



WITH 10 PER CENT OF KIDS NOW SEXUALLY ACTIVE BY THE AGE OF 14, IT'S TIME WE TOOK SEX EDUCATION SERIOUSLY, SAYS COMEDIAN **MARK BUTLER.**

Let's talk about SEX

A recent report by Marie Stopes International found that Australian students are not getting adequate sex education in school. Some kids aren't getting any – sex education, that is – and those who do get it will often get it too late. After all, 10 per cent of kids are now sexually active by the age of 14.

Children grow up fast these days and perhaps they deserve more respect. The Year 9 boys are not giggling out of immaturity when you mention safe sex, they're laughing at you for thinking that they don't know how to put on a condom. Kids are ordering lattes and sushi by the time they're six, and by 10 they have mobiles phones and mortgages; condoms were being tried on for size a long time ago.

I, too, would be giggling if I had to listen to a misinformed crusty bumble his way through a lesson on contraception – that stuff will always be funny no matter how old you are.

So when is the right time to broach the topic? While the Australian Medical Association is insisting that sex matters be taught to children at 10, the British government is aiming for half that, but at the age of five some kids are still playing with putty and shape sorters. Are they really ready to know that the round shape goes into the round hole? And if so, when do we tell them that with patience, persuasion and plenty of lubrication the same shape can also be pushed into the star-shaped hole?

I believe we should get students talking about sex as early as possible, and we shouldn't restrict our teachings to the oh-so-boring 'sex for procreation.' Most of us only have procreational sex once or twice in our lifetimes, mortgage allowing; we should be teaching 'sex for recreation' and discussing the pleasure it can bring.

Drag your students along to my comedy show this year and they'll learn all about oral sex, group sex, multiple orgasms and the Jen-Mo Point – and if you have to Google this phrase, you too will learn a few tricks in my show. Teenage boys don't want to know how sperm travel through the testicles, they want to be taught how to perform cunnilingus properly. I guarantee that if you show your Year 9 class the Circles technique, your credibility will go through the roof.

Recreational sex is one of the most important things in the world – without it, many of us would go insane – yet it's something most of us are too embarrassed to talk about. The topic is swept under carpets in classrooms and loungerooms throughout Australia, and if anyone has the courage to discuss it, or indeed write articles about it, they're likely to be labelled a pervert.

Sex is a subject that has been around a lot longer than Science, but if you were to scan an educational resource catalogue I doubt you'd find a textbook on blow-jobs. There are many people out there who know how to give great blow-jobs so why are we not sharing this knowledge in a more formal manner? As educators you would surely support the sharing of knowledge, wouldn't you? Schools provide learning support for students struggling with English. Why leave something as important as sex to chance?

So how do we do it? Well, we don't use unrealistic scenarios like putting a condom on a banana – I say 'unrealistic' because a banana doesn't go soft when you take the condom out of the packet. We do something less radical – we treat students with respect. We give them real-life skills that will fill them with enough sexual confidence to stop them worrying about the size of their genitals. We teach them how to get a partner so that they no longer have to beat themselves up because their cherry is still intact. We show

them how to sexually satisfy their partner so that they don't get dumped for someone else and spend the next few months moping around in their bedroom.

All these ideas may take up a lot of classroom time, but do we really need to spend so many hours on subjects like Chemistry? What is more valuable to a young man, an ability to recite the periodic table or an ability to bring a woman to orgasm? What's going to get that boy further in life, knowing that Ag is the chemical symbol for silver or knowing that a G-spot is about five centimetres inside the vagina?

Are my suggestions so crazy? I don't think so. They learn this stuff in Holland from a very young age and their Chlamydia rate is substantially lower than Australia's. The country with sex workers in windows regularly engages its citizens in sexual dialogue and its rate of teenage pregnancy is one of the lowest in the world.

The alternative approach would be to teach abstinence, but just look where this has got the United States. The US has the highest divorce rate in the world and the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the developed world. More teenage pregnancies inevitably leads to more teenage abortions – perhaps the more conservative schools should be thinking about this the next time they start sweeping condoms under the carpet. **T**

Mark Butler will be performing his new comedy show, 'Let's talk about SEX,' a tongue-in-cheek sex education class for adults, and the children of more open-minded parents, at the Adelaide Fringe Festival from 28 February until 14 March and the Melbourne International Comedy Festival from 1 to 26 April.

LINKS: For more information about Mark Butler, visit www.funnymark.com