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Prof. Gord Sellar
By: Jinyoung Kim

Topic. Adolescent Venereal Disease

The Ultimate Way for Our Hope

Have you ever seen the movie "Jenny&Juno" which dealt with young teenager's pregnancy as a subject matter? The whole outline is as follows: There is young couple, Jenny and Juno, which are middle school students. One day, Jenny says to her boy friend pointing at her pot belly with her finger like this, "Juno, maybe... I think sweet baby lives in here!" Hearing the surprising news, Juno cannot hide his embarrassment. Yet, he soon jumps around the playground shouting with joy. "Jenny, I love you, I will defend from everything!" After that day, both of them totally do not tell their families as well as friends the truth. Unfortunately, the bigger Jenny's belly is, the harder the couple's secret life is. Lastly, they are seized by the scruff of the neck, what is worse, the secret are spread and the daring couple was expelled from the school in the end. This absurd and uncommon movie is concluded with happy ending that Jenny gives birth to baby and Juno enters a prestigious school. As soon as this film was released, it caused great controversial issue in conservative Korea society. There have been a lot of arguments concerning whether the pregnancy of teenager could be an acceptable matter within people of every class. Most adults are worried about

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teenagers' reckless acts in imitation of this movie and concerned about their way of thinking about sex.

In the examination of the juveniles' consciousness of sex, I can find out that their mind is drastic and straightforward more and more while the adult's awareness is still conventional. More shocking news is that the rate of teenagers' venereal ailment rapidly grows together with the increasing number of pregnant girls. It is too irresponsible to say that just the teenagers' unreasonable acts and indiscreet consciousness make the rate of adolescent venereal disease speed up. It will be difficult for teenagers to make discrimination between right and wrong in the state of being curious. It is a question whether we have a right to cast the blame on the teenagers and what are the adults doing for a while. If not, who shall be responsible for this circumstance? So far, actually it's not so big matter of primary concern to adults. Finally, this topic of conversation comes up to the surface of Korea society. At this time, we have to find out the fundamental reason of these distressing results and devise adequate measures.

From the Joseon Dynasty, Korea society has been affected by Confucianism, which is ideas followed by the teachings of Confucius in ancient China, and adhered to conservative position socially and individually. Being formed by the deep

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rooted value of Confucianism, we have considered sex as the only means of childbirth and thought restrictive things that should be thoroughly covered. Contemporary people regarded outspoken words and unreserved behaviors as vulgar and indecent. However, as the age changed and the entire atmosphere introduced foreign culture into our society. Western civilizations were flowed into the small Oriental country, and the notions and functions of sex became altered. In this stream of changing times, teenagers who are full of curiosity have a tendency to easily accept new culture and adapt unfamiliar environment. They prefer sensational and exciting culture to adults' stereotyped ideas, and express what they think without slightest hesitation all the time, every place.

We should understand teenagers' general characters as well as the level of consciousness and culture of 'sex' among them. Most adults do not recognize that what kinds of books their children are reading, what sort of topics they are talking about. Unlike adult's expectation, teenagers are much better aware of sex. It is not too much to say that the most serious anxiety is about the relationships with the opposite sex. Nevertheless, grownup is at a standstill in the aspect of recognition of sex. Some adults who do not know the nature of sex argue that it is better not to learn the sex. By their opinion, if adults teach sex to teenagers, it will stir up

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them to have abnormal interest. However, the fact that we should keep in mind is that teenagers would still show their private interest in sex even though sex education is not carried out. It is a natural growth process to every juvenile.

The present sex education seems to retrogress forward the old era. Especially, formal sex education which in operation in middle and high school is indicated the most blamed factor of juvenile sexual problems such as venereal disease. Before we start to analyze a main cause of venereal disease, we need to look into the meaning of 'sex education'. The lexical meaning of sex education in dictionary is education in schools on the subject of sexual activity and sexual relationships. That is, it is the guidance and measure in order to maintain mutual respect each other and understand the difference of physical and mental relationship between male and female. The fundamental purpose of sex education is making human beings lead gratifying lives.¹ More specifically, sex education should lead teenagers' steps into the path of wholesome mental life by teaching scientific and rational knowledge of sex together with social norm. And also, it is significant to help teenagers understand and learn how their body is precious and how they endure and control sexual desire. This is because sex education is entitled 'education in sex morality' as the same meaning.

