**Share Your Attitudes About Sex**

**Ken Canfield, Ph.D.**

*April 30, 2007*

Are you getting ready for that big birds-and-the-bees talk, dad? That talk is important, but you can't stop there.

A study published in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* looked at 750 inner-city African American youth between the ages of 14 and 17. The researchers concluded that sexual behavior among the teens could be predicted with some accuracy based on each child's perceptions of his father's attitudes about sex.

To put this in more friendly terms, these teenagers' sexual activity was strongly influenced by what they knew their fathers' believed about sex. And it was true for fathers much more than mothers. Dads, we determine the child's sex at conception, and we have a huge part in shaping the child's sexual expression later on.

First, we should realize that ***this is our role whether we want it or not***. If it's an uncomfortable topic and you avoid talking about it, that's the message you're sending to your child about sex. You don't care about what happens, and she needs to make her own decisions-based on what others are saying and doing.

Or, she could face each day's pressures and temptations knowing exactly where you stand, and drawing on that knowledge to help her choose her course of action. Do you see how important it is for us to be involved?

So how do you give your child a clear message? The old "big talk" method has its merits, but we can't stop there. A one-shot discussion can't possibly cover every one of their questions and there's no way they'll remember everything you say.

***An everyday, piece-by-piece method is much more effective.*** Take advantage of the "teachable moments" that come along in the context of life, and over time, fill in the picture of what you believe. Since it's coming right on the heels of something you saw on TV or something your son heard at school, it's much more meaningful.

Teachable moments happen at the grocery store, at the dinner table, in the middle of a one-on-one basketball challenge in the driveway ... anywhere. Be ready, dad. Make sure your children know where you stand. As they navigate the confusing world of sexuality, they need you as a sturdy reference point.