

Teaching Guide for  
**Growing Up Sexually**

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# Introduction



## THIS COURSE AND THE DISCOVERING PROGRAM

Among the many topics of the Discovering Program, only *Growing Up Sexually* focuses on the sexual changes related to puberty and the effect these changes have on young people. This course explores the physical, emotional, and social changes that occur during puberty, and it offers young adolescents a Catholic moral perspective on their emerging sexuality. *Growing Up Sexually* affirms the U.S. bishops' document *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*, which states that "blending moral and values-based *formation* with clear and factual *information* is the best approach to sexuality education" (p. 83).

The content of this course is appropriate for seventh and eighth graders. In addition, some parishes may decide that their sixth graders are ready for and need this information. *Growing Up Sexually* can be offered at any time of the year. The content of this course does not depend on information or understandings gained from other courses in the Discovering Program. However, students who have experienced the courses *Understanding Myself* and

*Learning to Communicate* may be more receptive to it. See the coordinator's manual for specific information on curriculum design.

The six session plans of this course are each designed for a 1-hour meeting. If your group is scheduled to be together for more than an hour, the sessions can be extended with the optional approaches suggested at the end of each session plan. Also consult these approaches as alternative strategies if your teaching style or the students' learning style calls for changes. Because the topics flow logically from session to session, they also can be successfully combined in a number of ways to accommodate specific parish needs and schedules. For example, the sessions can be offered as an overnight, a daylong experience, or a series of three 2-hour sessions.

The time estimates suggested for the session steps are based on a group size of about fifteen participants. If your group has considerably more or fewer members, you may need to make minor adjustments in the session plans. This course, like all Discovering courses, works well with larger groups, but in such cases you will have less opportunity to address the students' individual contributions and needs.

*Growing Up Sexually* differs from the other courses in the Discovering Program in that it provides a session for the parents of the students who are taking the course. This parent orientation session acknowledges parents' primary role in their children's education; informs parents about the philosophy, process, and content of the course; and offers suggestions on how they can help their children develop a healthy Christian sexuality. During this orientation session, the parents preview the student booklet, which provides clear and concise factual information about the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty and about the church's views and moral values regarding sexuality and issues related to it.

## BACKGROUND

### The Young Adolescent and This Course

All of us are sexual, and throughout life we are educated about what that means. We begin as babies held close in warm intimacy. Throughout childhood our natural curiosity stimulates questions about where babies come from and about the differences between boys and girls. Our education continues amid the turbulence of adolescence, when we experience strong sexual feelings. As we mature we try to forge the intimate, responsive, and responsible relationships that mark adulthood. Throughout all the phases of our life, we continue to shape and reshape our sexual self-awareness, to define and redefine our sense of being feminine and masculine.

Along the continuum from infancy to adulthood, the developmental stage of puberty is a powerful turning point. Puberty marks the confusing and exhilarating time when early adolescents move rapidly toward sexual maturity. *Growing Up Sexually* can help adolescents understand the physical and emotional changes they and their peers are experiencing, recognize their sexuality as a precious yet powerful gift, and become more aware of Catholic moral values regarding sexuality.

Today's popular culture offers young people many false images and faulty messages about sexuality. Because young people are impressionable and inexperienced, within this cultural setting, they need strong support so that they can continue to grow as healthy and responsible persons. Although public schools often provide responsible sex education courses, they are bound by law to avoid approaching sexuality from a religious or even moral perspective. Catholic religious education programs are free to discuss this topic from all perspectives—including a moral perspective. The church can and must consider the physical, social, emotional, and moral aspects of sexuality. An integrated and full approach to sexuality gives the students a holistic view, which includes the Christ-centered values that call for sometimes difficult but always life-enhancing decisions. Often the sexuality education offered by the church is the only support parents receive as they try to communicate to their children religious values regarding sexuality.

The church has long been aware of the need to support young people and families in this way. *The Declaration on Christian Education*, promulgated by Vatican Council II, calls for “a positive and prudent sexual education” (no. 1). A document issued by the bishops of the United States, *Human Life in Our Day*, notes the persuasive power of today's culture and media and cites the necessity and “grave obligation” of providing young people with wisely planned sexuality education (p. 21). In its more recent document *Human Sexuality*, the bishops affirm “the fundamental right and responsibility of parents for the proper nurturing and instruction of their children” (pp. 2–3). However, they add, “in fulfilling its pastoral and educational ministries, the Church recognizes its own serious responsibility to supplement and enhance the education in sexuality, which begins in the home” (p. 3).

In response to this call and because many adolescents today are daily making serious sexual decisions, many dioceses and parishes have implemented sexuality education programs. Parents of adolescents need and want to be informed about such programs. Studies suggest that 80 percent of Catholic parents favor their church's values-based sexuality education over the programs offered in public schools.

Additionally, sexuality education programs must, for their part, truly engage young adolescents. Young people today want to understand why the church proclaims and teaches sexual values that challenge the sexual values of popular culture. Young people want to discover the meaning behind the rule. They insist that religious teachings make sense. This need to engage young people is a challenge and an opportunity for their teachers and indeed for the whole church.

## **The Church's Teachings on Sexuality**

*Growing Up Sexually* helps early adolescents see that the church's views regarding issues related to sexuality do make sense. Specifically, the following concepts outlined in the bishop's document *Human Sexuality: A Catholic*

*Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning* are incorporated into the sessions of this course (see pp. 105–108).

In *Human Sexuality* the bishops recommend that early adolescents learn to respect their bodies, know about the nature of personal maturation, and be helped to affirm the value of personal modesty. They add that early adolescents need further help with issues such as the following:

- sexual attraction
- hygiene and health
- biological processes
- the facts of human fertility

*Human Sexuality* also addresses the following areas of concern:

- adolescents' capacity to love and be loved
- appropriate ways of expressing love
- Christian marriage as the unique context in which love is fully expressed

The following guides and models are recommended in the bishops' document on sexuality:

- the life and story of Jesus
- the lives of the saints
- adult role models and mentors

*Human Sexuality* outlines moral issues related to sexuality that must be addressed from a Catholic perspective, such as the following:

- sexual language, literature, and media
- masturbation
- genital sex outside of marriage
- sexually transmitted diseases
- heterosexuality and homosexuality

Lastly, *Human Sexuality* emphasizes that young adolescents must be guided to lead a moral life based on Gospel values. The following issues need to be addressed:

- making moral decisions
- forming a good conscience
- evaluating the consequences of choices and actions
- receiving the sacraments

## The Theology of This Course

Many mothers and fathers of junior high or middle school students readily acknowledge that they are limited in their own efforts to teach their children about sexuality, often because they were raised in a climate of silence about and even negativism toward sex. Some parents have an emotional block to discussing sex with their children. Other parents find it difficult to overcome the once common religious view that sexual nature is at war with spiritual nature. This view reflects a time in the history of the church when people were taught that the body was bad and was set against the soul, or spirit. According to the logic of this view, sexual feelings and thoughts are sinful, and



sexual pleasure, even when not intended, is gravely sinful. Many Catholics believed that sexual intercourse between a husband and a wife was permissible only to conceive a child.

