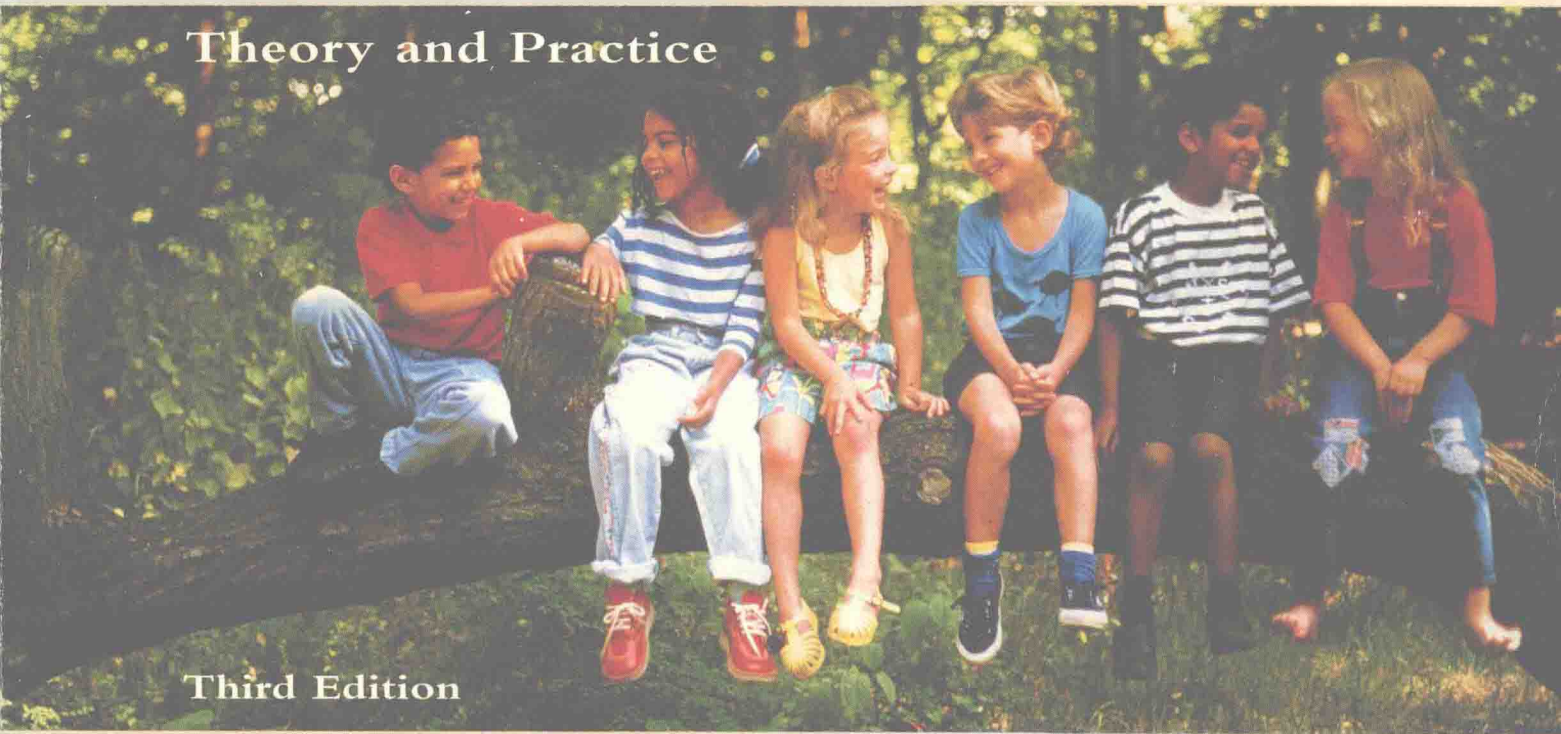


Sexuality Education

Theory and Practice

Third Edition

Clint E. Bruess • Jerrold S. Greenberg



Sexuality Education

Theory and Practice

Third Edition

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Preface

Over fifteen years ago the first edition of *Sexuality Education: Theory and Practice* evolved out of a need perceived by your authors when teaching sexuality education. There was no text available that approached sexuality education as the professional endeavor that it is. Since that first edition, a great deal of information about sexuality education has been published. However, it is still true that there is a lack of texts designed to help educators develop and implement comprehensive sexuality education programs.

