

THE SEXUAL CLIMATE OF A SCHOOL: IMPACT ON SEXUAL HEALTH, SAFETY AND EDUCATION

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A presentation prepared for

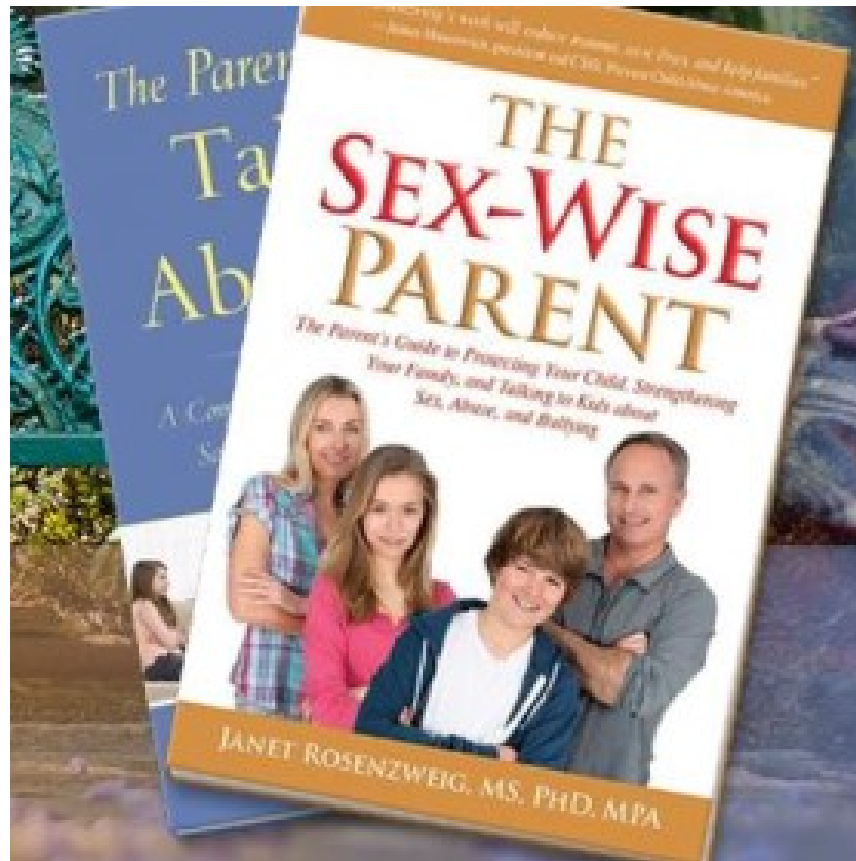
**BOARD OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
OF NASSAU COUNTY, NEW YORK**

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EXPERIENCE WORKING IN CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

- ◉ Staffed first Child Sexual Abuse Helpline in the US, 1978
- ◉ Directed 5 federally funded programs in East TN
- ◉ Started first County Commission on Child Abuse in NJ, 1985, Mercer County NJ
- ◉ Vice President, Research and Programs, for Prevent Child Abuse America, 2011-2016
- ◉ Founding member, NY State Initiative to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse
- ◉ Steering Committee member, National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

AUTHOR:



OBJECTIVES *

Learn

Participants will learn how the research of school climate can be applied to promoting a healthy sexual climate in a school

Identify

Participants will identify actions they can take to help maintain a healthy sexual climate in their school

Learn

Participants will learn the how basic issues in anatomy and physiology can impact sexual health and safety.

RATIONALE

A healthy sexual climate promotes the physical and emotional safety of students and school personnel.

A healthy sexual climate supports appropriate integration of sexual issues into curricula for health, art, history, health, science and related areas.