In recent years the church has been refining its vision of creation and, therefore, of sexuality. The Incarnation, the meeting of the divine and human in Jesus, offers to Christians the invaluable insight that God can be found in the wonder of creation, not the least of which is the wonder of the human person. In all creation and in all history, God dwells among us. The Incarnation teaches us that Christians are not to suspect, hate, or disparage creation. Rather they are to love it rightly and care for it responsibly. This call to care is no small matter; indeed, it is a grave matter. Human sexuality is among the gifts of creation. The human body is a wonderful creation that we must respect and care for.

Today, more than ever, people recognize that human sexuality is best discussed *as part of a whole*. Sexuality is far broader than just genital activity. Rather sexuality influences and includes all that we are as persons. Maleness or femaleness is each person's way of *being* in the world. Sexuality is not what we do but who we are.

The following principles make this understanding clear and guide the theology of this program:

- Biologically, sex is determined at conception.
- The changes that are part of puberty occur in exactly the way God designed them to occur.
- Each person's emerging sexuality is a perfectly natural process and is a wonderful gift from the Creator.
- After birth another dimension of sexuality—sex roles—comes into play. Parents and society teach girls and boys their view of what it means to be female or male. Their messages are conveyed in numerous ways, such as tone of voice, choice of clothing, ways of touching, the process and content of instruction, parental and societal expectations, and styles of discipline.
- Sexual stereotyping often inhibits and limits human freedom. Jesus, who was fully human as well as fully divine, is the model of a free and open person. Young people can freely be themselves, just as Jesus was.
- Sexual interest and attraction is a dynamic between man and woman. This emotional connection between male and female, created by God, is present throughout life.
- Sexuality involves psychological and physical intimacy. It is how the body expresses the deepest attitudes of heart and mind. The bodies of woman and man are designed for knowing and loving each other.
- Sexuality can be procreative. It creates new life in its expression; it creates new life in cooperation with God.
- Sexuality is expressed in a strong physical urge for union. This feeling is so strong that it can lead to commitment, sacrifice, and marriage. This drive toward union is a deeply spiritual as well as natural passion that can enhance life. However, as with any passion that is not based on and guided by moral principles, sexual passion can also lead to selfishness and immorality.

*Growing Up Sexually* translates these principles for early adolescents. Six structured sessions on the topics of human sexuality and decision making provide young people with a way to discover the wisdom of these principles in their daily experiences.

### **This Course and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church***

All the courses in the Discovering Program rely on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as a primary resource and a guide to theological accuracy. The *Catechism* can also serve as a valuable source of both information and inspiration for the teacher. We encourage you to review and reflect on certain sections of the *Catechism* as you prepare to teach. The following references to the *Catechism* set out the value, dignity, and integrity of the person; reiterate the value of chastity; delineate the responsibilities and dignity of marital fidelity; highlight the necessity of temperance and modesty; and provide scriptural and traditional sources for the church's views and teachings on human sexuality.

The scriptural insistence on the dignity and holiness of the human person is expressed in summary form in the *Catechism*, specifically in reflections on the sixth and ninth commandments. *Catechism* numbers 355, 369 to 373, and 383 speak of human beings made in the image and likeness of God and the complementary nature of the sexes. The exploration of decision making (session 6) relates to *Catechism* numbers 1176 to 1802, which summarize the church's teaching on the formation of a good conscience.

### **Teaching This Course**

Each course in the Discovering Program consists of two components: a teaching guide like this one that fully describes the course goals, objectives, content, and session plans, and a companion student booklet. The booklet is not a conventional textbook, in that the students are never expected to read it outside of the sessions. In fact, substantial reading is never required as a regular feature of the learning process. Nor does the booklet look like a textbook; for instance, it contains no recognizable chapters as one would expect in a standard text. The student booklet for each Discovering course, rather, is to be used only in conjunction with the session plans described in the teaching guide. It is effective in this way because of the following features:

- The booklet provides a kind of running summary of the themes and essential information that are presented through the engaging session plans. This gives the students a record of what they have learned in the course. It is also a helpful feature when a student misses a session; at the next session, you can ask him or her to briefly review relevant pages from the booklet.
- The booklet uses sidebars and quotes related to the main topics to draw the young people further into the material and enrich their learning. You may use the sidebars in any way that seems appropriate—perhaps as discussion-starters, topics for journal entries, or simply focal points for a brief silent reflection.

- The booklet includes an occasional personal reflection or journal-writing activity that students are asked to complete quietly on their own.
- The booklet presents activities designed for use in small groups—such as discussion-starters, role-plays, and vignettes.
- Finally, the booklet’s attractive design—using original art, bold colors, interesting type, evocative photos, and so on—is intended to support the total learning process.

### **Student Booklet Sidebars**

The student booklet includes a number of sidebars that are not central elements of the course content. Set off graphically from the other booklet materials, these sidebars are generally not referred to in the session plans. They are included in the booklet to spark the students’ interest or to encourage them to take care of themselves by eating right and developing healthy personal habits. As you prepare for each session, reflect on the sidebars and decide if you wish to use any of them in your teaching.

### **Student Booklet Bound into the Teaching Guide**

For your convenience and easy reference, a complete copy of the student booklet for *Growing Up Sexually* is bound into the back of this guide. You may find it helpful to tab or mark the booklet pages related to a given session as you prepare to teach it. That will make it easy to flip back and forth between the guide and the booklet.

### **Student Booklet Pages in the Session Plans**

As a visual aid, reduced versions of some student booklet pages are reproduced in the left-hand margin of the session plans. Such pages appear at the beginning of the related instructions. If more than one booklet page is involved in an activity, only the first of those pages is reproduced in the margin.

### **Prayer Experiences**

Establish a prayer area within the room where you will meet with your group. This area will become a focal point for a time of prayer during each session. An enthroned Bible in a designated place in the prayer area attests to the importance of the Scriptures and of shared prayer. Items such as a candle and a plant or flowers are recommended for the enthroned Bible.

Prayer opportunities are part of each session. Everyone is called to prayer through simple words and actions, such as lighting a candle, moving to a new location in the room, asking for silence, or playing music conducive to silent reflection. These simple gestures help settle everyone down and center them for reflection and prayer.

### **The Bible**

The Bible is another key tool in the Discovering curriculum. The students in this course frequently use Bibles and must be able to look up scriptural citations. If possible, provide a Bible for each of your students. Ideally, everyone would get the same translation. If this is not possible, try to divide your group into smaller groups of people with the same translation. Comparing the various translations can add a further dimension to your discussions throughout the course, though it may slightly complicate some activities and discussions.