Planners, educators, and the general public are frequently at odds concerning who should teach sexuality education and how it should be taught. At the center of this confusion are such questions as: What is sexuality education? How should a sexuality educator be prepared? How should sexuality education be implemented? This problem is compounded by *several false assumptions*:

1. The only preparation required for sexuality education is knowledge of human sexuality.
2. The function of the sexuality educator is to increase knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the reproductive system.
3. Prospective educators today are more open and forthright and are better prepared to conduct sexuality education than are their older counterparts.
4. Because someone has been an effective educator in another field, he or she will be a good sexuality educator.

Certainly potential sexuality educators need knowledge, but they need a great deal more. They also need the ability to reach learners, a feeling of having come to terms with their own sexuality, skills for communicating with individuals and groups, and a feeling of comfort when dealing with the topic of human sexuality.

Many excellent separate sources of information for sexuality educators exist, but no other resource has pulled all the pieces together. This is precisely the purpose of *Sexuality Education: Theory and Practice*: comprehensive coverage of the many aspects of human sexuality and the educational skills needed to prepare sexuality educators.

Whether sexuality education is conducted in a community agency, school classroom, or clinical setting, the basics are the same. Therefore, the practical ideas offered in this book can be applied in almost any sexuality education program. The authors have selected numerous examples that emphasize this universal applicability. The authors also give attention to the needs of varying age groups, cultural and religious persuasions, and people of varied mental and physical capabilities.

Features of the Third Edition of *Sexuality Education: Theory and Practice*

1. Key Concepts
2. Insights
3. Summaries
4. References
5. Suggested Readings
6. Cases

The key concepts at the beginning of each chapter give readers a preview as well as the authors' feelings about what is most important within each chapter. The key concepts can also be used as effective tools for reviewing chapters after reading them.

The insights prompt readers to think about issues related to the topic at hand. Each insight has a specific purpose, contains activities to help you learn to be a sexuality educator, and helps make the process more interesting. You may be tempted to skip them, but you will miss some of the meaning and fun of this book if you do so. Many of the exercises also can be used later as you teach others about human sexuality.

The summary at the end of each chapter helps readers recall the main ideas within each chapter. When combined with the concepts at the beginning, summaries can give a comprehensive picture of the chapter.

References at the end of each chapter allow readers to easily determine the sources of information included within the text. They, along with the suggested readings listed, show where you can pursue more information about topics of particular interest.

Cases at the end of each section are designed to help readers think through the planning, implementation, and evaluation of sexuality education programs. All of them are based on actual occurrences that your authors have encountered or about which other sexuality educators have told them. The cases provide a chance to integrate information from several chapters in the book at the same time.

What's New in this Edition?

Reviewers and users of the first two editions of *Sexuality Education: Theory and Practice* have been quite complimentary. Because of this, the authors made a conscious effort to retain those aspects of the book that readers and reviewers valued. However, any book can always be made better. In this spirit, the changes from the second edition are:

1. An entirely new chapter on strategies for learning and teaching about HIV/AIDS education (Chapter 15) was added. We argued with ourselves about whether or not there should be such a chapter. After all, HIV/AIDS education logically fits into an overall program of sexuality education which should be part of a comprehensive school health education program. However, there is no other health problem related to sexual behavior choices with such serious consequences. After much deliberation, we added the chapter.
2. The case studies at the end of each section, to which readers have reacted very favorably, were retained. However, the authors updated and wrote new cases to make them even more relevant.
3. Insights were also updated and changed to reflect the most recent issues in sexuality education.
4. Content throughout the book was updated. Even a cursory review of the dates of references shows that the most recent information is included.
5. Suggested readings have been updated—again to reflect the most recent information and issues in sexuality education.

