

CHAPTER 35

Human Sexuality

Before we learn about sex, we need to understand what human sexuality is. So much is seen, heard, said and even sung about sex today, that many people think sex is only something we do. However, our sexuality is part of our personality. It's not just our sexual organs and what we do or don't do with them; it's all the traits and values—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—that make a person male or female.

The word “sex” is used to refer to the physical and personal act of male and female genital union, sexual intercourse. This union brings with it an awesome responsibility for the persons involved and thus must be discussed and treated with respect. Sex is much more than just a casual pleasure.

The word “sex” also is used to refer to our gender, male or female. From the moment we are conceived, our maleness or femaleness is determined. Indeed, our sexuality, or the way we express ourselves as a male or female person, is part of us from the very beginning of life. Some of our expressions are determined by heredity, and others are learned as we interact with the world around us. Very early in life we begin to find ways to express our sexuality in words, feelings, thoughts and other creative ways.

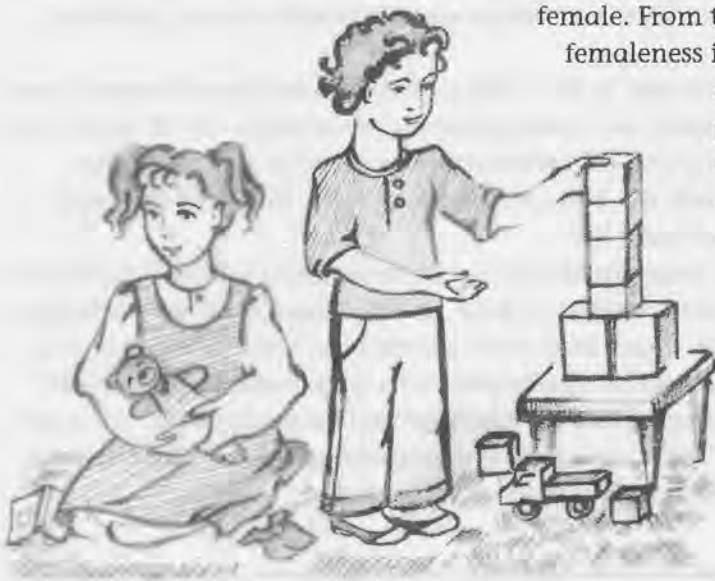
Even the male brain is different from the female brain. Tests have shown that the lobe of the brain with verbal skills develops more quickly in girls, while the lobe with visual skills develops more quickly in boys. One reason why men usually don't express feelings as well as women is that men have less of a connection between the verbal and emotional

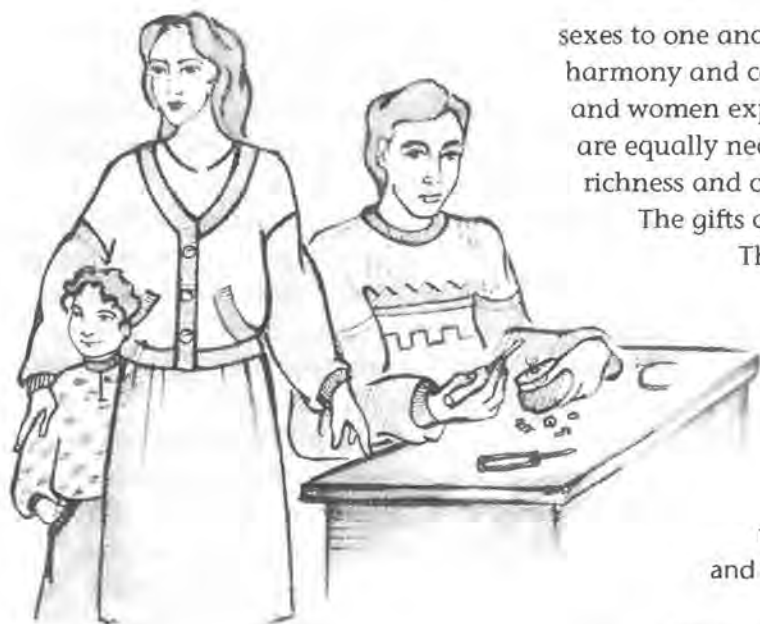
parts of the brain than women have.

