



Family Myths and Cultural Messages

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Your Family Messages

- How many conversations about sex did you have in your family? Content? Tone?
- First public school sex ed?
- Who was conspicuously absent or silent from talks about sex?
- What was the response to your questions about sex?
- How was nudity handled?
- Did you see/hear glimpses of adult affection or passion?
- How was puberty handled? Avoided? Celebrated?
- What were the rules about having a "date" in your bedroom?
- Were there rules around dating? Clothes?
- Were there things labeled as "forbidden"? Eg, movies, magazines, dancing?
- Were you ever caught playing doctor, strip poker, with erotica, or masturbating? Were you ever caught kissing or touching your date?

Reflecting on Your Family Messages

On your own

- Think of a specific event ... or series of events
- Try to reconstruct what message you took from that event
 - The event may be conscious, but the message may not be

Get into groups of 4

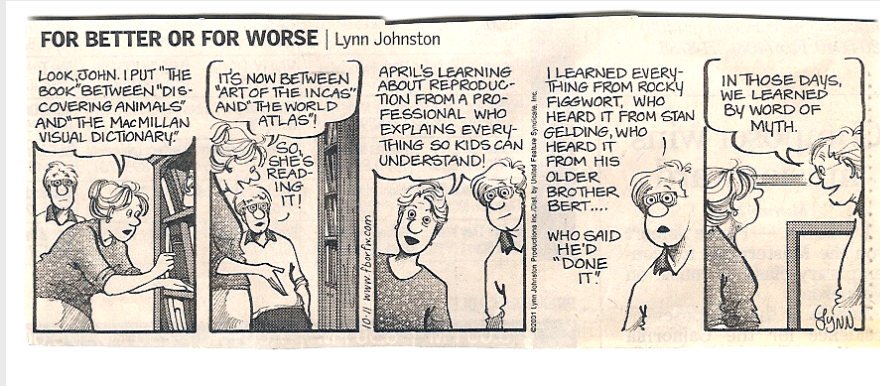
- Share the event and message you took from it
- Reflect on the impact of this message
 - How has it effected your (sexual) behavior? Feelings? Choices? Relationships?

Myths and Messages in the Media



Myths and Messages in the Media,

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Properties of Myth

- Seem to come from everywhere . . . from no where . . . they just *are*
- Mutually self-reinforcing
 - A comment reinforces an image which supports an article which reminds you of a concept which echoes a behavior which . . .
- Selective, narrow view of sexuality
 - Ignores the full range of human experience
 - Leaves us all insecure about our feelings



Prevalent Myths about Sex

- Sex should be natural and spontaneous .. without planning or talking
 - we should intuitively know what our partner likes
- Sex = intercourse, and the goal of sex is orgasm
- Sex is a performance; pleasing my partner is what counts
- There's a right way and a wrong way to "do it", to want it, and to experience it
- Sex requires an erection
 - sex is centered around a hard penis and what's done with it; size matters
- All touching is sexual and will / should lead to sex
- Partners should climax together in one mind-bending orgasm
- Sexual fantasies predict sexual behavior or preferences
- Sex implies love and commitment



More Myths

Myths about Men

- Men only want one thing
- They'll do anything to get it
- A real man is always ready
- Men should be active and initiate
- Men teach women everything
- A real man is so good at sex he'll make the Earth move .. or at the very least knock her socks off!

Myths about Women

- Women should reach orgasm through intercourse alone
- Women are much less sexual than men ("Nice girls aren't sexual")
- Women should know how to give good blow jobs ... and want to
- A (near) perfect body is a prerequisite for good sex



Myths about Sex Talk

- Talking about sex "destroys the magic"
- If you're doing it right, you don't need to talk about it
- If I tell my partner what I *really* want, they will think I'm abnormal, or that I haven't been satisfied so far
- Men don't like to be told what to do



Reflecting on Cultural Myths

On your own

- What myth do you find most troublesome?
 - Hard to get it out of your head?
 - You find it repeatedly in your partners?
- What is the impact on your thoughts, feelings, and relationships?
- What do you do more / less of as a result?

Get into groups of 4

- Share what you came up with
- Is your myth shared by others in the group?

In the large group

- Review from small groups
 - What was it like to talk about your myths?
- How might these myths show up in a client's complaints?



Impact of Myths and Messages

America has a message about sex, and that message is none too subtle. Anyone who watches a movie, reads a magazine, or turns on the television has seen it. It says that almost everyone but you is having endless, fascinating, varied sex.

The public image of sex in America bears virtually no relationship to the truth. The public image consists of myths, and they are not harmless, for they elicit at best unrealistic and at worst dangerous misconceptions of what people do sexually. The resulting false expectations can badly effect self-esteem, marriages, relationships, and even physical health.

-- *Sex in America, 1994*