Acknowledgments

The authors are proud of the third edition of *Sexuality Education: Theory and Practice* and feel it will help you conduct sexuality education with confidence. There are several people to whom we owe our thanks for these feelings. We owe a great deal to Chris Rogers, because of whom we chose to revise this book with Brown and Benchmark. His increased responsibilities with the corporation mean that we will miss his regular counseling and assistance; however, our developmental editor, Susie McCormick, has proved to be extremely capable. She knows how to help, when to encourage, and when to leave us alone. We appreciate all of those things. In addition, while reviewers sometimes create additional work for authors, we have benefited from their suggestions and know you will too. These reviewers were:

- Patrick K. Tow
Old Dominion University
- Melody Noland
University of Kentucky
- Carole Lou Roberts
University of Dayton
- Michael Young
University of Arkansas
- Linda McElroy
Oklahoma Baptist University
- Robert F. Valois
University of South Carolina
- Malcolm Goldsmith
Southern Illinois University
- Steven Godin
East Stroudsburg University

The need for sexuality education is as great as ever, but it must be conducted professionally and effectively. We are proud to think that this book helps to meet that need. Explore the book, enjoy it, and let it help you become a better sexuality educator.

C. E. B.
J. S. G.

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Introduction to Sexuality Education

Chapter 1:

Sexuality, You, and the Learner

Chapter 2:

Why Education About Sexuality

Chapter 3:

Understanding Yourself

Sexuality, You, and the Learner

1

Key Concepts

1. There are many similarities and some differences between traditional and contemporary concepts of human sexuality.
2. Human sexuality involves a great many components and interrelationships.
3. A total view of human sexuality is basic to personal well-being as well as to interpersonal relationships.
4. People are sexual beings at all ages and stages of development.
5. As people grow and develop, they encounter a variety of topics and experiences filled with implications for total human sexuality.
6. Every individual is a unique sexual being.

Traditional and Contemporary Concepts of Human Sexuality

Sex—the word conjures up different images in each person's mind. Before you read further, reflect for a minute on Insight 1–1 on this page.

The common thoughts people have when they hear or read this three-letter word usually relate to intercourse, reproduction, fun, and moral feelings. Some people associate the word with something “dirty”; some think the subject should not be discussed at all. Whatever thoughts, feelings, images, and impressions each of us has in regard to sexuality are the result of many different kinds of experiences we have had throughout our lives. We have learned from our parents, our relatives, our friends; from entertainment media and advertisements; from our churches and schools.

Insight 1–1

What Does “Sex” Mean?

What do *you* think of first when you hear or read the word *sex*? List the words or phrases that come to mind.

We have learned to consider sexuality in certain ways, most of them quite narrow and traditional. Think again about the list you just made. How many of the words you came up with related mainly to a sexual act? How often do you hear people talking of “having sex” or “looking for sex”? Traditionally, human sexuality, if thought about at all, has been thought to have to do with participating in intercourse or some other sexual act, and references to sexuality have been cloaked in negative terminology. Traditional concepts imply that people participate in sexual behavior only on occasion (sometimes only when apparently forced), but at other times are fundamentally asexual beings. This amounts to the view that although individuals participate in sexual acts, sexuality does not otherwise exist as part of individuals' personalities.

In days gone by, the word *sex* was often used interchangeably with words like *sin*, *dirty*, *unspeakable*, and *no-no*. There are some historical reasons for this negative attitude (see Chapter 4), and the influences of history and learning have affected contemporary concepts of human sexuality as well.

What do you feel people today think of when the word *sex* is mentioned? You have already identified what goes on in your own mind, but how about your friends—what do

they think? And your parents? relatives? Since you are probably not about to run out and conduct a neighborhood survey at this point (although you may find it interesting to survey a few people if you get the chance), consider what you think one or two friends and one or two relatives would answer if you asked them to define the word *sex* for you. You will probably quickly realize that there are similarities between their attitudes and the narrow, negative concepts already discussed. Despite the passage of time, many people today still think about sexuality only in terms of sexual acts or other small pieces of the larger picture.

We found many examples of this narrowmindedness about sexuality when we started doing research for this book. It seemed appropriate to review the many books and articles on human sexuality available today to get a feeling for how they were treating the subject. It is sad to say that many contemporary books still treat the subject in a limited fashion. It is common to find books that focus on the biology of sexuality, or on the psychological aspects, or even on the decision-making components. Although some authors have written about more complete ways of viewing sexuality, it is still uncommon to find many books that deal with sexuality as something that involves the total personality and that is basic to human health.

