

SPOTLIGHT

Birds and bees

INSIDE the teachers' room, there was a furor of shocked exclamations, hissed whispers and what not. Explicit pictures had been confiscated from a seven-year-old from Class 1. While the flabbergasted teachers furiously discussed the child's upbringing, other stories began to come out. A Class 2 child had been using foul language. A Class 3 had had her first period rather early. Solutions were presented, argued on, and dismissed; what this discussion did achieve, though, was to bring home with force the importance of sex education for children.

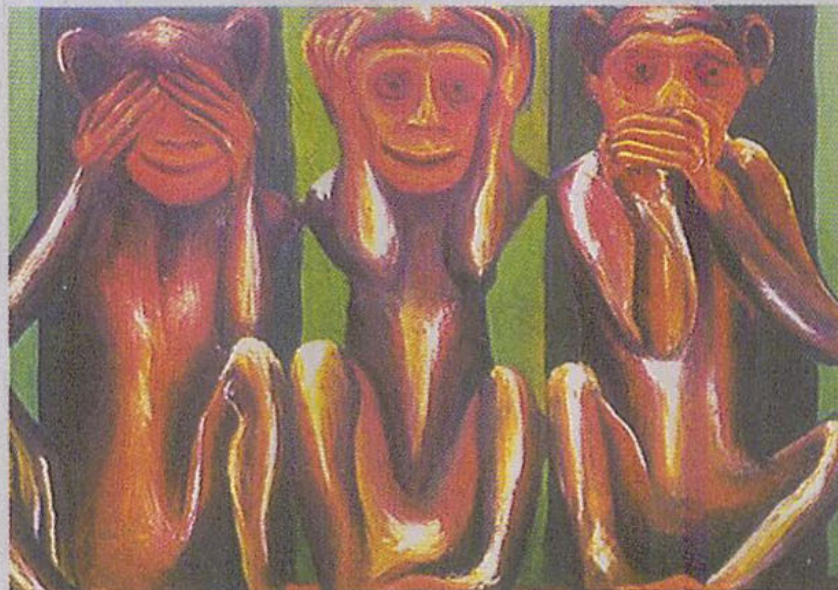
Sex is still such a taboo in our society, most parents would probably turn chalk-white if the word was even breathed in the presence of their children. Yet, wherever you go, you're bombarded with a thousand messages. Television ads, soap serials, music videos, songs with explicit lyrics, web-sites with suggestive content; even the most conscientious parents would find it impossible to shield their kids from it all. The best way to protect your child is to talk about it, now, before anyone else does.

Do the homework

The idea of talking about sensitive issues like this is enough to make any parent want to run for the hills, more so when one considers that broaching the subject will inevitably lead to an interrogation by the curious kids. Forewarned is forearmed, so be prepared in advance. Anticipate what questions they may ask, and read up on the subject before you go for The Talk. There are plenty of books and web sites available to help you through. When you find yourself able to answer questions, you'll find it a lot easier to discuss. If you're still uncomfortable, though, it's okay to let the kids know as long as you make it clear that you intend to be able to discuss anything with them.

The early bird doesn't squirm

It's best to start early, so that you maintain a continuous flow of information, instead of suddenly dumping all the information on their shoulders. It could be something simple as teaching a toddler the names of his/her private parts as well as other body parts, and gradually adding information as the child



grows up. If you haven't done so already, don't worry. It's never too late to broach the subject.

Talking TLC

The media consciously or otherwise, promotes the idea of instant gratification. Sex is portrayed as something happens within minutes of the movie's hero meeting the heroine. In real life, there are factors such as emotional chemistry, intimacy, trust, all of which builds up over a time. Talking to your children about the emotional aspect of a relationship will help them resist peer pressure, because they will know to look for more from it than simply physical pleasure.

In addition, it is also important to stress on responsibilities and consequences of a physical relationship. Talk about sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) and dealing with unwanted pregnancies, and stress the importance and side-effects of using protection.

Ages and stages

The information you impart to your child has to be appropriate to his/her age. Just as too much technical information will confuse

an eight-year-old, oversimplification of the subject will leave a teenager unsatisfied and dangerously curious.

Handling the situation sensitively is particularly important when dealing with pre-teens. As they begin to experience puberty, they are confused by the sudden changes in their body. Talk to them before they reach this stage, and ease them through the initiation by keeping them informed about the changes they are likely to expect. An 8-year-old girl is old enough to learn about menstruation, just as a boy that age is ready to learn how his body will change, so don't shelve the subject until too late.

Once you've decided to bite the bullet and have the talk, just relax. You may, or may not know all the answers, but that is not half as important as how you respond to their curiosity. If you can convey the message that your children can talk to you about just about any subject, including sex, half the battle is won.

By Sabrina F Ahmad

TIPS

The Golden Rules of Gifting

I waited and I watched. Watched as my mother read the wedding card handed to her by our long-time neighbours and soon detected the much expected look of disbelief in her eyes as she read a little line tucked away at the bottom. She gathered herself quickly though and luckily for civility's sake, once again concentrated her energies on smiling hypocritical (but polite nonetheless) smiles. She had taken it well...or so I thought until the moment our visitors bid us adieu. 'Atto behaya!' she cried, 'They've asked everyone to refrain from giving wedding presents. And instead pay them CASH!'