The following translations are among the best available for Catholic young people:

- The New American Bible (1991). This version is a modern translation of the Scriptures that is faithful to ancient sources. It is approved for use during the liturgy of the word and therefore will be somewhat familiar to the students.
- The New Jerusalem Bible (1990). This translation uses contemporary language, comes closest to using inclusive language, and provides theological insights through extensive notations that accompany the text. It is also an approved translation for use in the liturgy of the word.
- The New Revised Standard Version (1989). This recent translation uses gender-inclusive language when such use is consistent with rigorous biblical scholarship.
- The Good News Bible: The Bible in Today's English Version (1993). This translation attempts to capture and convey the meaning set forth in the original texts, in language that is accessible to a broad readership. It is truer to the original meanings than paraphrased versions, and it is presented in language that young people can more readily understand. Most students respond enthusiastically to this translation. It can be obtained from the Catholic Bible Press, a division of Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Some of the scriptural excerpts in this course are cited as adapted. Such passages generally have been adapted to make the language more accessible and to avoid exclusive language.

### **Teaching Strategies**

Solid preparation and a confident, relaxed attitude are two keys to a successful learning experience with early adolescents. Also, the following personal qualities in teachers proved most effective for good group leadership and facilitation in this course, according to the people who piloted it:

- an acceptance of their own spirituality, healthy attitudes about sexuality, and freedom from excessive childhood guilt
- an understanding of and appreciation for church teaching on sexual matters (The church offers a countercultural vision, and the teacher must be confident enough to speak on its behalf.)
- a personal comfort with using and discussing sexual terms and topics as well as the ability to use sexual terms clearly and candidly without relying on inappropriate humor or excessive formality
- a willingness to follow the methodology used in this course
- a rapport with and genuine care for young adolescents that demonstrates respect for their basic goodness; appreciation of their openness and spontaneity; and empathy with their struggles, questions, and misconceptions
- a respect for the privacy of the students

Teachers are asked to successfully manage their group by doing the following:

- protecting the right of group members to think and speak
- creating and maintaining an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect
- firmly and gently keeping the group on track

The sexuality education offered in this course flows from the church's teachings, which reflect the Scripture's insistence on the dignity of the person. Sharing the church's vision of sexuality is a complex task that requires great clarity as well as age-appropriate approaches. As a result *Growing Up Sexually*, unlike most of the other Discovering courses, *begins* by offering information to the students. They are then invited to demonstrate in some way that they understand and can apply the content to their own life. This is accomplished through a variety of activities such as role-playing, discussion, and physically active strategies.

Most of the sessions in this course open with short essays that address areas such as the church's perspective on specific issues, moral teachings, and biological information. This relieves the teacher of having to assume the role of the expert regarding all the topics related to sexuality education. By offering short and informative essays, this course provides an accurate, solid foundation for the activities that follow. Each session then engages the young people in applying this information and getting responses to their questions under the informed and mature guidance of a teacher.

The structure of this course also assures parents that the course reflects the Catholic values they are seeking to impart. Parents who evaluated this course were asked, "What qualifications do you want the teachers of this program to have?" They repeatedly responded that they wanted teachers who do the following:

- project a warm personality
- are persons of faith as well as competence
- accept adolescents as they are
- prefer listening and facilitating to speaking
- laugh easily
- possess a clear set of moral values and know why they believe what they believe
- possess the ability to manage a small group

People often ask if parents should be teachers when their own children are group members. Ideally, parents of participants should not teach their own children because it inhibits the children and their friends who are in the program. Parents of participants have successfully served as small-group leaders, but this is the exception, not the rule.

### **Typical Questions Young Adolescents Ask**

Because young adolescents are new arrivals to the world of their emerging sexuality, they are often bewildered. They are frequently too embarrassed to ask questions about sex. As a result they carry a great deal of misinformation and a burden of unanswered questions. A question box can help you address some of their concerns. If you use a question box as part of the course, assure the young people that they may submit questions anonymously and that you will not disclose or seek to know which questions were submitted by whom. Before each session check the question box and prepare to respond to all serious questions at an appropriate time. Distinguish for the group when you are answering questions that ask for an opinion and when you are giving factual information.

The following questions are typical of those asked by junior and senior high students. They indicate a wide range of concern as well as a general paucity of information among young people about sexuality.

- Do most people have sex before they get married?
- Do you think it is wrong for a girl age thirteen to go out with a boy after a dance?
- Is it wrong to have sexy dreams?
- Does it hurt a pregnant woman to have sex?
- What is a bisexual?
- Does it hurt the mother when the baby comes out?
- Does making love hurt?
- What is the first sign of VD?
- How do you tell someone no without making that person mad?
- Can smoking pot affect your sex organs?
- Can people tell if I've had my first period yet?
- What does the church think about petting? How far can you go?
- Can a girl get pregnant even if she doesn't go all the way?
- Why don't parents talk about sex?
- I am not real sexy looking. Do you think I will ever have dates?
- What about a girl dating an older man (two or three years older)?

Naturally, the questions submitted by those in your group may differ from these. The key point is to accept all questions and attempt to answer them as honestly and accurately as possible. Acknowledge as well when you do not have an answer to offer. The goal here is to communicate openly, not answer all questions. It would literally take a lifetime to do that.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Curriculums take on greater clarity, direction, and purpose if they are described in terms of goals and objectives. This observation is based on a commonsense principle: We have a difficult time getting somewhere if we do not know where we are going. Educators who design learning experiences must identify their destination as a first step in determining how to get there. The statement of goals and objectives is a practical way to identify the desired outcomes for a program.

In the Discovering Program, goals and objectives are used in the following ways.

**Goals.** Goals are broad statements of what we wish to accomplish—learning outcomes we hope to achieve. The coordinator's manual for the Discovering Program provides the goals for all the courses in the curriculum. Each course within the total program also includes a statement of its goals. The goals often have an idealistic quality, inviting the teacher to reflect on how the course relates to the personal and faith development of the young people. At the same time, the course goals are realistic, measurable, and attainable. As a teacher, at the end of the course, you should be able to look back and determine if you have in fact achieved the course goals.

**Objectives.** Objectives are statements that define how to get to the goals. They name specific tasks that must be accomplished if the goals are to be achieved. The coordinator’s manual identifies the objectives for each course in the curriculum. Each course, in turn, supplies a clear statement of objectives for each session in the course.

## The Goals and Objectives of *Growing Up Sexually*

### Goals

The first five course goals listed below are the same as the goals identified by the bishops as important to sexuality education in the church. These goals, which were spelled out in the document *Human Sexuality* are adopted as goals for this course.

- that the students gain “an understanding of the nature and importance of sexuality as a divine gift, a fundamental component of personality, and an enrichment of the whole person—body, emotions, soul” (pp. 74–75)
- that the students develop “an appreciation of chastity as a virtue that develops a person’s authentic maturity and makes him or her capable of guiding the sexual instinct in the service of love” (p. 75)
- that the students recognize “the human and Christian values that sexuality is intended to express” (p. 75)
- that the students attain “knowledge of, respect for, and sincere personal adherence to the moral norms regarding sexuality that are taught by the Church” (p. 75)
- that the students become familiar with the skills related to a person’s “integrating [sexuality] into his or her psychological and spiritual development” (p. 75)
- that parents and their young adolescents engage in meaningful conversations about growing up sexually

### Objectives

Each session has its own objectives, which will help realize the course goals. The objectives of *Growing Up Sexually* that follow are phrased as tasks for the young people.