¹ Lee, Si-Bak. Sex Education; Theory and Practice. P.187~191. Seoul National University, December, 2003

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So then, why is the sex education necessary? Historically, a social problem caused by events related to sex became an object of public concern, which was extended more enormous and more complicated social troubles. For instance, Japanese's sexual harassment to Korean girls was expanded into an anti-Japanese movement in Kwangju, in 1929. As another example, President William J. Clinton made a sex scandal and fell into a difficult situation in America.² Like this, sex is the continuous topic and it requires certain standard attitude.

Sexual problems including venereal diseases, prostitution and child sexual abuses become international more and more, so it is time to talk about the degree of perception about sexual problems and the way to solve the problems. I believe that the sole and principal solution is the very sex education. It means that the only rational and positive education can be the answer we are searching.

A number of teenagers of nowadays make an irrevocable mistake out of ignorance because insufficient information and wrong concept of sex affect teenagers. The organization, Korea Sexual Culture Research Institute and Korea Family Society, recently shows that pretty a lot of girls (about 7.5% of high school girls) have experienced sexual relations or become pregnancy. However, their poor awareness of sex is revealed

² Kim, Dong-Ku. The Educational Institute of Korea Parents. The Study of Sex Education. P.16~17. August, 1998

below the level. The organization blames how terrible formal sex education is.

Let us look into the actual condition of sex education. Model school, designated by the Education Ministry, that sex education is put in practice is extremely lacking, no more than 8; 1 elementary school, 5 middle schools, and 2 high schools throughout the nation.³ Moreover, the sex education of Korea is too formal to convey practical knowledge to the students owing to the lack of teacher's expertise. In sex education class, students just think of rest time to sleep or have a chat with classmates because teachers usually turn on a video player. The contents of the program are also out of date and boring itself: the process of fertilization, the difference of body between men and women, and not concrete but abstract teachings. In this way, different from the case of Japan or other developed countries, there are no specific schools including sex education system in regular school education courses in Korea. If any, it is an established form.

At this point of time when the necessity of sex education is raised, we should inspect the aim of our sex education by analyzing the other foreign countries' case.⁴

First, in Germany, they do not teach sex education as one specific subject in a curriculum but naturally include it

³ The materials of Korea Sexual Culture Research Institute and Korea Family Society

⁴ O, Suk. The Sex Education for Puberty and Adolescent Relationship. Ok-Hap. September, 1999.

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among various courses like biology, literature, sociology, and religion. Teachers in charge of sex education are trained at the first stage of university education curriculum. In school, teachers have an enough time to discuss the contents and the methods of sex education before it is planned and taught. The contents of sex education are organized in courses by dealing with appropriate questions related to their ages through a living discussion, focusing on cultivating impartial attitude in the changing man-woman relationship.

Denmark has a tendency to be generous in terms of premarital sexual relations and pregnancy because they are not affected by Christianity. The present purpose of Denmark's sex education is to enhance upright value and to emphasize mutual respect and self-identity. In 1970s, teachers educated only 6th and 9th grade students, and even parents had an option not to take a sex education when they did not want it. However, now students should complete the course contained sex education and the meaning of family by the health system.

There are many similarities between Korea and Japan in that diverse cultural characters have common things. Thus, the alteration of view of sex education and the reality is also similar. In 1960s, some scholar claimed that sex education should be scientifically grasped and developed on the model of Europe's sex education. In 1990, guidebook contained the information about ADIS were published and emphasized the

prevention of venereal disease.

In United States, schools are widely running combined class and openly having a time for mutual communication. SIECUS(Sex Information and Education Council of United States), which takes charge of sex education in the US, is consist of doctors, teachers, sociologists, and judicial officers etc. This organization takes an active part in giving advice to individuals and groups and gets excellent results.

Like this, if the needs are suggested, we need to have an open-handed mind and accept other educational policies in order to protect our teenagers. Although it seems to be pressing measures comparing with other countries, we need to know that long-term policy should be settled. So, how should be sex education done?