We would like to be able to tell you that contemporary concepts of human sexuality are radically different from the narrow and negative ones of the past, but unfortunately they are not. You may have already demonstrated this fact with your own list and your imagined lists for friends and relatives.

It is true that there is a trend toward a more comprehensive view of human sexuality. People today appear more willing to talk about the subject in the home as well as in educational settings. This trend toward more open interest in the subject is shown by sales of books, treatment of sexual topics in the media, and increased sexuality education programs.

While the existence of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) has caused tremendous suffering and premature death, it has also forced a more open consideration of numerous sexual topics. Sexual practices, use of contraception, advertising of condoms, and many moral considerations are just a few of the topics that now come up more frequently. Many people are realizing that human sexuality involves a great deal more than physical acts: however, there are still probably more similarities between traditional and contemporary concepts of human sexuality than there are differences.



We develop concepts of sexuality as our slate of life is written on by our many experiences.

The Complexity of Human Sexuality

In this book we take a broad view of human sexuality and define it as part of the total personality and thus basic to human health and well-being. This type of comprehensive view of sexuality assumes that many factors in the human makeup interact to create an individual's sexuality. The Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), whose purpose is to promote education about and for sexuality, explains human sexuality in this way: Human sexuality encompasses the sexual knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors of individuals. It deals with the anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry of the sexual response system; with roles, identity and personality; with individual thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and relationships. It addresses ethical, spiritual, and moral concerns, and group and cultural variations (Haffner and de Mauro 1991).

Given the fact that many people still do have a limited view of sexuality, however, it is appropriate to take a look at what a comprehensive view of human sexuality might include. We say *might* because there is no one best or exact definition of total human sexuality. The main thing to realize is that a total view includes many components and interrelationships.

Figure 1-1 shows one view of human sexuality that attempts to encompass the main aspects that need to be considered. It is easy to see that sexuality consists of at