WHAT IS SEXUAL CLIMATE AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

SEXUAL CLIMATE/SEXUAL CULTURE

- ◉ Terms borrowed from researchers/scholars in education

Extensive research on the impact of school climate on discipline, performance, achievement, staff turnover and other issues; see for example Tableman, Betty and Adrienne Herron. “School Climate and Learning.” Best Practice Briefs, Number 31 University-Community Partnerships @Michigan State University: 2004

- ◉ “Culture” refers to the written rules, regulations and policies that specify how an organization operates
- ◉ “Climate” refers to how it actually feels to be in a building

SCHOOL CLIMATE CAN BE A DIFFICULT CONCEPT TO GRASP

- ◉ Because most adults have spent time in very few schools!
- ◉ Those of you who work in multiple schools can attest to the fact that 2 schools in the same district, with the same formal culture can 'feel' entirely different.
- ◉ Climate is specific to an individual school - highly dependant on the PEOPLE

LINKS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SCHOOL CLIMATE

- ◉ <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/school-climate>
- ◉ <https://www.schoolsafety.gov/resource/school-climate-surveys>
- ◉ <https://www.air.org/our-work/education/school-climate>
- ◉ [School CLimate and Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\)](#)

SEXUAL CLIMATE

- ◉ Refers to how a group or organization actually deals with sexual issues
 - Language and terminology
 - Privacy
 - Respect
 - Boundaries
 - Dress Code
 - Graffiti
 - Others?

SIDETRACK! ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY

Physical facts with emotional impact

MY IDEAL:

Each child should be able to go out in the world with age appropriate, medically accurate information about human sexuality, all wrapped up in the values of their family and faith tradition.



SUPPORTING PARENTS IS CRUCIAL!

As we'll see, social changes greatly reduced the opportunities for children and youth to get quality sex information while technical changes are exposing them to often TERRIBLE sex information.

Most parents think their kids are getting more sex information in school than they actually are.

Most parents underestimate how important their opinions are to their children

Most parents are woefully unprepared to provide age appropriate, medically accurate information about sexuality to their children

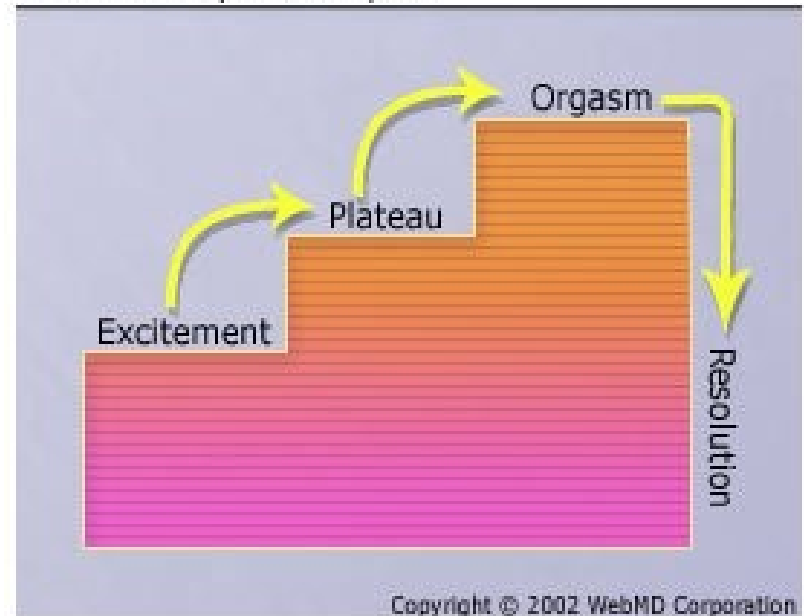
THOSE OF US WORKING WITH PARENTS CAN STEP UP
AND SUPPORT PARENTS!!!