The most important thing is that it is advisable to teach sex in natural conversation, daily school life, and all guidance activity rather than education in fixed curriculum. In addition, the role of parents is crucial in sex education at home. When parents are faced embarrassing question, it is important not to avoid the puzzled situation. Many parents would answer ambiguously and superficially all in a fluster. Yet, it is not correct way to respond, so you had better give right and concrete answer as possible as you can. Lastly, if the connection between family and school is maintained well, it will positively influence prevention of sexual delinquency.

"Just click!" Can you catch the meaning of this short phrase which can be seen in the process of web surfing? As you can guess the message of this expression, another tragic factor resulted in venereal disease is an abnormal and illegal medium. No one can deny that the mass media occupy a key position in modern life and it is not exception to the children and teenagers. Particularly, on-line media have effect on our daily lives, giving innumerable useful information. Unfortunately, among them pretty much part negatively influences young boys and girls, especially the concept of sex.⁵

Actually, the knowledge given by the internet service does not always contain distorted information. Of course, there are a lot of helpful homepages established on purpose of healthy sex education. For example, The Association for Korea Family's Health and Welfare is setting up counseling section related to sexual problems and paying attention to teenagers' anxious voice. In addition, Korea Juveniles Consultation Center (www.kyci.or.kr) divides the common problems into 10 fields, sharing typical questions and answers with teenagers. Every week, the statistics shows that teenagers mainly use the section of sex at the highest rate.⁶ Through this material, we

⁵ Kim, Dong-Ku. The Educational Institute of Korea Parents. The Study of Sex Education. P.388~403. August, 1998

⁶ Lee, Si-Bak. Sex Education; Theory and Practice. Seoul National University. P.19~23. December, 2003

can see the most interesting part to teenagers is concerned with sex.

It is certainly desirable to find solution of sexual problems through this bright way, but many juveniles secretly satisfy their desire in shady place. For example, there are lascivious and unwholesome websites, obscene magazines, and bills in the streets, and so forth. Or, teenagers can get twisted knowledge of sex without consciousness through those violent and obscene scenes in pornography. If these procedures are repeated and the situation is not improved, eventually young teenagers cannot help making a deep impression in their mind and then acquiring the abnormal sexual acts.

Also, teenagers who are intercepted 'realistic sex' often experience in direct way such as that kind of media or internet. Teenagers cannot get any realistic and direct responses with only this one-sided approach, so their senses about conducts are dull and they are deprived of the opportunity to make reciprocal action. Indirect information and experience can lead teenagers to judge the interpretation of sex faultily and arbitrarily.

Furthermore, when they attempt to have real meeting, teenagers cannot build proper relations with 'real' humans unlike cyber space, so they might fall into utter disorder. In reality, teenagers who could not overcome sexual impulse might make an irreparable mistake. Typically, those acts are

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represented to unexpected pregnancy and venereal disease. Teenagers who are insufficient about preliminary knowledge and readiness would get into difficulties that they cannot cope with. Eventually, they would choose extreme measures such as abortion, even suicide.

We do not have to conceal sex in dark side anymore but should show in bright side, recognizing just one process of precious lives. Sexual response is an instinct, and a sexual act is absolutely natural rights of humans which are concomitant with responsibility. In a few days from now, we have treated sex as the only means of sensual pleasure stimulating a peripheral nerve. Besides, sex, is recently wide-spread to all over the world treating as a social evil; such as sex crime, sexual violence, prostitution, and even adolescent venereal disease. Although sex seems to be the sphere of private life, we need to realize that it can stir up the whole society and lead to confusion at the slightest slip. That is, the sex act done from the impulse of the moment destroys us individually as well as give rise to troubles socially. Of course, some people might think that it is shameful to speak frankly sex and uncomfortable to break the 'sensitive' ice. Yes, it is true. However, it is never judicious conducts to avoid tough problems because we are sure to confront the situation. The past sex is changing forward

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the unclosed sex educated and learned naturally with varied ways. The attitude requested to us is flexibility, which makes our society much healthier and is beneficial to young hopeful existence.

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