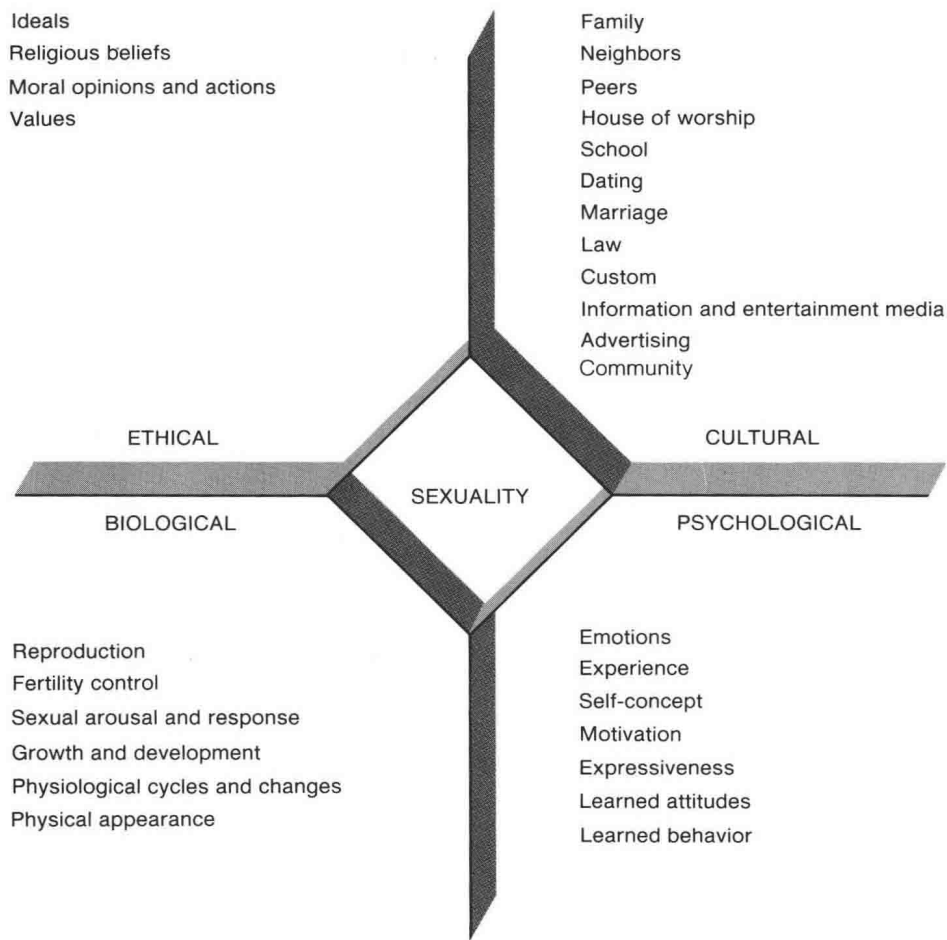


Figure 1-1 Dimensions of human sexuality. Source: Jerrold S. Greenberg et al., *Sexuality: Insights and Issues*, 3d ed. (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Communications, Inc., 1993).

least cultural, psychological, ethical, and biological dimensions. The interrelationship of all of these dimensions results in an individual's total sexuality.

The *cultural dimension* of sexuality is the sum of the cultural influences that affect our thoughts and actions, both historical and contemporary. Historical influences become evident when one considers roles of males and females, as well as certain customs.

For example, for over 30 years (approximately 1949 to 1980) the Chinese Republic permitted virtually no information concerning sexuality to reach the Chinese people. Even since a more open attitude was adopted, Chinese women today rarely inquire about sexual matters, unless they relate to pregnancy or menstruation—the only type of sexually related questions they believe are appropriate to ask (Ruan and Bullough 1989).

Another example can be found among many Latino populations. The macho concept, or the exaggerated importance of being a man, is stressed for a male child from a very early age. His parents and other adults may even admire and fondle his penis as one means to remind the child of his maleness. On the other hand, daughters are often trained to play “little women” to their fathers, brothers, and husbands. Sons are commonly trained to be dominant and independent in relationships with their wives as well as other women (Medina 1989).

Among the sources of current influences are the radio, television, film, and print media; social institutions, such as family, church, and school; and interpersonal relationships. Each impresses on us the culturally defined ways in which we “ought” to think as females and males and the roles our sexuality “ought” to lead us to play.

The *psychological dimension* of sexuality is probably the clearest example of learned aspects of sexuality. Our attitudes and feelings toward ourselves and other people begin to develop very early in life. From the time we are born we get signals from all around us telling us how to think and to act. We learn that some words are “wrong” or “dirty” and that certain parts of our body are “untouchable” and “unmentionable.” We even learn to be careful about what conversational topics we enter into with certain people. If we feel one way about ourselves but think others find these feelings unacceptable, we learn to hide our true feelings and to pretend. After all, thinking or talking about sexual topics is not a good idea anyway (or so we have learned). Some of us are lucky enough to grow up with a more positive set of experiences, but regardless of whether our experiences are positive or negative, our learned responses to them become integral to our sexuality.

The *ethical dimension* might be included as part of the psychological dimension by some people, but for the sake of clarity we mention it separately here. Basically, this dimension includes questions of right-and-wrong, should-I-or-shouldn’t-I, yes-or-no. Ethical aspects might be based on a particular religious philosophy, or they might have a more humanistic or pragmatic origin. Whatever the source of our ethical attitudes, each of us faces daily decisions that affect and in turn are affected by our concepts of sexuality.

The final dimension of sexuality we will mention is the one that most people usually think of first—the *biological dimension*. Just to emphasize the point that biological aspects are only one part of sexuality, we are considering them last. However, no hierarchy of sexuality dimensions can be established; it would be a mistake to assume that any one part is more important than any other.

The biological dimension of sexuality involves our physical appearance, especially the development of physical sexual characteristics; our responses to sexual stimulation; our ability to reproduce or to control fertility; and our growth and development in general. Although human reproductive functioning does not begin until puberty, human sexual-erotic functioning begins immediately after birth and lasts a lifetime. It is important to realize that biological functioning, as it relates to sexuality, is a part of the natural functioning of human beings. The biological aspects also relate to the sexuality dimensions, and the four dimensions constantly work together to produce an individual’s total sexuality.