#### *Session 1*

#### *“Puberty: A Life Story”*

The students will do the following:

- identify specific physical and emotional changes related to puberty
- recognize that sexual development emerges according to each person’s biological clock and that no one can speed up or slow down their sexual development
- try to accept and be comfortable with the rate at which their body is developing
- discuss the importance of treating others with respect and kindness, regardless of their rate of development
- demonstrate the ability to relate what they learned about puberty to everyday situations

*Session 2**“Feelings: More Than the Body Is Changing”*

The students will do the following:

- recognize that the feelings they are experiencing are part of growing up sexually
- identify appropriate ways of managing their feelings
- articulate their understanding of what it means to be male or female in light of the Gospel
- examine how Jesus expressed his emotions

*Session 3**“Love: How Do I Know It’s Real?”*

The students will do the following:

- demonstrate their ability to differentiate between love and infatuation
- reflect on Saint Paul’s description of love
- recognize that decisions based on feelings of infatuation rather than on love can lead to inappropriate choices and actions
- realize that love exists and grows when the individuals in a relationship care as much about each other as they care about themselves
- formulate their own personal definition of love

*Session 4**“Sex: It’s Sacred”*

The students will do the following:

- identify the emotional, spiritual, and physical costs related to premarital sexual activity
- examine the biblical view of premarital sexual intercourse
- evaluate their views on premarital intercourse
- identify the benefits of chastity
- recognize that popular culture tends to focus exclusively on the pleasure involved in intercourse and to ignore the consistency and commitment that love asks

*Session 5**“Difficulties: Facing Tough Issues”*

The students will do the following:

- realize that the gift of sexuality can be abused or misused
- explore the Catholic perspective on the difficult issues of masturbation, homosexuality, pornography, abortion, rape, and AIDS
- demonstrate their ability to apply that perspective to real-life situations

*Session 6**“Decisions: Making Good Choices”*

The students will do the following:

- learn to draw on the sources of good conscience formation, such as the Scriptures, church teachings, and sound counsel and the example of others
- become familiar with a systematic method for making moral decisions
- become aware of the individual and societal consequences of their decisions



- practice moral decision-making skills related to sexuality
- apply the key concepts of this course in solving dilemmas related to growing up sexually

## RESOURCES

### Audiovisual Materials

As noted previously in this introduction, the session plans are designed for 1-hour meetings. If you wish or need to expand a session, check with your local diocesan consultant and your state board of health to see whether they have an audiovisual library from which you can borrow other resources. Many films and videotapes on sexuality are available, but carefully preview all audiovisual materials before using them during this course. Often they are too simple or too complex for young adolescents, and sometimes the materials reflect values indifferent to or in contradiction with values held by the church. The success of this course does not require the use of any audiovisual materials, and their use is wholly at the teacher's discretion.

### Books

#### For Parents

- Bell, Ruth, and Leni Zeiger Wildflower. *Talking with Your Teenager: A Book for Parents*. New York: Random House, 1983.
- Gale, Jay. *A Parent's Guide to Teenage Sexuality*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1989.
- Lewis, Howard R., and Martha E. Lewis. *Sex Education Begins at Home: How to Raise Sexually Healthy Children*. Norwalk, CT: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1983.
- Miller, Patricia Martens. *Sex Is Not a Four-Letter Word: Talking Sex with Your Children Made Easier*. New York: Crossroad, 1994.

#### For Young People

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- McCoy, Kathy, and Charles Wibbelsman. *The New Teenage Body Book*. Rev. ed. of *The Teenage Body Book*. Los Angeles: Body Press, 1987.

#### For Teachers

- Center for Early Adolescence. *Early Adolescent Sexuality: Resources for Professionals, Parents, and Young Adolescents*. Carrboro, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1989. Most of the publications by the Center for Early Adolescence are now available through Search Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Call 800-888-7828 to receive a catalog.
- Lerner, Richard M., and Nancy L. Galambos, eds. *Experiencing Adolescents: A Sourcebook for Parents, Teachers, and Teens*. New York: Garland, 1984.

United States Catholic Conference (USCC). *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*. Washington, DC: USCC, 1991.

### **Other**

Fetal models are available from Life Cycle Books, P.O. Box 420, Lewiston, NY 14092-0420; phone 416-690-5860.



# Parent Orientation Session



## INTRODUCTION

The young people who helped pilot this course enjoyed *Growing Up Sexually* even more when their parents showed an interest in it. Parents who are aware of and supportive of this course realize it fills an important need. Early adolescents need and want a safe place to sort out how they are growing up. They often miss the presence of mature adults who can help them think through their confusing experiences with their emerging sexuality. They may feel isolated as they worry if their body is developing properly or if they can withstand the pressure to be sexually active.

Find a way to *strongly encourage parents to attend this orientation session*. Parents have a deep concern for their adolescent's emerging sexual development and moral life. You can count on their making time to attend this session, if you provide adequate information and ample time for them to plan their attendance. A sample letter to parents is provided on resource P-A (located at the end of this session plan).

During this 1-hour orientation session, parents become familiar with the contents and methods of this course. They actually experience a few of the activities their children will be participating in, such as distinguishing between love and infatuation. They get to see and hear some of the information that their children will study, and they have a chance to ask questions about this course or sexuality education in general. This session has proved to be a positive experience for catechists, administrators, and parents alike.

The parent orientation session requires an organizer, not an expert. Whether offering this program in a small parish with a dozen students or in a larger parish with a hundred, you can use the following information to plan and carry out a successful parent orientation meeting.

## PREPARATION

### Materials Needed

- a Bible
- copies of handout P–A, “Your Role and *Growing Up Sexually*,” one for each parent
- copies of handout P–B, “Course Overview,” one for each parent (optional)
- newsprint and markers (optional)
- student booklets, one for each parent or pair of parents
- writing paper, and pens or pencils
- copies of handout P–C, “How You Can Help,” one for each parent

### Other Necessary Preparations

Prepare to lead this session by doing the following things and checking them off as you complete them:

- Check the parish and the civic community calendars and select a date, time, and location for the parent orientation session. Be sure this date does not conflict with a high-priority activity, such as a home basketball game.
- Advertise the date, time, and place of the meeting, in the parish bulletin and from the pulpit.
- Send the parents a letter about the orientation session (see the sample letter on resource P–A).
- Confer with other members of the parish (the pastor or his associate, teachers, leaders) who are involved in the course.
- If you wish, recruit someone to help you lead the meeting. This may be the parish DRE, the youth minister, or another pastoral leader. Meet with him or her to discuss the plan and who will lead what parts of the meeting.
- For step B.* Decide how to present the course overview.

## PROCEDURE

**A. Welcome and Introduction: Why Offer Sexuality Education?  
(20 minutes)**

1. Welcome the parents to the meeting and express your gratitude for their taking time from their busy life to attend. Explain that the meeting introduces the rationale for and content of the Discovering course titled *Growing Up Sexually*. Assure them that there will be ample time to address and discuss their questions and concerns.