PHYSICAL FACTS WITH EMOTIONAL IMPACT

FACT 1:

- ◎ *The human body will react to various kinds of stimulation with very specific physical manifestations*

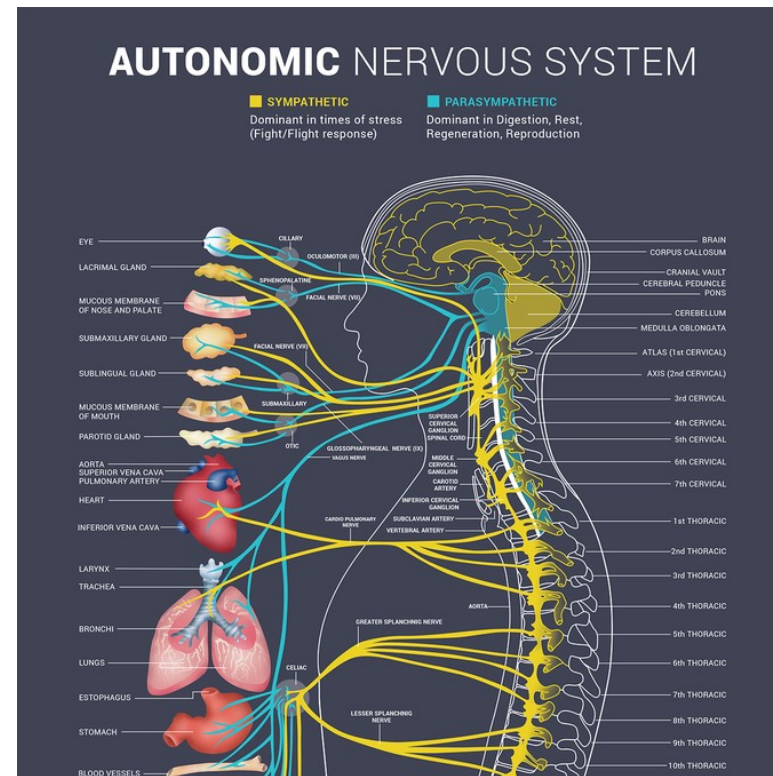
Sexual Response Cycle



PHYSICAL SEXUAL AROUSAL

◉ *The Autonomic Nervous System:*

*The part of the nervous system responsible for control of the bodily functions **not consciously directed**, such as breathing, the heartbeat, and digestive processes.*



KEY WORDS!

not consciously directed,
such as breathing, the
heartbeat, and digestive
processes

Physical sexual/genital
arousal is an autonomic
response

KEY REASONS WHY KIDS NEED TO KNOW THIS

- Victims may experience a physical, sexual/genital response while being victimized
- Predators may use the response against them, convincing the child they a willing participant because they ‘enjoyed’ the act.



KEY REASONS WHY TEENS NEED TO KNOW THIS

- Kids may experience a physical, genital response while observing a teacher
- Without the physical facts, they will mistake this for a 'crush' or even a stronger emotional reaction, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!



Thank you. This is the first time I fully realized that I was a victim. I had a 20 something highschool teacher have an inappropriate relationship with me. I always thought I was an equal party and felt guilt about hiding it.

Nobody at all knows this ever happened and this was over 15 years ago.

Thank you.

~~The Inn at [redacted]~~

KEY REASONS WHY KIDS NEED TO KNOW THIS

- Victims may experience a physical, sexual/genital response while being victimized
- This is wildly confusing for children who have experienced sexual abuse prevention as only 'good touch/bad touch'

TOTS AND MOMS.COM



Child Abuse
Prevention

GOOD TOUCH
AND
BAD TOUCH



KEY REASONS WHY KIDS NEED TO KNOW THIS

- A teen may experience physical genital arousal from multiple types of interactions, and not understanding it, may experience it as a 'call to action' to impose that arousal on a peer.



ACCOUNT FROM A VICTIM

Child TV star describes being molested by his publicist:

“Pull your pants down,” he said.

