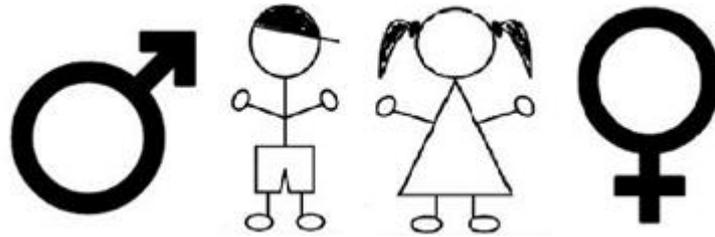


Sexuality and your Child

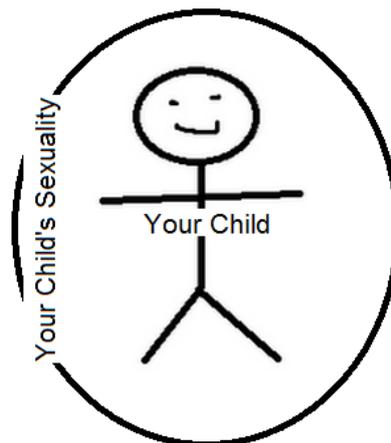


A talk by Rene Raff at WPPS on 23 October 2013– written by Julien Rumbelow

The Centenary Pavilion was packed to the rafters for this talk. Perhaps the crowd was due to the provocative topic or maybe it was Rene Raff herself: she is clearly a highly skilled professional when it comes to this topic and her “say it like it is” manner is highly amusing and straight to the point.

Rene started straight out of the Left-field: “Bullying” she stated boldly “is a big problem”. “It is not the confident well-rounded child who bullies. It is the child who LACKS CONFIDENCE who bullies, the kid seeking recognition, who has possibly been bullied themselves, who is perhaps bullied at home”.

My eyes were popping!



“You child’s sexuality is about everything about your child”

Rene then drew the figure above and made it very clear that your child’s SEXUALITY IS ABOUT EVERYTHING about your child. It is not just about genitals, or reproduction, or gay-or-straight issues, or waxed skin, or any other historic or traditional notion of sex or sexuality.

Sexuality is about Confidence.

After emphasising the need to limit your child’s intake of violent imagery through TV and Computer Games etc. (this “violence is so unnecessary”- see more below), she made us think about our child’s developmental stages – and the confidence that we imbue to them at each stage? She pointed out that “doing up buttons” is a major developmental milestone for a child aged 3 or 4. It is not physiologically possible before then. We were thus invited to imagine how a small kid must struggle to learn to bring his or her hands together precisely in the way necessary to push a button through a button-hole for the first time. One day he/she finally gets it right, and feels elated at the

achievement! and runs thru to mum or dad (who are disinterested or in a rush as usual). They take one look at the 'miss-aligned' buttons and coldly state: "THAT'S ALL WRONG – LET ME FIX IT" - what message(s) are you giving your child?!

We should always TELL OUR KIDS THEY ARE FANTASTIC / AMAZING / BEAUTIFUL

Be around for your kids. How else can you possibly teach them your MORALITY (or your notion of Good Morality if you are human like the rest of us and have made mistakes)!

GIVE YOUR KIDS YOUR TIME!

There were few other things that stood out from Rene's talk:

DON'T EXPOSE YOUR KIDS TO (too much TV & VIDEO GAME) VIOLENCE – IT'S NOT NECESSARY

This is particularly true for younger kids who are at more sensitive developmental stages. When your six-year-old says "but mommy/daddy it's not *very* violent – only a *few* people get killed"- you know you are already in deep water. Similarly for older kids – exposure to violence is not necessary

PUT LIMITS ON THE USE OF DIGITAL TOYS AND GAMES

(& get them to play other 'old fashioned' games, read books, and play out-doors)

SOCIAL MEDIA – KEEP IT REAL

Teach your kids that it's NOT OK to do anything on social media that you would do in real life if you were there in person. It's too convenient to break-up via email or SMS/TEXT. It is sometimes necessary to do the right thing and face the person that you are dumping/dissing in real life!

PORNOGRAPHY – DON'T BE TOO SHOCKED

Rene told a story about some quivering Grade 8 school boys who had been sent to her as punishment for the "shocking" crime of having been bust looking at pornography in the school computer lab. She was very "ho-hum" about it and did not belittle the boys. The fact that people were so shocked was an over-reaction and not useful in dealing with the real issues at play: a curious child who is becoming sexually mature and is completely out of his/her depth, and is clearly in need of some guidance on Computer Room etiquette.

