

# Talkin' not boppin'

by Stephanie Nolen

Katherine Anderson says talking to kids about sex is going to keep them out of bed longer.

Anderson is the Education Coordinator for the Metro Area Family Planning Association. She talks to students about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. Although she does encounter some opposition from those who believe talking about sex to young people only encourages promiscuity, Anderson doesn't buy it.

"The research states that the kids with the most information - the coping strategies on how to say no - they're delaying intercourse the longest," Anderson says.

She teaches in area schools as part of the Personal Development and Relationships Program.

"It's a one shot birth control show and tell," Anderson says. She talks about avoiding high risk pregnancy and STD situations, and discusses sexuality. She covers all of the birth control methods, with the aid of a wooden penis for condom demonstrations.

"The more information they have, the better off they are. I tell them that abstinence is the only 100% effective method there is. It's the only way to be 100% sure about

pregnancy, and how to protect yourself from STD's," she explains.

Anderson also stresses that sex is not necessarily a part of physical relationships.

"I tell them they don't have to have intercourse, that there are lots of other things which are physically exciting. I call it 'outercourse'. It's safe for pregnancy and STD's."

This suggestion gets some laughs from Anderson's student audiences.

"They laugh at me," she says. "They say 'this lady knows what we're doing'."

Anderson's work puts her in touch with the attitudes young people today have about sexuality, and she isn't too disturbed.

"Sex is easier for everyone to talk about today," she says. "Everybody is a lot more open, and that's really a good thing."

The questions she hears most often from young women concern the Pill and its safety. From young men?

"There is still a lot of resistance to wearing condoms," she says.

Anderson also teaches to a variety of community and professional groups. She is part of a Sex Weekend where medical, nursing, and theology students learn about

attitudes to sexuality. Med and theology students may sound like an unlikely mix of people, but Anderson says it works.

"Medical students tend to look at ovaries and testicles. Theology students spend most of their time dealing with emotions," she explains. "When you integrate these two approaches, you get a more effective, more holistic approach to sexuality."

She's also teaching about attitudes: "Everybody is not a WASP heterosexual male."

Anderson says it is important to get people to relax when they talk about sex, to be comfortable, and realize where their feelings are coming from.

"I talk about these things everyday, for me talking about sex is like talking about toast," Anderson says. "But sex has a working language, a language all of its own, and people have to be comfortable."

Anderson has been working in sex education for five years, and with the MAFPA for one. She finds her work there satisfying.

"I think in this day and age we have to put our energy into prevention instead of tertiary health care. Here I can work at the preventative level, empowering people to make their own decisions."



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