2. Introduce yourself, and any other teachers or personnel who will be working with the young people.

3. Introduce the opening scriptural reading by noting that it is the same reading used with the students to open and close the *Growing Up Sexually* course. Ask the parents to listen reflectively as you or another person reads Eccles. 3:1–8.

4. Allow a few moments of silence after the scriptural reading and then invite the parents to enter into a brief period of silent reflection. Say something like the following, pausing at the ellipses (. . .):

► Take a few minutes to think of the time in your life when you were the age of your son or daughter. . . . Try to remember what it was like for you as you began to develop sexually. . . . What single word would you use to describe what it was like to discover your emerging sexuality?

. . .

Repeat the question. Allow a moment of silence for reflection. Then ask volunteers to share their selected word with the group. When someone volunteers simply repeat the word they offer, thank them, and move to another volunteer. Keep the activity moving quickly, and avoid commenting on the responses.

When all the volunteers have shared their descriptive word, ask the parents to briefly identify how they first learned about sexuality. Suggest possible sources, such as discussing it with parents or peers, reading books, attending class, hearing remarks, or seeing words written in public places. Again, respond affirmatively to the parents' responses and move along rather quickly to this question:

► What kind of help or guidance do you now wish you had had when you first tried to deal with your emerging sexuality?

After the parents have volunteered responses, point out that they have named some of the reasons why this course is being offered to their children.

## **B. Course Overview** (15 minutes)

1. Pass out copies of handout P–A, “Your Role and *Growing Up Sexually*.” Read aloud the essay or give the parents about 5 minutes to read it.

2. To provide a session-by-session overview of the course, do one of the following activities:

- Distribute copies of handout P–B, “Course Overview,” and read it aloud.
- Post the main topic of each session on newsprint and briefly describe the activities and moral values contained in each session.

3. Give each parent or pair of parents a copy of the student booklet. Explain that the students will receive this booklet at their first session. Invite the parents to take a few minutes to browse through the booklet, noting any questions or comments they have about it. Then offer an opportunity for them to share those reactions.

## **C. Preview of Activities** (15 minutes)

1. Tell the parents that they now have an opportunity to preview some of the activities that their children will complete during this course. Distribute writing paper, and pens or pencils, so that the parents will not have to write in the booklets. Together work through the following three booklet activities. You will have to establish a brisk pace, allowing only about 5 minutes for each activity. The goal here is simply to have the parents sample some of the activities and information offered in the course.

### **a. Booklet Activity: “Words to Know” (from session 1)**

1. Invite the parents to complete the crossword puzzle on page 4 of the student booklet. Ask them to write their answers on the paper provided. Encourage them to find the answers in the student booklet essay “This Time in Your Life,” pages 1 to 3, if necessary. (The answer key is on page 38 of this guide.)
2. Explain that this activity provides their children with accurate information on puberty and engages them in a task that allows them to use the proper terms among their peers. It also serves as an effective icebreaker.

### **b. Booklet Activity: “Is This Love?” (from session 3)**

1. Have the parents turn to the student booklet activity “Is This Love?” on pages 13 to 14 and ask them to read the scenarios without looking at the differences between love and infatuation listed in the activity “Loves Me, Loves Me Not” on page 15.
2. Describe the main points of session 3 and explain that the content of this session—love and infatuation—provides a foundation for the next session, which is on sexual intercourse. Emphasize that many adolescents explain their participation in sexual intercourse as a way of expressing

“love” for another person. Their idea of love is more often than not confused with infatuation, and it is clear that they urgently need guidance in distinguishing between the two.

**c. Booklet Activity: “Decisions, Decisions, Decisions” (from session 6)**

1. Point out that session 6 invites the young adolescents to become familiar with and to practice a clear and simple moral decision-making process. It has them apply the process to hypothetical situations that reflect the topics covered in this course. Comment that this session also serves as a review that challenges the students to apply the key concepts of the previous sessions to real-life situations.
2. Take the parents through the SODAS method as described in step C of session 6 (page 86 of this guide) and quickly preview the scenarios used in the student booklet activity “Decisions, Decisions, Decisions” on pages 30 to 31. Tell the parents that throughout this course the students discuss realistic situations that enable them to concretely apply the concepts they have learned.

2. To conclude this preview, ask the parents if they have any questions and spend time fully responding to their questions and concerns.

**D. Closing Comments  
(10 minutes)**

1. Distribute handout P–C, “How You Can Help.” Briefly cover the main points or ask the parents to take the list of suggestions home and read it at their leisure.

2. Tell the parents when, where, and how often the sessions will be held. Invite them to contact you or any other members of the team at any time during the program if they have questions or comments. Especially encourage them to offer comments on and evaluations of the program at its conclusion.

3. If someone raises the question of parental presence at the students’ group sessions, explain that the presence of parents almost always inhibits the students. Strongly urge the parents to talk about the program with their children as they are going through it and to request to see the completed student booklet at the end of the course. However, caution the parents that their children’s personal reflections will be recorded in the booklet, and this might cause them to be reluctant to show it to their parents. Stress the importance of respecting the students’ privacy.

4. Explain that the intent of this program is to help the parents educate their children regarding sexuality from the church’s perspective and that the parents have every right to withhold their children from this program should they desire to do so.

Also point out that no child will ever be asked to share anything against her or his will. Recall that in the opening activity of this session, participants were given an opportunity to volunteer to respond, but no one was pressured to do so. Similar procedures are followed in all the students' sessions.

5. Convey your enthusiasm for this course and the young adolescents of the parish and reiterate that you appreciate the time that the parents have taken to learn about and support the program.

6. Close with a short prayer. Feel free to reread Eccles. 3:1–8. Collect the booklets as the participants leave.



# Sample Letter to Parents

Dear [name of parent or parents]:

We are pleased to announce that we will offer *Growing Up Sexually*, a sexuality education course, to our [sixth, seventh, and/or eighth] graders this year.

We strongly encourage you to attend a parent orientation meeting for the course on [date, time, and location]. We will explain the course content, preview the student booklet, sample some of the learning strategies, and discuss how you can share with your child your religious values regarding sexuality.

The students will participate in the course itself on [dates]. We know that your time is precious. But we trust that your child's moral education in sexuality is important enough to warrant your presence at this meeting.

See you on [date] at [time].

Sincerely,

# Your Role and *Growing Up Sexually*

As a parent of a young adolescent, you face important responsibilities, one of which is nurturing in your child a healthy Christian sexuality. An adolescent going through puberty experiences not only physical development but also emotional change and a deepening self-awareness. This time can add stress to your family relationships and challenge you to express the importance of the moral and spiritual values you hold.

We need to transmit the idea that sexuality is a wonderful, powerful gift from God. Because if the children don't get clear ideas on sexuality from their parents and the church community, they will likely adopt the values of the media and popular culture.

