



# *Promoting Sex-Wise Parenting: Supporting Parents to Promote Sexual Health and Safety at Home and in the Community*

A NEARI PRESS WEBINAR OFFERED BY DR. JANET ROSENZWEIG

AUTHOR, THE SEX-WISE PARENT AND THE PARENTS GUIDE TO TALKING ABOUT SEX

# My Perspective

- ▶ Sex education a major part of sex abuse prevention in the late 1970' s.
- ▶ By the time I came back in 2001, IT WAS GONE!

WHAT HAPPENED?!?!?!?

# Policy Issue: Megan's Laws

- ▶ First passed in states, 1994 feds 1996
- ▶ Consequences of being labeled a sex offender now much more serious,
- ▶ Public became over-reliant on Megan's Law registries for 'prevention'

# Funding Restrictions: Limits on Sex Ed

Abstinence only education:

- ▶ limited funding 1982
- ▶ massive infusion, 1996

Funded both schools and youth serving agencies

# Political Environment: Jocelyn Elders

- ▶ 1994 Dr. Joycelyn Elders, U.S. Surgeon General, was forced to resign
- ▶ “With regard to masturbation, I think that is something that is part of human sexuality and a part of something that perhaps should be taught.”



Dr. Janet F Rosenzweig, Author, *The Sex Wise Parent*

# Politics Effect Social Norms: Judy Blume.....

- ▶ “When I began to write, thirty years ago ... I was never told what I couldn't write. I felt only that I had to write the most honest books I could.”
- ▶ “But in 1980, the censors crawled out of the woodwork”



One result of changes in the 80's and 90's

Even well-meaning adults  
stopped talking to kids  
about sex



# Current Issues in Sex Abuse Prevention

- ▶ Over-reliance on background checks
- ▶ Over reliance on child-directed strategies
- ▶ Over-reliance on offender registries

# Current Issues in Sex Abuse Prevention

- ▶ Under-reliance on community and adult responsibility
- ▶ Under-recognition of child on child incidences/offenses
- ▶ Under-reliance on the importance of children having information and language about sex as a tool for promoting sexual health and safety.



An important part of the continuum of solutions:

- ▶ ‘Sex-wise parents’ who know how to fulfill their critical role as the primary sexuality educator of their child.

This is not a new idea!

# The critical role that parents play....

- ▶ Parents are less prepared for this role than ever before.
- ▶ Internet porn is now reaching millions of young people with potentially harmful messages and results
- ▶ Children with missing or incorrect information about sexuality are at risk for:
  - ▶ Sexually acting out
  - ▶ Inability to recognize potential harm
  - ▶ Vulnerability to sexual exploitation

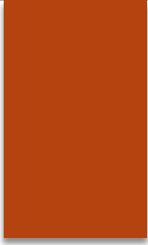
## Call to action:

We must recruit parents to our prevention team by offering them the resources to promote sexual health and safety.





What do parents  
need to know?



THAT THEIR OPINION COUNTS  
ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY  
PSYCHOSEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

# Parents underestimate their impact

- ▶ Parents consistently underestimate the influence they have on the children's decisions about sex
- ▶ Parents generally overestimate the amount of information their children get from health education classes

- ▶ Source: Albert, B. (2012). *With One Voice 2012: America's Adults and Teens sound Off About Teen Pregnancy*. Washington, DC: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

