

CHECKLIST FOR CATHOLIC PARENTS

What Young Children Should Know About Human Sexuality

Use this checklist to determine if your son or daughter knows what a young child should know about human sexuality. The checklist is based on guidelines for young children ages birth to 6 suggested by the Committee on Education of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops and published in *Human Sexuality-- A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning* [USCC, 1990].

Because each child has the right to life, bodily integrity, and the means for proper development, parents and guardians need to understand the physical, cognitive, affective, social and spiritual development of young children. At this stage in a child's development, it is important to:

- | | Yes..... | No |
|--|----------|-----|
| 1.1. Provide a wholesome and safe environment. | ___ | ___ |
| 1.2. Demonstrate to children that they are loved, valued, cherished and prized. | ___ | ___ |
| 1.3. Provide the first experiences of God's love, communicated through the love of family members for one another and for the child. | ___ | ___ |
| 1.4. Help children develop a personal relationship with God, especially through prayer. | ___ | ___ |

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Because the body is a sacred gift, parents and guardians should help children be comfortable with their bodies. At this stage in a child's development, it is important to:

- | | Yes..... | No |
|--|----------|-----|
| 2.1. Teach children proper names for body parts. | ___ | ___ |
| 2.2. Instruct children to respect and care for their own bodies, including proper hygiene, good eating habits, exercise and sleep. | ___ | ___ |
| 2.3. Teach children to respect other people's bodies. | ___ | ___ |
| 2.4. Explain the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. | ___ | ___ |

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Because young children are naturally curious about their bodies and the bodies of others, parents and guardians need to affirm the goodness of their children's bodies. At this stage in a child's development, it is important to:

- | | Yes..... | No |
|---|----------|-----|
| 3.1. Understand the naturalness of children's actions, especially their curiosity about body functions and sexual parts. | ___ | ___ |
| 3.2. Accept children's actions that are natural, while assisting them to know what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior. | ___ | ___ |

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Because younger children are highly impressionable, parents and guardians need to create a wholesome environment that will foster the child's growth and development in human sexuality. At this stage in a child's development, it is important to:

- | | Yes..... | No |
|---|----------|-----|
| 4.1. Moderate and supervise children's access to television, video and print media. | ___ | ___ |
| 4.2. Be alert to nonverbal communication as well as direct questions. | ___ | ___ |
| 4.3. Be discreet regarding your own sexual behavior. | ___ | ___ |
| 4.4. Be selective in choosing care-givers for children. | ___ | ___ |

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What Young Children Should Know About Human Sexuality

Because building a child's self-esteem begins at birth and is a foundation for all levels of development, parents and guardians need to recognize and respect the uniqueness of each child. At this stage in a child's development, it is important to:

- | | Yes..... | No |
|---|----------|----|
| 5.1. Enable children to accept themselves as total persons, created by God, with both strengths and limitations. | — — — | |
| 5.2. Help children distinguish between persons who by nature are good and their behavior, which may be undesirable. | — — — | |
| 5.3. Respect the dignity of children verbally, physically and emotionally. | — — — | |

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Because young children develop trust by relating with significant adults, parents and guardians need to be open, honest, available and caring. At this stage in a child's development, it is important to:

- | | Yes..... | No |
|--|----------|----|
| 6.1. Answer questions honestly, correctly and with language children can understand. | — — — | |
| 6.2. Give parental warmth and affection, especially through the sense of touch. | — — — | |
| 6.3. Spend significant time with each child. | — — — | |
| 6.4. Provide opportunities for children to interact with adults outside the home. | — — — | |

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Because young children learn through observation and experience, parents and guardians need to be good role models. At this stage in a child's development, it is important to:

- | | Yes..... | No |
|---|----------|----|
| 7.1 Provide opportunities for children to witness loving relationships. | — — — | |
| 7.2. Help children experience single persons and celibate persons as living beings. | — — — | |

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Because making choices is the basis for moral decision-making and the formation of conscience, parents and guardians should provide children with situations that help them practice making choices. At this stage in a child's development, it is important to:

- | | Yes..... | No |
|--|----------|----|
| 8.1. Allow children to make simple choices that will develop a pattern of making free choices. | — — — | |
| 8.2. Give gentle, ongoing guidance on what is morally good. | — — — | |
| 8.3. Help children learn the consequences of actions and choices. | — — — | |
| 8.4. Provide a healthy balance between structured and free play. | — — — | |
| 8.5. Help children distinguish between safe and dangerous situations. | — — — | |

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Because young children are curious about the differences between boys and girls, men and women, parents and guardians need to affirm the equality of men and women in word, attitude and action. At this stage in a child's development, it is important to:

- | | Yes..... | No |
|--|----------|----|
| 9.1. Create an atmosphere that includes loving modeling by adults or both genders. | — — — | |
| 9.2. Foster appropriate use of inclusive language. | — — — | |
| 9.3. Appreciate the equality and mutuality of men and women. | — — — | |
| 9.4. Explore gender roles regarding work and family life. | — — — | |
| 9.5. Provide a variety of role models. | — — — | |
| 9.6. Allow children to discover various ways to play and interact. | — — — | |
| 9.7. Accept children without stereotyped role and gender expectations. | — — — | |