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

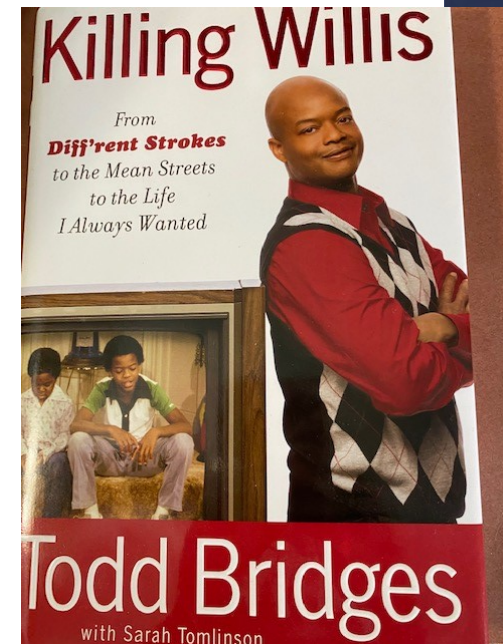
He put his mouth on me. I got hard. I didn’t know where to look or how to feel. I squirmed against the back of the seat. He kept on going, getting into it.

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, 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.”



SEXUAL AROUSAL INFLUENCES SEXUAL DECISION BEHAVIOR AND REDUCES RESTRAINT!

ARTICLE

The impact of sexual arousal on elements of sexual decision making: Sexual self-restraint, motivational state, and self-control

Shayna Skakoon-Sparling^{1,2} and Kenneth M. Cramer¹

¹Psychology Department, University of Windsor, Windsor, ON

²The Ontario HIV Treatment Network, Toronto, ON

Sexual arousal has been shown to have an impact on risk-taking and intentions to engage in risky sexual behaviour (e.g., Ariely & Loewenstein, 2006; Shuper & Fisher, 2008; Skakoon-Sparling, Cramer, & Shuper, 2016); however, the mechanisms underlying this effect are not well understood. To further investigate the effects of sexual arousal on sexual health decision-making, the current study was designed to examine the associations among self-control, sexual self-restraint, and motivational state, as well as the impact of sexual arousal on these factors. Forty-nine female and 26 male participants viewed either sexually arousing (experimental condition) or control video clips and responded to inventories designed to measure their self-control, sexual self-restraint, and meta-motivational state balance (within the Rules domain of Reversal Theory). A moderate positive correlation was found across all participants between self-control and self-restraint. Participants in the sexual arousal condition scored significantly lower on measures of self-control and sexual self-restraint; no effect was found for the meta-motivational state measure used. The results of this study suggest that sexual arousal either functions to deplete individuals' internal reserves of self-control or that it creates conditions that make it difficult to access the cognitive capacity to engage in self-control. This effect, combined with the correspondingly low score on our measure of sexual self-restraint, suggest that this may be an avenue through which sexual arousal negatively impacts sexual health decision-making.

KEY WORDS: Sexual arousal, sexual decision-making, sexual self-restraint, motivational state, self-control

SEXUAL CLIMATE IN SCHOOLS

At least 5% of kids report sexual contact with a school employee sometime during their school years

With young kids, we're concerned with pedophiles.

By middle and high school we're concerned with adults who exploit their power and status to seduce kids.

- *Hebephiles* - attraction to young teens (11-14)
- *Ephebophiles* - attraction to older teens (15 - 18)

THE SHAKESHAFT REPORT

- ◉ Shakeshaft, Carol. *Educator Sexual Misconduct: A Synthesis of Existing Literature*. Washington, D,C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Undersecretary, 2004.

◉ Access the report,

[Educator Sexual Misconduct](#)

here.

NEW YORK STATE LAWS

- ◉ New York State Consolidated Laws *Article 23-B:NYSED:SSAE
- ◉ **Child Abuse in an Educational Setting**
- ◉ **complaint forwarded to Law Enforcement**
 - when the school personnel KNOWS
 - Justice Center investigates reports of abuse against people with disabilities (www.justicecenter.ny.gov)
 - ◉ In NY, Institutional Abuse appears to apply only to residential facilities (in NJ, IAU investigates schools as well)
- ◉ **What if you just think something is on - the slippery slope?**

CURRENT EVENTS IN NY

- ◉ [Walkout at LI School After Former Students Allege Teachers, Coaches Sexually Abused Them - NBC New York](#)
- ◉ [How the NY DOE is Handling a Rash of Sex Abuse Cases \(publicschoolreview.com\)](#)

Changes in policies and procedures may impact school culture

YOU are the key to changing school climate!

