

PARENTS V. "STATE EMPLOYEES" - WHO GETS TO DECIDE?



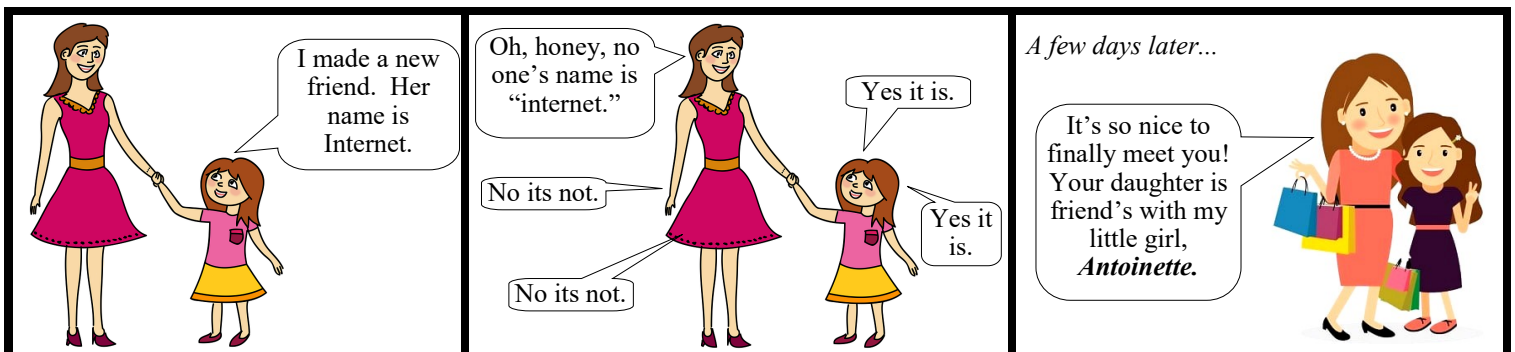
A mom in Rocklin, CA saw her 1st grader begin to sob and tremble uncontrollably after standing up in the bathtub and catching a glimpse of herself in the mirror. The little girl interpreted her wet, slicked back hair as an indication she had “turned into a boy,” because she had been told by her teacher that “Sometimes a person who thinks they’re a girl, is really a boy, or vice versa.”

This is just one of many stories lately about sexualizing children (particularly very young children) in public schools. Some states have enacted laws to limit what is taught, while others are expanding to include controversial topics such as gender fluidity and sexual behaviors. The debate is really about what is “age appropriate” and finding the right balance between teaching “too much, too soon” and “affirming identities.”

The key is remembering a child’s ability to understand abstract ideas **develops over time**. Cognitive development always follows a sequence, and stages cannot be skipped. Each stage is marked by new intellectual abilities and a more complex understanding of the world. Babies literally can’t understand that an object still continues to exist when they can’t see or hear it. To an infant or toddler, a ball rolled under the couch is just gone. It’s as a child interacts with the world around them, that their ability to reason and predict develops.

From 7 to 11, children are still essentially concrete thinkers — meaning their thinking is literal and focused on the world they can see, hear, and touch. Experience helps them understand why others act the way they do, and starting about age 12, their brains learn to analyze, extrapolate, generalize, and empathize.

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Which is why there is push-back against introducing complex concepts with political, social and health ramifications before a child's brain is mature enough to grapple with it. At best, it's unkind, and at worst, it's abusive.

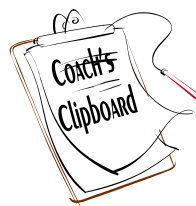
As we at *Positively Waiting* often remind parents, the brain's reaction to sexual material (visual, audio or tactile) is unlike any other learning experience such as art, music or sports for example. Sexual material is burned into the memory system of the immature brain by the magnitude of the chemical response, even when it is not pleasant (such as molestation or accidental exposure). All concerned adults want children to become adults with a healthy sex life, but the truth is, early exposure to sexual imagery is at the root of many emotional traumas.

Pre-teens and teens have almost no ability to understand the long-term ramifications of "choosing a gender" or sexual identity. In point of fact, their brains aren't fully capable until they are about age 25.

With that in mind, the more important question to wrestle with is WHO should determine when and how to introduce sexual material? Or, as one commentator put it, should "state employees" or parents be the ones to decide?



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COACH'S CORNER

This month's tip is a response to a question from a Christian parent.

Apply as needed, or disregard as you like. The question had to do "judging" someone with same sex attraction (SSA). This particular Christian teen is close to a person with SSA, but she is also aware that sexual immorality is condemned in the bible.

Here is one suggestion to help manage the tension of those two competing values. Remember ALL sex outside of the marriage of one man and one woman is biblically immoral. But that command is for *believers only*. Until someone voluntarily puts themselves under the Lordship of Christ, then **none** of the commands of Jesus actually apply to them. They're not required to tithe, or refrain from gossip, or forgive seventy-times-seven or bear one another's burdens. There is no compulsion (or supernatural power to do it, for that matter) for them to go the extra mile or turn the other cheek. All of those commands are for followers of Jesus ONLY. There isn't anywhere in the bible where it says believers are supposed to impose those behavioral standards on *non-believers*.

Until a person has a relationship with Jesus, their sex life is none of your business. Ideally, the inexplicable joy and blessings that come from the believer who is Christ-like would be so appealing that non-Christians would demand to know, "How do I get what you have?"

On the other hand, if a person with SSA identifies as a Christian, then "speak the truth in love." Treat them with the compassion you want for yourself when you fail at Christ-likeness, as you strive for the biblical standard.

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