Parents may want to talk with their children about sexuality, but many are unsure about what to say and when and how to say it. Such insecurity and reluctance may stem from a number of sources: Parents may be stymied by memories of their own childhood experience, when frank discussions about sex may have been rare. They may feel reluctant to bring up the topic because it triggers old feelings of guilt and embarrassment. Or they may think they don't know the necessary biological information or the correct terminology.

Nonetheless, as a parent you remain the primary educator of your child. You are in the best position to know and understand your child's temperament, habits, tastes, behaviors, and needs. Although your young adolescent might seem to have suddenly become a stranger in your home, he or she still needs the support and comfort your home gives. Young adolescents need direction and limits, guidance and positive example. They may seem to resist such education and consistent direction, but they would feel lost without it.

No matter what you and your young adolescent experience together, you will leave a legacy for your child. She or he will remember if you were loving. Your child will remember if you were kind. Your child will remember your tenderness, your firm rules, and most of all, your child will remember your moral voice and example.

Even dedicated and consistent parents face major challenges in guiding their young adolescent toward sexual maturity in today's culture. The media "images" the moral life for youth. Parents find little help from a sex-obsessed culture that at best pays only lip service to traditional sexual values. Elements of our society—such as the trends and fads hawked by recreational and cosmetics industries—invade the consciousness of young people, encouraging them to accept the belief that teenage sexual activity is inevitable and that sexual and moral responsibility consists not in chastity but rather in safe sex.

This course responds to that cultural influence with a strong, alternative voice reflecting the Scriptures and the teachings of the church. The course helps young adolescents to better understand their sexuality and tries to support parents as they struggle to nurture a healthy Christian sexuality in their children.

*Growing Up Sexually* was originally tested for four years by more than sixty-five Catholic parishes and schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. Thousands of parishes have used this course since then. The revised course incorporates insights gained during those years of use by educators, administrators, parents, and young people, as well as from recent church documents, including the U.S. bishops' document *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The church is often the only institution that supports an alternative and countercultural vision of sexuality. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic church has urged parents, parish schools, and religious education programs to take seriously their obligation to educate young people in human sexuality. The document *Declaration on Christian Education*, from the Second Vatican Council, called for "a positive and prudent sexual education" (no. 1).

More recently the Catholic bishops of the United States echoed this theme in their document *Human Sexuality* when they stated, "Blending moral and values-based *formation* with clear and factual *information* is the best approach to sexuality education" (p. 83).

*Growing Up Sexually* presents sexuality as a unique and wonderful gift from God. It draws on the wisdom of the Scriptures and the pastoral guidance of the church, as well as the fields of biology, psychology, and sociology. This course also reflects an awareness that humans can and do misuse and abuse God's gift of sexuality. The course provides the young people with a learning process that engages them in open discussions that apply to typical, real-life situations.

The parents' awareness of the ideas presented in this course can greatly support the young people's learning process. It can also encourage participation at home that complements and enhances their children's understanding of the issues explored during this course.

# Course Overview

## Session 1

### “Puberty: A Life Story”

During this session the students will do the following:

- identify specific physical and emotional changes related to puberty
- recognize that sexual development emerges according to each person’s biological clock and that no one can speed up or slow down their sexual development
- try to accept and be comfortable with the rate at which their body is developing
- discuss the importance of treating others with respect and kindness, regardless of their rate of development
- demonstrate the ability to relate what they learned about puberty to everyday situations

## Session 2

### “Feelings: More Than the Body Is Changing”

During this session the students will do the following:

- recognize that the feelings they are experiencing are part of growing up sexually
- identify appropriate ways of managing their feelings
- articulate their understanding of what it means to be male or female in light of the Gospel
- examine how Jesus expressed his emotions

## Session 3

### “Love: How Do I Know It’s Real?”

In this session the students will do the following:

- demonstrate their ability to differentiate between love and infatuation
- reflect on Saint Paul’s description of love
- recognize that decisions based on feelings of infatuation rather than on love can lead to inappropriate choices and actions
- realize that love exists and grows when the individuals in a relationship care as much about each other as they care about themselves
- formulate their own personal definition of love

## **Session 4**

### **“Sex: It’s Sacred”**

Session 4 focuses on the church’s views regarding premarital sexual intercourse. In this session the students will do the following:

- identify the emotional, spiritual, and physical costs related to premarital sexual activity
- examine the biblical view of premarital sexual intercourse
- evaluate their views on premarital intercourse
- identify the benefits of chastity
- recognize that popular culture tends to focus exclusively on the pleasure involved in intercourse and to ignore the consistency and commitment that love asks

## **Session 5**

### **“Difficulties: Facing Tough Issues”**

Session 5 enables the students to explore the difficult issues of masturbation, homosexuality, pornography, abortion, rape, and AIDS from a Catholic perspective. (Because of the time constraints, most teachers will select two or three issues from among those offered for discussion.) In this session the students will do the following:

- realize that the gift of sexuality can be abused or misused
- explore the Catholic perspective on the difficult issues of masturbation, homosexuality, pornography, abortion, rape, and AIDS
- demonstrate their ability to apply that perspective to real-life situations

## **Session 6**

### **“Decisions: Making Good Choices”**

Session 6 helps the students develop the skill of moral decision making. Specifically, the students will do the following:

- learn to draw on the sources of good conscience formation, such as the Scriptures, church teachings, and sound counsel and the example of others
- become familiar with a systematic method for making moral decisions
- become aware of the individual and societal consequences of their decisions
- practice moral decision-making skills related to sexuality
- apply the key concepts of this course in solving dilemmas related to growing up sexually

# How You Can Help

The following suggestions are ways that you can help your child develop a healthy Christian sexuality:

1. Review your own attitudes and values about sexuality and talk about your attitudes with your spouse or someone else whom you trust.
2. Your child will appreciate honest and direct responses to his or her questions. If you are unsure about some information, simply admit that and tell your child that the two of you can find the answer together.
3. Take advantage of daily events or occurrences that naturally invite discussion about sexuality, such as the content of a TV show or emotional or physical changes in your child that signal the onset of puberty.
4. As your child experiences this course, initiate a discussion about the course and then follow your child's lead. Sometimes she or he may want to talk at length about a specific issue; at other times the discussion may be quite brief.
5. Feel free to talk about your values and assume that your child truly wants to know about them and why you hold them.
6. Be aware that your child is evaluating, consciously or not, whether you live by the values you profess; she or he is secure in knowing that your values are reflected in your entertainment choices, leisure activities, reading materials, TV program choices, and conversations.
7. Encourage proper hygiene, regular exercise, and good nutrition as a way for your child to respect and care for her or his developing body.
8. Look for opportunities to build up the self-esteem of your child. Keep in mind that early adolescence is a time when young people's self-esteem is under siege.
9. Remember that your child already possesses an authentic spirituality and a growing relationship with God. Encourage and support your child's faith growth through your example and participation in the sacraments and other parish activities.
10. Provide your adolescent with reasonable structure, expectations, and clear behavioral limits to his or her social life.
11. For information or to express concerns, feel free to contact staff members who are working with your child at this time.