Often kids (especially teenagers) will do things that shock just to get a reaction, like 'finding' some pornographic pictures in a classroom and then gauging the teacher's reaction to this.

MASTURBATION – IT'S NORMAL BUT THERE ARE SOME 'RULES'

Masturbation is completely natural. Little boys get erections and little girls lubricate from infancy, sometimes spontaneously, or if they physically stimulate themselves. This is normal. However, masturbation 1) Must be Private (some kids don't get this and need to be told/taught) 2) Should not be obsessive 3) Should not cause bodily damage.

WORLDWIDE BULLYING HAS BECOME MORE WIDESPREAD & DIVERSE IN RECENT YEARS

Perhaps it is because of the insidious Soap Opera TV shows during the dinner-time hours, or maybe it's the internet, social media or modern values, but for whatever reasons, research shows that bullying has growth both in scope and in incidence in recent years. Previously bullying was mainly physical and mostly by boys only. Nowadays, there is more bullying by kids generally and by both boys and girls. Bullying is also more diverse, from physical abuse, to verbal abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.

If your child is experiencing abuse, speak about it to your school councillor. Don't stay quiet

AN EXAMPLE IN SOLVING A CASE OF BULLYING (AT BISHOPS LONG AGO!?)

When Rene worked at Bishops there was a dormitory of about 10 boys with one tear-away bully who was making life miserable for the group. On and on it went. First one boy was miserable, then the next. Teachers were aware of the problem but were helpless to resolve things. Parents were tearing their hair out, the bully's parents (a lovely couple) did not know what to do. No-one knew what to do but there was a simple solution enter Rene Raff . . . !

The solution was quick and effective:

The school provided the opportunity and support for all ten boys to confront the bully together with the assistance of a professional councillor. The boys told the bully that they would collectively refuse to stand his abuse any more. Guess what, the problem stopped immediately and permanently.

You see, the crowd gives the abuser his/her power. If the crowd stands together against the abuser, the power base is removed, and the abuse ends

THE BIGGEST PROBLEM IN KIDS LIVES THESE DAYS

Here are some of the usual contenders:

- The internet
- Social media
- Violence (or sex, nudity, language, profanity, bitchiness) on TV
- Predatory adults
- Lack of moral teaching

These are certainly some contenders for the biggest problem in our kid's lives, but according to Rene's professional, experienced and hugely insightful opinion, for kids these days, the BIGGEST NEGATIVE = ABSENTEE PARENTS

ON SLEEP OUTS AND BOUNDARIES

Think carefully about the sleep-out option in your family life. It's frequently over-rated and often happens too early for most kids (how many "come and fetch me" calls from kids have you heard of?). Also, if your kid has been playing with a friend all afternoon, why does he/she need to stay all night as well? What does this tell your kids about boundaries and limits?

Also seriously ask yourself, "Is this sleep-out actually about me (so I have a night off parenting and can go out). Is it really in my child's best interests? Do I know who will be taking my place for the next 12 hours of my child's precious life".

TEENAGERS – A RUNAWAY TRAIN - IF YOU DON'T PUT BOUNDARIES IN PLACE

Read this article again, and start to put things in place for a happy teenager in your home, before your teenager becomes a runaway train. If you are interested in teens, take a look at this review of a talk by Rene Raff on Teenagers specifically:

<http://www.childmag.co.za/content/when-your-child-turns-teenager#.UnJPFvmnp9U>

THE KEY ISSUE ABOUT SEXUALITY AND YOUR CHILD

Give your kids TIME, give them LOVE, they are fantastic, amazing. Build their CONFIDENCE. Teach them your morality.

LISTEN TO YOUR CHILDREN – TRUST THEM

When your daughter says "I hate the way Uncle Bob kisses me every time he visits". Don't say to her "Well that's too bad, Uncle Bob is dad's oldest friend from university. He's such a nice man". Rather trust her intuition and support her – she has been given her instincts for a reason – to protect herself. Don't teach her that it's OK from someone else (her mother in this case) to decide what she does with her body – that is her domain and her body. She needs this reinforced not undermined.

Thank you Rene Raff for the awesome talk!