



May 2009

A Simple Strategy for Sex Questions

Ask them questions back.

It will not only help you to know the answer, it will also help you to know the question!

Here is how it works: *'Mommy, how do babies get inside you?'*

'What do you think?'

'Well, you eat things, and then you eat more, and then you get fat.'

Tentative ideas

The first time a child asks about sex or babies is not the first time he has thought about it. And, although his idea may be tentative, it is also likely to be a strong compelling conviction, because it matches up with so much he knows.

For example, with observations: that eating makes his belly stick out. With information: eating makes you grow. With logic: things get inside you through your mouth. And with language: food goes into your tummy; a baby is in mommy's tummy; tummies get bigger when you eat; mommy's is getting bigger.

If the child already knows the answer, then what was the question? Consider it, then try this: *'Do mummies really get babies by eating?'*

The answer is simple. No. After all, daddies eat too, and so do children. But they never get babies. Babies grow inside a mommy from a tiny seed that she keeps inside her. Stop there. That is all he asked.

Wait for the next question.

'Where do babies come from?'

'I wonder what you think?'

'From your pooh-pooh place.'

So now you know where you are. The question is concerned not with where babies come from, but with how they get out!

And again, your question is: *'Do they really? Can it happen that way?'* Now is the time to tell your child about the vagina - the special opening for babies to come out of. Then stop. No one has asked you yet how a baby starts!

Harder questions

Not all questions are big and bold, or even said in words. A child may aim a few good punches at his mother's tummy, or parade around with a pillow under his shirt. He knows something's up, even when he's only eighteen months old. The question is: what? Answer: there is a baby in there.

There are other harder questions asked quietly in private, or in a loud voice at the shop counter. What do fathers have to do with making babies? And penises and testicles? Can boys have babies? Can girls have babies when they're still little? Can people have babies if they aren't married?

And the hardest one that ever came the way of a babysitter from a 6 year old boy: *'When a daddy puts his sperm into a mommy, is it accidentally or on purpose?'*

Other theories

There are other theories, too: that kissing or dancing together, or the magic words of a marriage ceremony make babies; that babies come out through belly buttons or through a hole the doctor cuts in the mother. Or even in modern children who have always been told the truth (but who distrust the idea of a stranger inside their mommy's tummy), from the shop, the doctor's, or the hospital.

No matter how preposterous, how silly, how cute, or how frightening such ideas seem to you, they are the closest the child has come, on his own, to understanding. It's interesting and precious to think that they are shaped by childhood's version of common sense.

From a pre-schooler's perspective *truth* is fine, but is it *common sense*?