While men are more adept at analytical reasoning, a woman's mind tends to arrive at the same conclusion through intuitive insight. A woman's heart is generally more sensitive, and women seem to have a better sense of ultimate objectives and people.

A woman's exercise of authority is different from a man's. It's neither better nor worse. A woman's point of view and priorities differ from a man's. A man's emotional warmth is different in quality from a woman's emotional warmth.

Everything you think, feel and do—you experience as a man or as a woman. Why is this? Human sexuality is a gift for differentiating between and attracting the





sexes to one another. Men and women experience balance, harmony and completion through each other. Although men and women express different aspects of human nature, both are equally necessary in order to experience the wholeness, richness and completeness of love, life and humanity.

The gifts of one are not better than the gifts of the other.

They complement one another, and that's why men and women need each other. When we can understand this, we can accept and respect each other's differences. Everyone discovers his or her complete self in relation to the other.

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

— Gen. 1:27

This Bible verse teaches not only that man and woman reflect the different aspects of God's nature—man expressing God's original masculinity and woman expressing God's original femininity—but also that a man's and woman's harmonious union reflects God's oneness.

How can we learn to respect our sexuality?

We need to come to terms with our sex and sexuality and learn to grow with them as we mature. Respect for sex is necessary if sex and sexuality are to have a constructive, enriching roles in our lives.

Some young people think that learning to have sex is more important than learning to love. They may become sexually active before marriage, thinking that is the way to enhance their life. Peer pressure to perform sexually can be intense, and many young people feel, either consciously or unconsciously, that they need to be sexually active in order to be accepted.

Once we understand that our sexuality extends throughout our entire being and is part of our whole personality, we will not feel pressured to prove our manhood or womanhood through sexual intercourse.

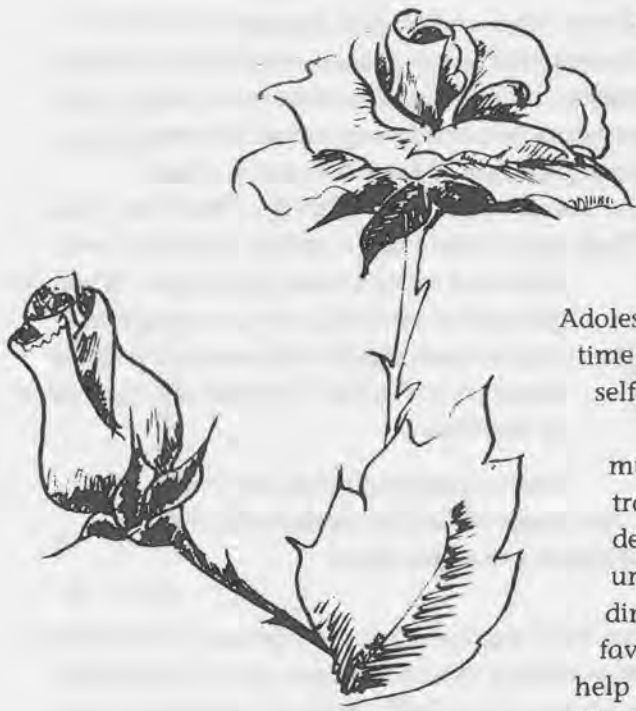


Almost everyone grows to physical sexual maturity without any effort. But how can we grow to sexual maturity emotionally, mentally, socially, and spiritually? Developing their sexuality without becoming sexually active is the main challenge that teenagers face.

What is maturity?

This is an important question. By maturity we are speaking not about physical maturity, but about spiritual maturity, the maturity of our personality. As an adolescent it's important to be aware of the qualities of a mature person, so that we'll know how to become one!

Becoming mature is a lifelong process. Believe it or not, even your parents



can be learning and growing in maturity—they probably have learned a lot just from raising you! Although maturity is a lifelong process, we must reach a certain level of maturity to function properly and well in the adult world.

Children come into the world dependent and self-centered. Slowly, as they begin to share and help, they learn that they are not the center of the universe. Adolescence is a time for important growth in maturity. It's a time to move from being self-centered and impulsive to being selfless and disciplined—practicing self-control.

