

objects, such as a favorite toy, may also help the child bridge the gap from home to school.

Sex Education

Preschoolers have assimilated a tremendous amount of information during their short lifetimes. Although their thinking may not be mature, they search constantly for explanations and reasons that are logical and reasonable to them. The word “why” seems to supplant the word “no,” which was common in toddlerhood. It is only natural that as they learn about “me,” they will also want to know “Why me?” and “How me?” Questions such as “Where do babies come from?” are as casual as “What makes it rain?” or “Who is that?” It is the way in which questions about procreation are answered that conditions children, even the youngest, to separate these questions from others about their world.

Two rules govern answering sensitive questions about topics such as sex. The first is to *find out what children know and think*. After investigating the theories children have produced as a reasonable explanation, parents can give correct information but can also help children understand why their explanation is inaccurate. Another reason for ascertaining what the child thinks before offering any information is that the “unasked for” answer may be given. For example, 4-year-old Emma asked her father, “Where did I come from?” Both parents quickly took this inquiry as a clue for offering sex education. After the explanation, Emma exclaimed, “I don't know about all that! All I know is Katie came from New York, and I want to know where I came from.”

The second rule for giving information is to *be honest*. It is true that much of the correct information will be forgotten or misunderstood by the preschooler, but the correct information can be restated until the child absorbs and comprehends the facts. Even though the correct anatomical words may be hard to pronounce or even more difficult to remember, they become foundational content for explaining other concepts later on.

Honesty does not imply imparting to children every fact of life or allowing excessive permissiveness in sexual curiosity. When children ask one question, they are looking for one answer. When they are ready, they will ask about the other “unfinished” parts of the story. Sooner or later they will wonder how the “sperm meets