

Sex education in the united states

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



Education is formal while socializing is an informal process of teaching children or adolescents about sexual health and behaviors, respectively. Sex education focuses on relaying impartial information about healthy sexual behaviors and trains individuals in expressing and sorting out their sexual concerns or problems. It focuses on their psychosocial development and sexual literacy can also enhance their knowledge about positive sexual behaviors.

On the contrary, socialization which first begins at home is aimed at teaching children about “ ideas, beliefs, and values, shared cultural symbols, meanings, and code of conduct.” (Shtarkshall, Santelli, & Hirsch, 2007) Once children and adolescents begin to interact with society, they learn more about sexuality through mass media and by observing the norms of society within its particular cultural and religious contexts. Thus, they gain diversified knowledge about the attitudes and views of society regarding sex-related issues like socially-accepted gender roles and social taboos like abortion, birth control, etc.

“...cultures around the world socialize boys and girls through both, direct and indirect means, to understand their gender roles in society.” (Ember & Ember, 2003) Thus, children and adolescents develop their social and sexual identities from their parents and society that transfer their cultural/religious values and beliefs in them.

As education and socialization are different modes of teaching children and adolescents about sex, therefore, sex education is incomplete without either of these modes. Teenagers should be educated about sex in schools and parents should set examples through role-playing about positive sexual

behaviors and equal gender roles at home.

According to Shtarkshall, Santelli, & Hirsch (2007), most teens would prefer to learn about sex from schools. This conclusion is based on studies conducted in Israel and the United Kingdom, in which adolescents were asked about their preferred source of sexual education. A majority of the students expressed their desire to learn about sex in their schools rather than their homes.

This is because many teenagers believe that parents cannot impart complete knowledge of sexuality. Another reason why teenagers cannot learn about sex from their parents is that in many families, parents do not discuss such subjects openly. Even if they do, it occurs between some members of the family like mothers, daughters, etc. Fathers are often found to be hesitant in discussing anything about sex or educating their children about the importance of being sexually safe through the use of condoms etc.

The Facts on Sex Education in the United States (2006) state: " In another study, 82% of parents supported comprehensive sexuality education that teaches students about abstinence and other methods of preventing pregnancy and STIs..." (Bruess & Greenberg, 2009) This shows that parents also prefer schools or educators to teach their children about sexual health than doing it on their own.

The assumption that parents are capable and willing to appropriately and accurately inform their adolescents is also faulty. According to the best social science research, we know that parents are influential in the early stages of adolescent sexual knowledge acquisition and that that focus changes towards peers and educators later on. (Hecht & Eddington, 2003)