It requires a lot of self-control and training to become a musician, an athlete, or a scientist. In the same way we can train ourselves to love unselfishly and unconditionally with depth and commitment. We can start now by practicing unselfishness and sacrifice (for example, helping with dinner when we'd rather be with our friends, giving up our favorite TV show in order to do a better science project or to help our younger brother or sister do homework).

By developing our ability to love, our sexuality develops harmoniously. It is eventually realized in its fullness—manifested in a selfless love and in the gift of the total self—allowing us to become a true man or a true woman. Husband and wife are then able to grow together in love and service to a new level of maturity. In nature, nothing reproduces before it has completely matured. If you are given a rosebud, you are given a promise of beauty. You don't rip it open right away so that you can enjoy the fragrance and softness and color immediately. If you did, you would have nothing of value whatsoever. You can only enjoy a rose if you keep it in a protected place and wait for it to unfold. Then it will share with you its fragrance, its color and its softness, all in its own time.

If we don't take the time to go through this development first, we are like a person who tries to swim in a pool before filling it with water. If there is no water, we cannot swim. If there is not enough water in the pool, swimming is difficult or impossible. If the water is deep enough, it buoys us up and we can swim with freedom of movement. In other words, our "pool" of love needs depth before it can hold us up for a happy experience of marriage and parenthood.

Individual Exercise



You are a TV critic for your local newspaper. Watch a popular TV program and write an article about it. Point out who was mature and who wasn't and what the consequences of acting immaturely were. Interview others who watched the show and include their reactions in your article.

For Your Journal



How mature am I?

Immaturity

- Self-centered, concerned only about "me".
- Focuses on immediate pleasure, the here and now; unconcerned about the future.
- Insecure, needs to go along with the crowd.
- Sees boys and girls in stereotyped roles, macho and dependent.
- Confuses love with physical attraction.

Maturity

- Caring and kind toward others, secure enough to give not just take from others.
- Aware of long-term consequences, accepts responsibility for decisions.
- Independent, knows one's mind and values; resists wrong peer pressure.
- Understands complexity of sexuality, the interplay of gentleness and strength.
- Sees physical and emotional components of love as inseparable.

There are many adults who do not act like adults. Their maturity is only physical. The more mature we are, the more control we have over our impulses and the more responsible we will be.

How mature are you? Try rating yourself on the "Maturity Scale" below. Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10 for each sign of maturity, with 1 meaning "strongly disagree" and 10 meaning "strongly agree."

1. I can stand up against the group when I think that what they're doing is wrong.
2. I can pass up immediate pleasure for future gain.
3. I think about and respect the feelings of others.
4. My parents can depend on me to help at home.
5. I do my school assignments thoroughly on my own and on time.
6. I can face frustration, discomfort or defeat without complaining or falling apart.
7. I take responsibility for the consequences of my decisions and actions.
8. I can control my anger and settle disputes reasonably without becoming abusive, violent or destructive.
9. I can admit my mistakes without making excuses for them.
10. I think about how something will affect others before I do it.

In your journal, write your thoughts concerning your level of maturity and in what ways you hope to change.



Love, Life and Lineage

Sexual union expresses a type of relationship—a permanent, faithful and exclusive one: an eternal commitment of marriage. Sexual love has three major purposes:

1. Experiencing the most profound love and depth of relationship between a man and a woman.
2. Creating new life, which initiates an eternal relationship with another human being.
3. Passing on inherited traits to another generation and continuing the lineage.

The essence of life is love. The human lineage is transmitted by means of the love and life of a husband and wife. Thus, love, life and lineage—the most valuable things to us—are all realized through sexual love. The linkage of love, life and lineage gives history its continuity. Therefore, love between husband and wife is the fulfillment of a divine design.

Sexual love is the fulfillment and expression of the commitment of eternal love between a mature man and mature woman—a celebration of a couple's total unity with God and with each other, enabling them to give and receive love in a true way. Sexual love is God's design for a couple to experience love in all the beauty, fervor and purity that He intended for them. Husband and wife create children as the fruits of their love, experiencing true parental love, which is selfless and unconditional. These children can fulfill their true potential. They create a harmonious family that lives in true joy and happiness.