When writing your definition, you may have noticed that it is quite difficult to define the term *sexuality* in a few words. Rather than becoming frustrated over the inability to come up with a specific definition, you should realize that it is more important to get a feeling for what the concept involves. Many people find themselves using such words as

Insight 1–2

Defining Sexuality

Stop for a minute. Take a piece of scrap paper and, without looking at this book, write a two- or three-sentence definition of total human sexuality. After completing your definition, check it against Figure 1–1.

feelings, relationships, or decisions to help define sexuality. We might compare the attempt to grasp a total concept of sexuality to the attempt to grasp a total concept of personality. It is extremely difficult to precisely define what personality is, but almost everyone has a pretty good idea of what it involves.

Even though it is often necessary to treat aspects of sexuality as isolated entities for purposes of clarity in discussion, it is important to remember that these aspects all combine to make up our sexuality and that our sexuality is but one part of our total personality. Our hope is that each of you will be able to consider these separate topics without losing sight of human sexuality in its totality.

Sexuality, Personal Well-Being, and Interpersonal Relationships

There has been a lot of emphasis on health education and health services by the media and by federal and state governments, but few discussions point out the importance of a total view of human sexuality to human health. Consider how much time you have spent in the past week thinking about topics related to human sexuality. How often in the years that you were growing up did you have questions related to human sexuality? Perhaps you have seen surveys indicating that at any given time in a high school or college classroom, a great number of students are thinking about sexuality. This concern is natural, but if not dealt with can produce negative influences on mental health.

Recognizing that sexuality is a basic part of human personality and that people have numerous questions and thoughts about this topic, it makes sense to help students of all ages develop a healthy concept of human sexuality and to relieve the anxieties and fears that they have developed. This is an important reason for sexuality education programs (see Chapter 3); health and well-being are promoted by an understanding of total human sexuality.

Of course, our personal health and our self-concept relate to our dealings with other people. Did you ever stop to think how much growing up would be facilitated if people had positive self-images and better social skills? We

cannot claim that a total view of sexuality would eliminate all problems associated with interpersonal relationships, but let us consider an example or two.

As young people grow and develop, they have countless questions about their changing feelings as well as about their physical changes. A simple understanding of how these feelings and changes are common to all people and of the biological facts, coupled with an opportunity to discuss concerns with understanding peers and adults, is definitely helpful. But how many young people do you know who experience such help?

A recognition that we are all sexual beings also contributes to positive interpersonal relationships. As we grow up, we do not realize that our parents, teachers, relatives, and everyone else around us are sexual beings. This of course does not mean they are performing sexual acts at every opportunity, but it does mean they all have sexual feelings and characteristics.

The AIDS crisis has forced increased attention on people as sexual beings. All dimensions of human sexuality come into play when dealing with the topic of AIDS. How well people can cope with the many issues and dilemmas related to AIDS can also influence their well-being.

Being comfortable with sexuality has many applications for sexuality educators. Graham and Smith (1984) developed an operational definition of sexuality comfort which includes feeling satisfaction with and pride in one's own sexuality, feeling secure about one's own sexual natures, communicating effectively about sexuality, expressing respect and tolerance for others' sexual values, encouraging others to explore sexual issues and their own sexual values, and acknowledging that sexuality is an important topic to people and therefore a legitimate topic for intellectual inquiry. They also pointed out that experiences which improve sexuality comfort include improving self-understanding, improving understanding/tolerance of divergent sexualities, improving communication skills, increasing one's knowledge base about sexuality, and being exposed to people who are comfortable with their sexuality.

Using a specific population as an example, the sexual health of adolescents can be viewed as encompassing the issues of body image awareness, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, and sexual intimacy. Specific factors related to body image might include feeling good about being male or female and feeling comfortable with bodily functions. Interpersonal relationships involve concerns such

Insight 1-3

Age and Sexuality

Consider the chart below. Note that there are six blank columns in two rows. In the top row first column, write the approximate age at which you started to be a sexual being. In the second column write the age at which you think others of your sex usually start to be sexual beings. In the third through sixth columns, do the same thing for others of the opposite sex, for your brothers and sisters (if you have any), for your parents, and for your grandparents.