HOW CAN WE CHANGE NORMS....

in our schools to make it *safe to speak with a colleague when we notice they are on a slippery slope?*

- “I see Jane is spending a lot of time in your room after school - is she OK?”
- “Jon seems to have a real crush on you - how are you going to handle that”?
- “Hey - how come the shades always down on your door - what’s up?”

EXAMPLES OF BAD SEXUAL CLIMATE

- ◎ [Bergen Record Story](#), January 2012
 - Statewide, nearly a dozen teachers or coaches have made headlines {in the past 2 months} accused of everything from videotaping boys showering in a school locker room to having sex with teens they were chaperoning on a field trip.



THIS WAS NOT A SECRET!

- ⦿ People knew that this teacher routinely made sexual advances towards students.
- ⦿ In some schools, faculty or staff would be punished for no more than an off-color remark to a student; in other schools men like Andy Bleiler (who was barely 30 at the time!) operate in the open.

The DIFFERENCE IS THE SEXUAL CLIMATE!

EXAMPLE OF A SCHOOL CLIMATE

- [HBO special](#) on you tube

GOOD POLICIES!

- ⦿ a spokesman for the New Jersey School Boards Association, estimates that 15 to 20 percent of districts now have policies that prohibit teachers from "friending" students on networks. The policies also ban teachers from giving out private cell or home numbers without district approval. All "e-contacts" with students must be made through school computer and telephone systems and communication between coaches and players should be sent to all members of a team.

SUPERINTENDENT REMOVES ENTIRE STAFF OF A SCHOOL AFTER INCIDENT REPORTED

- Deasy: “We intend to interview every adult, every adult who works at that school, whether they are a teacher or administrator, or whether they are an after-school playground worker or a custodian or a secretary. I mean every single solitary adult who works at Miramonte.”

This man understands the power of school climate!

ANDY HAS A LOT OF COMPANY

- I have yet to speak to a group where at least one person recalls their school experience including a teacher sexually involved in some way with a student
- [Educator Sexual Misconduct: A Synthesis of Existing Literature](#)

READ THIS REPORT!

BEYOND PEDOPHILIA

- ◎ **Hebephile:** someone with a preference for children just entering puberty
- ◎ **Ephebophile:** someone with an attraction to older adolescents.
- ◎ **BOTH GENDERS**
 - Brittni Colleps, a Texas school teacher charged with having sex with four students at her home, 2012
 - Mary Kay Letourneau, the school teacher jailed for having sexual relations with her 13-year-old student, 1996

SCHOOL CLIMATE

- ◉ [Great article about school climate here](#)
- ◉ There is a lot of research on the overall school climate and its impact on everything from student behavior to student achievement.
- ◉ These same concepts **MUST** be applied to issues around sexuality

NY STATE LAW REQUIRES....

- ⦿ “two hours of course-work or training regarding the identification and reporting of child abuse and maltreatment.”

- ⦿ What about prevention?

Please consider --- Pre-service training for student and new teachers on sexual climate

IMPORTANT DETAIL...

- ⦿ Does the policy provide for sanctions for failing to comply? Is anyone monitoring?
- ⦿ **The difference between culture and climate.... Just because there's a rule that something has to be done (culture) is no guarantee that it will be done the same way throughout!**

ASSESSING SEXUAL CLIMATE IN A SCHOOL

- ⦿ Is the school's physical environment welcoming and conducive to learning?
- ⦿ What are the school's policies and track record around bullying and sexual harassment?
 - Key conceptual link between bullying and sexual abuse: lack of regard for the impact the behavior has on the victim. Sadly, lack of empathy is developmentally normal during adolescence.

