

Discussing Sexual Abuse with Children

by Bernice Hauser
Primary Education Correspondent

An issue which I am happy to say is being discussed now by some human sexuality educators is the matter of how to handle types of child abuse including sexual abuse. I feel that this is an important oversight and that part of all Human Sexuality curricula should include a section on this. However, before any adult educator includes this material in lessons, he/she should find out the school's policies regarding this controversial and touchy subject. Many schools may not wish to address this material with students and, especially with young children, unless parents or guardians have been informed about it and that the material is consistent with the policies of the city and state Board of Education. Educators must abide by the rules of their schools.

But if your school has approved your teaching of these lessons for young children, then I would urge all the educators out there to look at the *Science for Life and Living: Integrating Science, Technology, and Health* series developed by The Biological Sciences Curriculum Study and published by Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company. The following material is taken from this series, Grade One.

The points from BSCS include:

- Feelings can be good, bad, or confusing
- Trust your feelings
- Your body belongs to you
- You can decide who touches it
- If you have confusing feelings talk to a grownup who can help you
- It's OK to say no if someone confuses or embarrasses you
- It is not your fault if someone does something that makes you feel confused or embarrassed

BSCS then highlights various lessons that teachers can use about events that trigger certain feelings or make children mixed-up or make them feel good, bad, or confused. Using puppets, young students identify situations and gain knowledge that they can use in events that make them very uncomfortable. The puppets role-play with each other and with these students so that they learn to respond assertively in abusive situations. First Grade students were able to offer simple comments in a supportive atmosphere for everyone in the class to hear. Some of the suggestions offered by the puppets and the young children in the audience were to walk away, tell a trusted adult, say "no," get away, yell "STOP!," "You are bothering me," "Quit it!," "Leave me alone!," and yell for help.

(*Editor's Note:* Bernice Hauser would like to learn from her readers what age they feel is appropriate to bring in the issue of child abuse and sexual abuse. You can send e-mail to <Bernice_Hauser@horacemann.org>.)

References

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Siecus (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S.), <<http://www.siecus.org>>.

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