



## EARLY QUESTIONS ABOUT SEX

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. H. B. TURBOTT,  
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MODERN parents are continually being surprised and discomforted by the barrage of sex questions fired at them, especially in the early years and when their children begin school. "Where do babies come from?", "How was I born?", "Can I have a baby?"—awkward queries like these, and questions concerning the difference between the sexes, may arise with children from as early as two years onwards. Birth questions are commonly asked at three or four years of age. Springtime trips are usually provocative—"Where do the lambs come from, mother?"—and no occasion is safe from an unexpected toddler probing. It is not only mother who must be ready with information. A father can be more than momentarily nonplussed when asked "What's the bull for, Daddy?"

A great deal depends on the wisdom of the parents at this stage. To attempt to dodge and parry with half-truths, or to tell the child to be quiet and not ask questions, is fatal. Evasive answers or any suggestion that the questions are improper may invest the whole matter of sex with unpleasantness. The frank approach to the parent will also be spoilt; the children will soon cease to bring their questions if they are not satisfied, and the prestige of mother and father suffers. If a child ceases to ask questions about birth, the differences between the sexes, and the parts played by both parents, it will not be because it does not want to know the answers, but because it has been made to feel that such subjects are prohibited and shouldn't be talked about. Curiosity is healthy and quite legitimate. It is better for the child to learn from his parents than from ignorant or possibly vulgar or vicious companions.

### No Need for the Stork

Usually interest dies down between the seventh year and puberty, when there's a great revival of curiosity unless information has been given at an earlier stage. The aim of instruction is to get the child to accept sex as a normal part of its own nature, and of life. It is the parent's duty to present facts without bias.

When a child asks questions as to where the new baby came from, etc., he should be told the truth. There is no need for the stork and doctor's bag stories. Enough of the truth to satisfy is required. The child will accept the fact of living within the mother's body and will go more than halfway to meet the parent in accepting and clothing the explanation in idealism and purity of thought. The child's questions must be answered and he will keep on coming with more if he gets satisfaction. There is no need to anticipate; simply answer questions truthfully as they are asked, grading the answer to the age and understanding of the child. The simplified

it arises, casually, honestly, and with plain common sense. The child will respond by taking sex as a matter of course and will have no suggestions of indecency or immodesty about the human body. It all hangs on the parents' attitude—should they feel ashamed of their parent relationship, they'll give the child the wrong attitude, too. The child should slowly and surely develop an appreciation of sex as a great and good thing. It will be three or four years probably before the first questions are asked—see that you answer them truthfully, naturally, and readily as they come.

(Next week: "Some Questions Answered," by Dr. Muriel Bell.)

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