SEXUAL CLIMATE

- ⦿ **What is the school's policy and track record regarding teacher-student contact?**

Are student allowed to address faculty and staff by first names?

Are there clear rules for both actual and virtual out of school contact between student and faculty/staff? Are there meaningful consequences for breaking the rules? Are they enforced?

SEXUAL CLIMATE

- ◉ What is the policy on dress code and how is it enforced?

Butt cleavage, breast cleavage, midriffs and suggestive slogans on clothing are not conducive to learning. It is perfectly natural for kids to push boundaries and show up to school wearing something that bends -- if not actually breaks -- the rules. School staff should react firmly and without embarrassing or humiliating the student.

BOUNDARIES:

Can be.....

- ⦿ Physical (physical proximity, who can be alone with whom)
- ⦿ Emotional (e.g. certain feelings aren't shared)
- ⦿ Social (what we do together)
- ⦿ Virtual (on-line communication and relationships)

BOUNDARIES

Concepts:

- ⦿ Privacy: We know what's going on, but don't have to see it
- ⦿ Secrecy: We don't know what's going on

‘FIRST RESPONDER’

- ⦿ Think before responding
 - “Contiguity of stimuli”
 - Above all, do no harm
 - Face your own feelings about sexuality and work on keeping a ‘game face’, especially with younger kids
 - Avoid shaming kids in consensual play or self-comforting
- ⦿ If possible, determine if the act was consensual
 - This only applies to kids with kids --- It is NEVER consensual if it’s a child and adult - Joe Del Russo will cover this!

TODAYS HANDOUTS:

Resources to share with parents and consider using with staff in your schools

- ◎ ['Rosenzweig's' Rules](#)
- ◎ New York State Initiative [info graphic for parents](#)
- ◎ [Norms exercises](#) (2) for institutions younger children and adolescents/teens

INSTITUTIONAL NORMS

- ◉ **When will we let a child toilet by himself?**

Discussion points: Privacy, modesty, safety.

- ◉ **How will we react to hugging and kissing?**

- ◉ **What will we do when a child's curiosity leads him to touch your body?**

Discussion points: Privacy, role-modeling setting boundaries gently but firmly.

- ◉ **How will we react when we see a child touching his or her genitalia?**

Discussion points: Autonomic arousal, avoid associating sexual pleasure with fear/guilt/shame.

- ◉ **How can we support a child's enjoyment of all her senses: the taste of food, the smell of a beloved person, the feel of fabric, the warmth of human touch?**

Discussion points: Healthy sexuality is positive, wonderful and life affirming; too many parents only discuss the dangers and kids deserve a balanced perspective.

GROUP EXERCISE

What is the sexual climate in your school?

- **Institutional Norms Exercise** *For agencies serving young children*
- The following questions can be used to start discussions among staff in child serving institutions as a tool for management to communicate the policies and procedures in place to promote appropriate boundaries. These answers will change with the age of the children being served, the formality of the institution and the experience of the staff.
- Detail on these and related topics can be found in *The Sex-Wise Parent*, (Skyhorse, 2012) Chapter 6.
- **What terms will we use with kids about all body parts? How and when will you use them?**
Discussion point: Children need words for genitalia easily understood by others.
- **Will we have a dress code for both staff and students?**
Discussion point: Privacy, modesty, self-respect

SEE HANDOUTS FOR MORE!

SPANISH LANGUAGE RESOURCES

- ◉ <http://www.nsvrc.org/es/saam>
- ◉ <http://nsvrc.org/publications/en-espanol>

FOR MORE INFORMATION,

Or a copy of this slide set

● www.sexwiseparent.com/resources

Look for 'slides from Nassau County NY presentation'

● All links will be live back to the items references in this presentation

Thank you!

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