 The National Campaign  
to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

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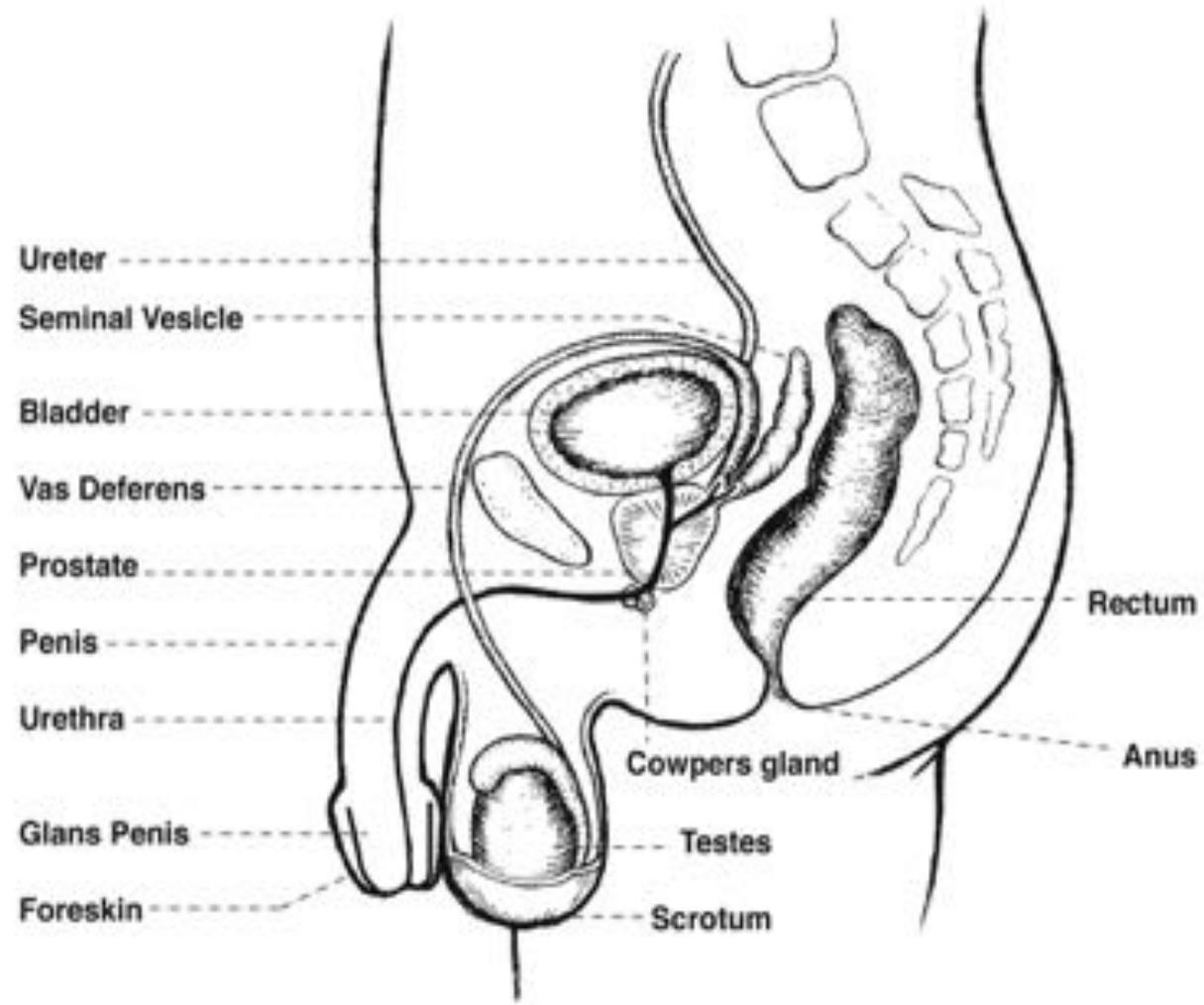
A PERIODIC NATIONAL SURVEY  
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# Anatomy and Physiology for Grownups

The next slides  
are anatomical  
line drawings  
of male and female  
sexual and reproductive organs

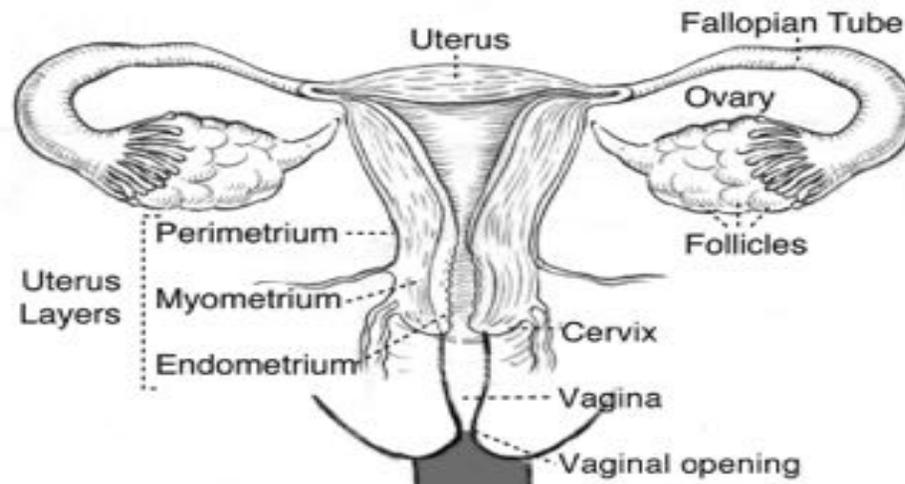
# MALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

