latest books on sex and they needed to know what resources were available in every state to assist them with their concerns. The letters poured in and I (who would rather phone than write even a short thank-you note) tried to answer them. Several hundred later, I realized the pile was getting bigger, the answers were getting longer and even then I really couldn’t say all the things I needed to.

Just as I was beginning to devise some form letters and fact sheets to take the place of at least some of the handwork, Sherry Huber, at that time an editor with the *C. V. Mosby Company*, asked me if I’d thought about writing a book. She had watched the show for many months and felt a book for parents on how to handle their children’s sexuality would be an excellent way to expand the concept of the show as well as its audience. I countered with the idea of a book for the whole family—a book that would allow me to answer all of their questions about sex from birth to old age. She agreed and with her expert guidance it is now ready. My very special thanks go to Sherry Huber whose knowledge I deeply respect and whose warmth has made this project a delight. And also to Andrea Pullan. Whenever I think of this manuscript I’ll always think of Andrea, my friend and typist who has patiently typed and retyped seemingly endless pages, often in the wee hours, and sometimes with little Lara in her arms. And to her husband, Terry, for putting up with Andrea and me. I would also like to thank the staff of Publication

Services in Champaign, Illinois, who transformed the manuscript into these finished pages. And special thanks to Terri Gitler whose enthusiasm and precision I've admired.

Finally, I want to thank the many viewers who have waited so patiently for their letters to be answered. And speaking of patience, no one has had to practice it more than my family and friends, particularly my husband and children and my mother and dad. For them, thanks is not enough.

More than a decade has passed since I first became aware that families needed a complete source of sexual information. I've tried the "mediums" of the classroom and a television show to communicate sound, candid sexual information but I'm particularly optimistic about this book. I feel confident that the family who owns it will be prepared to deal with just about anything that might come up regarding sexuality in the course of family life. They will also know where to go for help with special problems when they can no longer cope. My fondest hope is that this book will illuminate the shadowed regions of peoples' lives as it helps them to understand and enjoy their sexuality.

Sharon Goldsmith
Los Angeles, California

Author's Note

This book is written in a question and answer format and it covers the sexual questions that come up for people at various stages of life. Because of this, it is intended to be used as a reference over many years. A young man may find the chapter on male sexuality fascinating, but have little interest at this point in the sections that deal with stable sexual relationships. A new mother may be ready for the section on infancy and preschool age children now, but may want to wait awhile longer before reading the section on children at school-age through teens. I have designed the book so you can skip around as needed and so you can locate even a specific topic like "How to Cope with Hot Flashes" or "How to Talk to Your Son About Adolescence" in the Table of Contents without reading through an entire chapter. If additional background material is required, my answer to the question will refer you to another part of the book or to the Resource Guide.

The questions I've used throughout the text are drawn both from viewers' letters and from the students in my seminars, but I've con-

structed them myself in order to maintain anonymity, and to insure this, identifying data has been altered. At times I have phrased questions and statements for you and even written entire conversations. Keep in mind that these are not intended to be used verbatim. I've included them simply to indicate appropriate content and feelings. Once you understand what you are trying to accomplish, your own words will be as effective as mine.

Special organizations and a good many books have been very helpful to me over the years and I'm passing them on to you in the Resource Guide where they are listed according to the question that refers to them. They are all available as we go to press, but since some of the organizations are voluntary and under-funded they may not endure for the lifetime of this book.

I feel it's important to comment on the sexually explicit passages included throughout since you may wonder why I chose to go into such graphic detail in a book that's intended for families. It has been my experience that most authorities refer to masturbation and oral and anal lovemaking, but make little effort to explain them. In the ten years that I led seminars, I was never able to locate a book that offered *complete* information on all the intercourse alternatives. The sources I did find, were either incomplete, pornographic or inaccurate. Most often they were all of these things.

Without access to intercourse alternatives, many people are forced to give up sexual satisfaction entirely when sexual problems exist or during times of illness, pregnancy or stress. In addition, intercourse alternatives are an important ingredient in long term sexual satisfaction. Questions about these activities abound as you will see in Chapter Five and I feel strongly that people need to have access to this information from a reputable source. In fact, my sense is that if accurate information of this nature was available, people (including our young) would not need to turn to illicit suppliers, and pornography would lose some of its fascination. Most important, much of the energy people spend on tracking down this material and working through conflicts regarding it could be freed for more creative use.

This book begins with the Sexual Concerns of Adulthood, then covers the Sexual Concerns of Childhood. This is intentional, because I

am convinced that the principles of sex education make more sense once we understand how lack of information about one's body and guilt over sexual feelings and masturbation can affect how people feel about themselves and how they conduct their relationships through life. The book ends with a Parents' Sex Education Check List in an effort to pull together the fundamental ideas stressed throughout the text. I believe that if we raise our children according to those principles, they'll be much less likely to need this book when they reach adulthood.

S.G.

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