## SESSION 1

# Puberty: A Life Story



## AN OVERVIEW OF THIS SESSION

### Objectives

The students will do the following:

- identify specific physical and emotional changes related to puberty
- recognize that sexual development emerges according to each person's biological clock and that no one can speed up or slow down their sexual development
- try to accept and be comfortable with the rate at which their body is developing
- discuss the importance of treating others with respect and kindness, regardless of their rate of development
- demonstrate the ability to relate what they learned about puberty to everyday situations

### Session Steps

This session uses pages 1 to 7 of the student booklet and includes the following steps:

- A. an introduction (15 minutes)
- B. the student booklet activity "This Time in Your Life" (10 minutes)
- C. the student booklet activity "Words to Know" (10 minutes)
- D. the student booklet activity "A Time for Change" (15 minutes)
- E. the student booklet summation "In a Word" (5 minutes)
- F. the student booklet activity "A Time for Every Purpose" (5 minutes)

**BACKGROUND**

This session helps the students to better understand how their body is changing and how its changes affect their self-concept and their relationships. Even though young adolescents are terribly concerned with these changes, they may be reluctant to discuss them at first—just as we may have been when we were their age.

To encourage the beginning of a dialog among the students, the session opens with a warm welcome and then moves right into a student booklet activity that offers a clear and straightforward essay about the physiological and emotional changes of puberty. Then a crossword puzzle is used to reiterate some of the terms introduced in the essay. The puzzle also offers a direct and nonthreatening way to begin discussing sexuality. It helps the young people begin to become comfortable with using new or seldom-used terms, and it helps them learn about how their body is changing. These opening activities encourage a candid level of discussion that can continue throughout this course.

The booklet activity “A Time for Change” helps the students recognize and deal with the onset of puberty. Many will be concerned about whether they are developing earlier or later than most of their peers. This is a familiar and understandable concern of young people. The changes that occur during puberty affect the way young people relate to peers and adults alike. For example, a girl who develops before most of her peers may be proud to be growing into womanhood. Although she receives a positive response from her family, she may also face negative or demeaning remarks and reactions from her peers. The young girl notices that her parents tend to be a bit more strict with her about her friends, her interests, the hours she spends away from home, and the places she goes. Similarly, the boy who develops later than most of his peers may receive negative responses from them because he is short, does not have facial or pubic hair, or still has a high-pitched voice. This boy may seek to prove his “manhood” in unsuitable or unhealthy ways, such as by fighting, stealing, drinking, or experimenting with inappropriate sexual behaviors.

In such situations young people sorely need a boost of self-assurance and acceptance to bolster their sagging self-concept. This session provides help by offering scenarios of males and females who are developing earlier or later than most of their peers. These scenarios can spur animated discussions that help the students grapple with the social ramifications of their own physical development.

As you facilitate this session, remember that young people often seem to enjoy noise and constant activity. However, also keep in mind the value of quiet reflection. They need time to think about how their emerging sexuality is affecting them. Make it a point to provide ample time for the students to complete the reflection activity that brings this first session to a close.



## PREPARATION

### Materials Needed

- newsprint and markers
- masking tape
- a question box (e.g., a decorated shoe box)
- a boxed cake mix
- a baked cake
- student booklets, one for each student
- blank self-adhesive labels, one for each student
- pencils or pens
- a Bible, a pillow or a Bible stand, a table and a cloth, a cross or a statue, a live plant or other item from nature, and a pillar candle and matches (These items are referred to in subsequent materials needed lists simply as an enthroned Bible.)

### Other Necessary Preparations

Prepare to lead this session by doing the following things and checking them off as you accomplish them:

- For step A.* Post on newsprint your expectations of this course and of the students, as directed in step A.
- For step C.* Review the terms used in the crossword puzzle.
- If you wish to change the procedure to better fit your teaching preferences or the learning style of your group, see the Options section at the end of this session plan.

### Teacher Prayer

Imagine that God is your director of religious education and that you and God are having a meeting just before you are to teach this course. Take a few moments to express to God any concerns you have about teaching this course. What advice does God offer you regarding your concerns? What does God say to you about how you should *be with* your students?

Ask God for that which you most need in order to teach as Jesus did. You may want to write down the substance of your conversation and keep it with this guide as a reminder of what is central in your work with this course.

## PROCEDURE

### A. Introduction (15 minutes)

*Before the session.* The following list explains what the students can expect from the course and what the leader expects of the students. Write the list on newsprint and mount it in a place where it can be easily seen by all.

Leave room at the bottom or put up another sheet of newsprint in case the students want to add expectations of their own.

- You are mature young people and will be treated that way.
- Topics will be presented in an honest, straightforward way.
- The course will present situations that realistically reflect your experiences and respond to your concerns.
- You are expected to participate as well as you can in the activities and discussions.
- If you have difficulty understanding some topics or areas of discussion, it is okay to ask questions.

1. Warmly welcome the students and express your hope that they will find this an interesting and enjoyable course on the topic of sexuality. If you have not worked with these students before, tell them something about yourself—where you live, how long you have lived there, your occupation, and so on. Invite the students to introduce themselves in a similar manner.

If you and the students already know one another, simply move along and introduce the course's question box. Tell the students that they can write questions regarding sexuality and put them in the box at any time. Assure them that only you will have access to the question box and that you will respond to the questions at the appropriate time during the course.

2. Hold up a box of cake mix and ask the students to think about all the ingredients and tasks that go into baking a cake. Ask them to describe what their kitchen at home might look like to a visitor who walked in while they, the students, were baking a cake. You might ask questions like these:

- ▶ What ingredients and other items would the visitor see? [Cake flour, eggs, milk, pots, pans, measuring cups, spoons, etc.]
- ▶ What would the condition of the kitchen look like to this person? [The answers will vary depending on the students' experience of baking.]

3. Present a baked and perhaps decorated cake and make these points in your own words:

- ▶ It can be hard to imagine a beautiful cake resulting from all the apparent chaos and messiness of a kitchen during the baking process.
- ▶ As young people begin to grow up sexually, everything in life might also seem to be confusing and messy.
- ▶ The person who is good at making a cake doesn't worry about the mess, because he or she knows that this process is necessary to make a cake: eggs have to be broken; ingredients have to be mixed in; the baking, cooling, and decorating of the cake takes time.
- ▶ Puberty can be a messy and confusing time when young people wonder if everything will turn out okay.
- ▶ Like the cake maker, God the Creator knows exactly what is going on as young people enter into the process of growing up sexually, and God will see that young people turn out all right. For God, it is "a piece of cake!"

4. Close this introduction by outlining the content of this course and making your expectations clear. Offer the following observations in your own words:

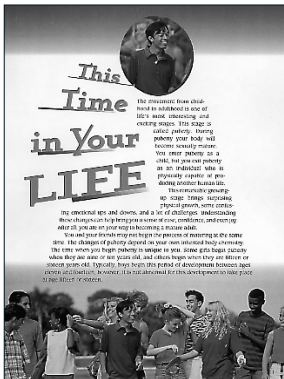
- ▶ This course focuses on how human beings develop sexually, how they express their sexuality, and what real love is.
- ▶ You will be given information about sexual reproduction, about some difficult issues related to sexuality, and about making sound decisions regarding sexuality.