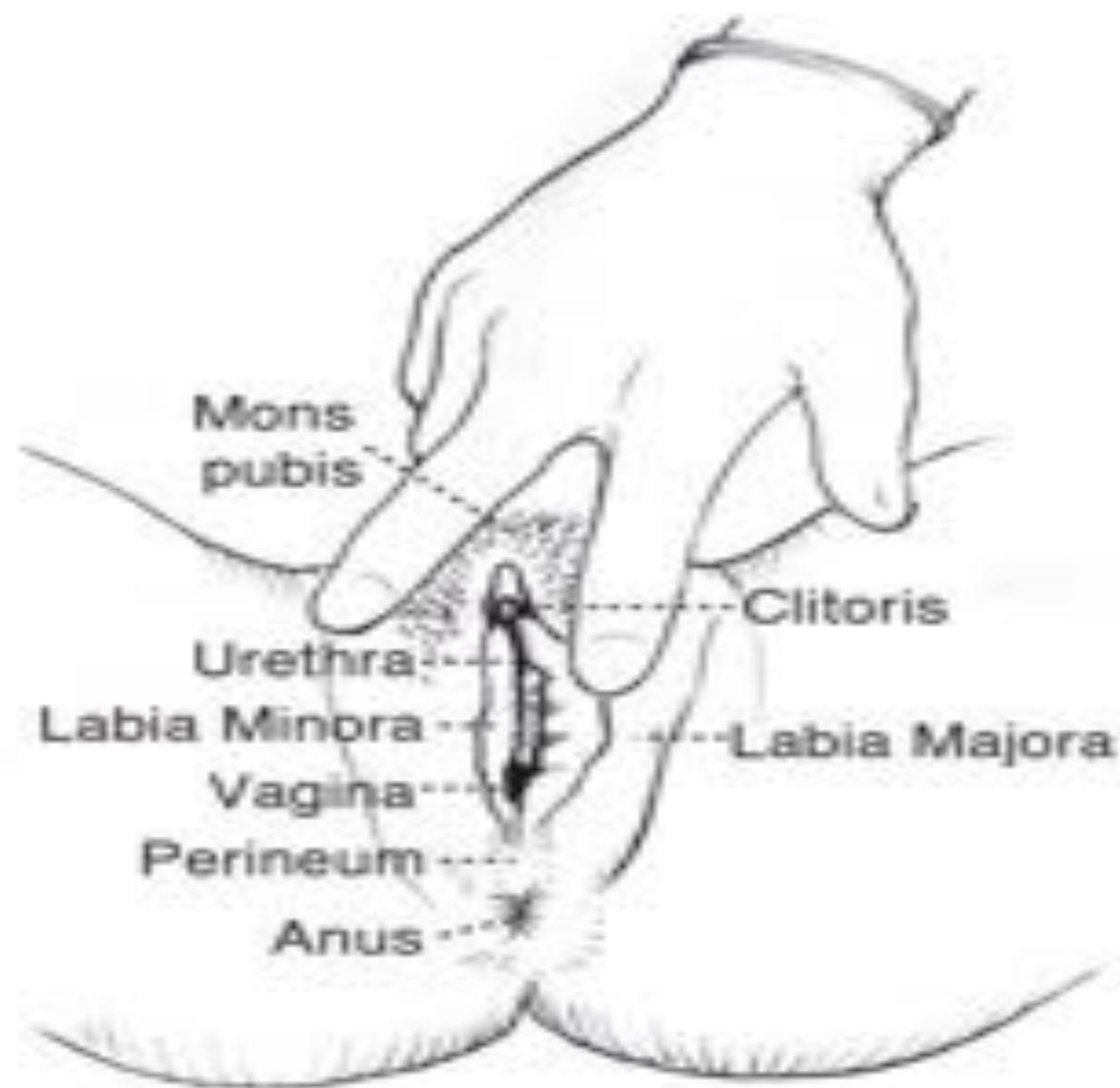


# Important concepts for kids

- ▶ School aged and younger
  - ▶ Testicles are located inside of scrotum
  - ▶ Scrotum tighten up when they're cold
  - ▶ Penis' get big when they feel certain things
- ▶ School aged/young adolescent
  - ▶ Sperm are produced in the testicles and follow the tube out the tip of his penis