Now as unacceptable as wedding registers may be in our sub-continent, I somewhat agree with their concept. Not that I would be able to cook up the audacity needed to do such a thing, but the idea of 200 serving bowls and 300 bed spreads for my wedding isn't a prospect too amusing. So although I cannot ask you to show courage where I fail to do so, I can at least shed some light on the art of gift-shopping in general.

Naturally the first determinant to be considered is the person you wish to gift. Their tastes, their preferences and in some cases their needs could act as useful guidelines. Taking note of pointers like the kind of collectibles they have, the kind of music they listen to or the kind of books they read will prove mighty useful when picking out a gift. Similarly, if you can remember seemingly meaningless opinions of the person you wish to spoil (or are obliged to spoil) such as how nice such and such a saree looked on so and so a serial, opting for something similar will be a definite winner.

Besides personal preferences, it is also important to bear in mind the age of the giftee (if there is indeed such a word). It is needless to mention how different age groups are inclined towards different objects and choosing the right genre of a gift shouldn't be too difficult. Dolls for little girls, make-up for the teens, jewellery for the ladies are the basic patterns to follow. Next up we have the type of relationship you have with the person you are shopping for. Gifts to people who belong to your professional world should be appropriate for the occasion and less personal in nature. On the contrary, almost anything is giftable to a person you are close to.

Turning to one of the less-pleasant aspects, it is important as well to consider the amount of money you can or are willing to spend. Fixing a budget beforehand does away with a lot of options that could otherwise lead to confusion and once you know exactly what is in your range, shopping becomes less perplexing and time-consuming.

I also acknowledge that there exists a very queer breed of people who do not have enough time or will to put so much thought into shopping. For them, we have some timeless last minute options of saving grace that people can never go wrong with. Flowers and chocolate gentlemen (ladies need not read this paragraph because they always have time to shop), will always melt a heart, however much one receives.

In drawing a conclusion, we look into the aspect of wrapping. Although wrapping paper is mercilessly ripped off without a second thought and it is the contents that count, a presentable, well-wrapped gift will always earn you a smile.

I will end with the closing thought that it is of grave importance that the right gift be chosen for the 'it-is-the thought-that-counts' ideal left the world with Jesus. Although I have attempted to provide the decent way out for those who have to rack their brains every time a gift is to be bought, I know these rules will not be followed to the tee. Certain 'inelegant' practices will still be resorted to. Gifts received will be used as gifts given, wrapping paper will be used twice and so on, but it is not a crime. I do it too.

By Subhi Shama Reehu

A TRUE TASTE OF ASIA

BY TOMMY MIAH



A true taste of Asia

**Lamb Biryani****Ingredients**

2 lbs Lamb
1 1/4 th cup Basmati rice
3 medium Onions, sliced thin
A few sprigs of mint to garnish

For the Marinade

2 medium onions
6 cloves garlic
4-inch ginger root
1 sprig of mint
4 small green cardamoms
4 cloves
2 teaspoons poppy seeds
1 inch stick cinnamon
4 green chillies - according to taste
2 cups plain yogurt

Grind together all the above ingredients, except the yogurt to form a smooth paste. Add the ground spices to the yogurt and mix well. Marinate the lamb pieces in this mixture for about 2 hours.

Cooking the Lamb

Fry the sliced onions in a few table spoons of ghee, until they are golden brown. Add the lamb marinade and mix thoroughly. Add about 1 pint of water over the lamb and heat and bring to boil. Lower the heat, cover and cook until the lamb is tender.

Cooking the Rice

Wash the rice in cold water at least three times. Drain all the water from the rice. Set aside for 20 minutes. In a pot add 3-4 table-spoons of ghee and sauté the drained rice until the rice grains separate and then start sticking together again. Remove from heat. Add salt to taste. Mix well. Set aside.

Layering the Lamb Biryani

3 Medium onions, sliced thinly and fried to golden brown
1/2 cup of Sliced almonds, fried to golden brown
4 Tablespoons Golden raisins
1/2 tsp Saffron and 3 tablespoons warm Milk

Mix the Saffron with the milk. Set aside.

In a large ovenproof "Corning" container add a layer of rice followed by a layer of the cooked lamb along with a little sauce from the lamb. Now sprinkle the fried onions, almonds, raisins, and saffron mixture.

Now add a layer of rice and lamb and again sprinkle the fried onions, almonds raisins and saffron mixture. Add the final layer of rice and again for the final time sprinkle the fried onions, almonds, raisins, and saffron mixture. Add about 3-4 tablespoons of melted ghee on top.

Add enough water until you see the water level about 1/2 an inch higher than rice. Cover the saucepan well with a tight fitting lid. Or you can cover with aluminium foil. Put the pan inside the oven. Oven temperature should be over 450 F for 45 minutes. Garnish with a few mint sprigs.

Enjoy it with a Raita.

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ONLY FOR LADIES

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HARMONY SPA House #50, Road #10/A, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka.
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