Now, go back to the first column again (bottom row). Write the age at which you would expect to cease being a sexual being. Then do the same thing in the remaining columns for the people already considered. Before going further in this book, jot down three thoughts or feelings that came to mind while you were filling in the columns.

| | You | Others (same sex) | Others (opposite sex) | Siblings | Parents | Grandparents |
|-------|-----|----------------------|--------------------------|----------|---------|--------------|
| Start | | | | | | |
| Cease | | | | | | |

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

as being able to communicate feelings to others without being embarrassed and having respect for another's individuality. Decision-making includes being able to decide what is "right" for oneself and acting in personal best interests; and having a clear sense of personal values and acting in congruence with them. Sexual intimacy might deal with such issues as understanding the difference between sexual feelings and love; and knowing that one's feelings deserve respect from others (Brick 1989).

Removing some of the mystique that currently surrounds the topic of sexuality would certainly facilitate interpersonal communication. Cat-and-mouse games would become less needed, and more honesty and openness could occur. With some communication barriers lifted, the potential for more positive interpersonal relationships would be greatly enhanced.

Sexuality and the Life Cycle

Perhaps you already know that all people are sexual beings at all ages. In this event, you probably filled in the columns with "birth" and "death" rather than with specific numbers. If not, why did you put down any numbers at all? Are any of the columns different from the others?

Insight 1-3 examines your feelings about sexuality as it relates to the life cycle. Actually, if you were paying attention earlier in this chapter, you realized that human sexuality is so broad that it is impossible for anyone to be an asexual being at any point unless he or she stops breathing. The idea of an absence of sexuality is similar to the idea that a person has an absence of personality. You may feel that a given person has a poor personality, but that individual still has a personality of some kind. Just as people have personalities from the time of birth, they are sexual beings at all ages and stages of development.

Dr. William Masters pointed out some facts related to sexual functioning that add an additional perspective to our picture (Masters 1975). Dr. Masters emphasized that sexual functioning is a part of the natural functions of the body and that it begins at birth. He told the story, for example, that as an obstetrician delivering many babies, he decided to play a little game to make things more interesting. This game consisted of seeing how often he could deliver male babies and cut and tie the cord before they had an erection. Dr. Masters reported that he won about half the time. Newborn male babies often get partial or complete erections right after birth. Dr. Masters pointed out that female babies experience vaginal lubrication early, too. Obviously, penile erections and vaginal lubrication are natural functions that occur prior to any learning about sexuality.

As further support for the idea that sexual functioning is natural, Dr. Masters pointed out that all natural functions have their own rhythm. For example, most males experience an erection and females have vaginal lubrication about every 80 to 90 minutes at night while they sleep. Again, the absence of conscious control indicates that these are natural functions.

Given such information about natural functions, combined with the total sexuality concept of which it is a part, we readily see that people are sexual beings from womb to tomb. This idea comes as a shock to some individuals since it includes little brothers and sisters as well as older parents and grandparents, but it is simple fact that all people are sexual beings.

In spite of this fact, certain groups of people are usually seen as asexual beings: the young, the old, the mentally and physically disabled, and all parents (see Chapter 10). You can readily see that this leaves us with only a select few individuals who supposedly are sexual people, expected to participate in intercourse and other physical sexual acts. In light of our total concept of human sexuality, this type of thinking simply does not make sense. Psychological, cultural, ethical, and biological forces have made their mark on all individuals. It is becoming more and more apparent that it is far healthier and more logical to consider sexuality as encompassing not only specific acts but attitudes, emotions, interpersonal relationships, and self-concepts as well.

Human Development and Issues of Sexuality

You may have already completed courses or parts of courses in human growth and development. In any case, you are aware of at least some of the many physical and emotional changes that take place as people grow and develop. We will cover most of these topics in greater detail later in the book, but we want to introduce their relationship to total human sexuality as part of this introductory discussion.

Interestingly, you might have different feelings about certain sexual topics depending on whether you are a male or a female. For example, it has been found that females have more favorable attitudes toward homosexuals than do males, males appear to be more conservative than females about the dispensing of contraceptive information to young adults, males accept cohabitation before marriage more than do females, more males indicate approval of abortion, more males than females approve of grades K-12 sexuality education, and more males than females believe infidelity should be grounds for divorce (Taylor and Adame 1986).