## Female Reproductive System





# Important concepts for kids

- ▶ School aged and younger
  - ▶ A baby grows in a Moms uterus
  - ▶ Girls have one opening to pee (urethra) and one connected to the uterus (vagina)
- ▶ School aged/young adolescent
  - ▶ Eggs are produced in the ovaries
  - ▶ The uterus prepares each month for an egg and maybe a baby
  - ▶ In the month there is no sperm meeting the egg, meaning no baby, the material in the uterus that would have nourished a baby is released through the vagina

# Important concepts for teens

- ▶ Arousal is normal, autonomic and private
- ▶ Arousal happens to both boys and girls
- ▶ Sexual health and safety include preventing STI's and unwanted pregnancy
- ▶ Girls and boys developing brains process relationships very differently
- ▶ KEY LESSONS: Empathy Relationships Boundaries

# Kids want to know about sex!

"If they believe that you will listen to them, they start asking you questions about the body and sex that they are afraid to talk to parents and others about. That's really how it got started."

- ▶ *This is a quote from someone who had been convicted of sex with children, interviewed when I wrote *The Sex-Wise Parent**

# Exploiting sexual response

- ▶ Sexual arousal is an autonomic response to stimuli.
- ▶ The brain experiences a sight, sounds, smell, touch, memory or other stimuli and the genitals respond.
- ▶ This response is present at least since birth

# The paradox of arousal

- ▶ When a child experiences arousal and potentially orgasm, they can have a profoundly difficult time reconciling that with the concept of being a victim

# A victims own words

"Pull your pants down" he said (Bridges read)

I didn't want to lose everything he had given me. And so I did.

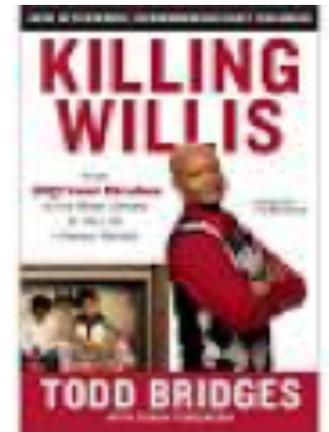
He put his mouth on me. I got hard. I didn't know where to look or how to feel. I squirmed against the back of the seat. he kept on going, getting into it.

I hoped it would be over fast.

Then it happened. I came.

As confused and upset as I was, I liked the feeling.

"No one had ever talked to me about sex before" Bridges writes. " But somehow I knew it was wrong for a man to do that to a boy." "I was really confused because having an orgasm had felt good"





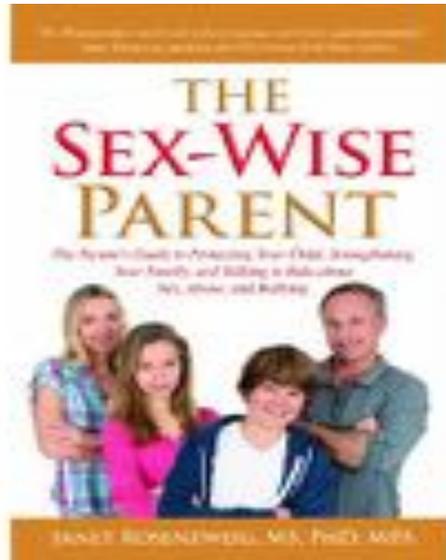
So much of the sexual abuse  
perpetrated by adolescents is  
impulsive

IN MANY CASES, BECAUSE THEY DID NOT  
UNDERSTAND THEIR OWN SEXUAL AROUSAL!

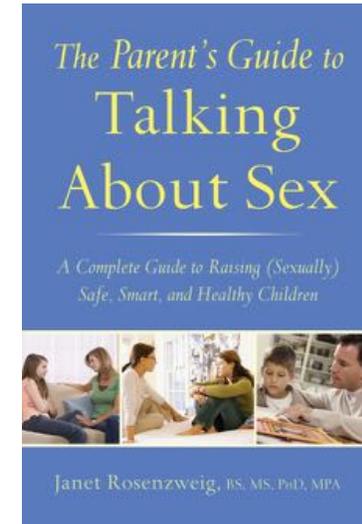
# We can support parents...

- ▶ ... to become the primary sexuality educators of their children
- ▶ ... to consciously decide on the sexual climate they will set in their home
- ▶ .... To monitor the sexual climate of the organizations and institutions serving their children

# Thank you!



Dr. Janet Rosenzweig, Author,  
The Sex Wise Parent



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