5. Refer to the posted list of guidelines and go through them with the students. Solicit their views and suggestions for clarification or additional guidelines.

Remind the students that they can ask questions anonymously by putting them in the question box at any time. Assure them that you will try to answer these questions during the course. Check to see if anyone has any questions before proceeding to the next activity.

### B. Booklet Activity: “This Time in Your Life” (10 minutes)

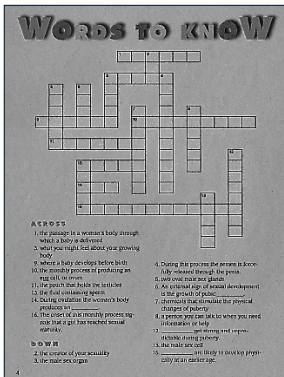
1. Explain that this session focuses on how the human body changes as one moves from childhood to adulthood, and how these changes affect the way a person relates to family, friends, and classmates.
2. Pass out the student booklets, pencils or pens, and blank self-adhesive labels. Tell the students to write their name on the label and stick it on the cover of their booklet. Give the students time to leaf through their booklet. Then direct them to read silently “This Time in Your Life” on pages 1 to 3. (Or you might want to read it aloud for them if you think this will save time and improve student comprehension.) As the faster readers finish, let them begin working on the crossword puzzle on page 4.



Booklet page 1

### C. Booklet Activity: “Words to Know” (10 minutes)

1. When everyone has read the essay, point out that many of the terms introduced in the essay are also used in the crossword puzzle “Words to Know” on page 4 of the booklet. Instruct the students, including those who have already begun working on the puzzle, to pair off to complete the puzzle. (If you have an odd number of participants, allow some of them to form a threesome.) In the interest of saving time, you might prefer to divide the class in half and have half of the students solve the *across* items while the other half solve the *down* items.



Booklet page 4

Expect some noise as the young people work on the puzzle; this is a sign that they are engaged in the task and are not unduly inhibited by the

subject matter. Move around the room encouraging students, but avoid giving them answers.

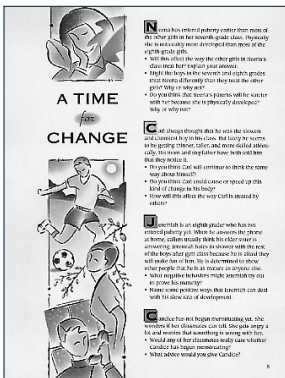
2. After the students have completed the crossword puzzle, go over each item with them. Read the clues and invite volunteers to give the responses. This procedure again gives the students an opportunity to say sexual terms aloud and use them correctly. Also take this opportunity to gently correct mispronunciations. The puzzle answers follow:

*Across*

1. vagina
3. pride
9. uterus
10. ovulation
11. scrotum
13. semen
14. egg
16. menstruation

*Down*

2. God
3. penis
4. ejaculation
5. testes
6. hair
7. hormones
8. parent
12. feelings
13. sperm
15. girls



Booklet page 5

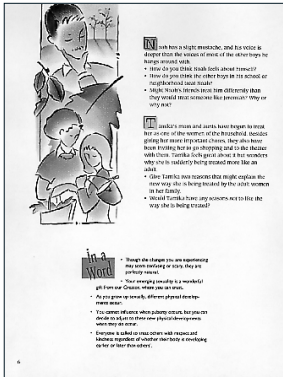
**D. Booklet Activity: “A Time for Change” (15 minutes)**

1. Point out that the students have now read about and discussed the physical changes involved in puberty and have learned that these physical changes happen to everyone. Introduce this activity by emphasizing that each person develops at her or his own rate. Note that, unfortunately, those who begin developing earlier or later than most people their age are often treated differently.

2. Tell the students to open their booklet to “A Time for Change” on pages 5 to 6. Ask a volunteer to read one of the case studies. Use the questions following the case study to lead a discussion, helping the students to build on one another’s ideas.

Set an example by listening carefully, restating and adding to students’ opinions, and being open and respectful. Point out that the students can agree or disagree with one another’s ideas. However, keep in mind that they may need help learning how to respectfully express their disagreements. As the group completes the discussion, restate the opinions of the group members so that everyone clearly understands how the young person in the example might be affected socially by the onset of puberty.

Invite another volunteer to read the second case study, and proceed in a similar way through each case study.

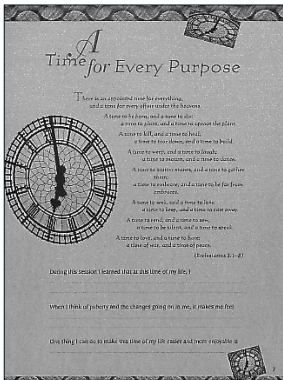


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### E. Student Booklet Summation: “In a Word” (5 minutes)

1. Invite the students to summarize what they believe is the major point of this first session. Welcome and accept each student’s attempt to formulate a summary statement. If necessary, help the young people clarify their ideas by restating them.

2. Thank those who volunteered responses. Then direct the students to “In a Word” on page 6 of their booklet. Point out that in this and subsequent sessions, “In a Word” offers a summary of the key concepts of the session. Read aloud and comment on the summary statements. Compare them with the students’ summary statements.



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### F. Booklet Activity: “A Time for Every Purpose” (5 minutes)

1. Gather everyone in the prayer space. Have them turn to “A Time for Every Purpose” on page 7 of their booklet. Slowly and reverently read aloud Eccles. 3:1–8 or have several students each take a turn reading aloud a line.

2. Direct the students to the bottom of the page. Point out that this activity gives the students an opportunity to individually and privately record their feelings and ideas. Assure them that their written reflections are for their eyes only and that no one else will have access to their booklet.

3. As you close this first session, thank the students for their participation and especially for the way they worked together. Collect the student booklets, assuring the students that you will keep them in a safe, private place until the next session.

## OPTIONS

After reading the session plan, you may choose to do some things differently or to make additions to an activity. Consider your time limitations first and then the following optional approaches.

**For step A.** Create a poster listing the session titles. Post the list where all can see it.

**For step A.** As you explain the cake analogy, actually mix the ingredients. If you have an oven handy, bake the cake while you proceed with the session. If all goes well, you can offer everyone a piece of cake before they leave.

**For step A.** If you think your students would respond better to an example other than baking a cake, such as assembling parts to a machine or computer or sewing pieces of fabric or preparing soil for a seed, spread the appropriate materials in front of the students. Also have the assembled item or end result at hand. Use these materials as the basis of a discussion to help

the students recognize the sometimes apparently messy or bewildering process necessary to create something new and wonderful.

**For step C.** If the students have not had an adequate study of human anatomy, use some of the pertinent resources listed at the end of the course introduction in conjunction with “Words to Know” on page 4 of the student booklet.