Sexuality through the Lifespan

Health Promotion ~
- Risk assessment
  - Lifestyle
  - Environmental
- Developmental level
  - Maturation
- Cognition and Communication
- Identity
  - Sexuality
  - Intimacy

Sexuality
- Deep, pervasive aspect of total person
- Sum of feelings and behavior as male or female
- Attitudes necessary to maintain an intimate relationship with an other

Factors influencing sexuality...
- Biology/genetics
  - Genotype and phenotype
- Culture
- Ethnicity
- Spirituality/religion
- Stereotypes
  - Fathers more than mothers

Infantile sexuality
- Freud
  - Orality
- Montague
  - Touch
- Parental reinforcement
  - Trust

Toddlers...
- Body image
  - Self concept
  - Autonomy vs. shame and doubt
- Primary identification
  - Traditionally imitation from observation of same sex parent
- Exploration of body
  - Masturbation
  - ‘analigy’
Preschoolers…
- Initiative vs. guilt
  - Conscience, superego
- Self concept ~ emerging overt sexuality
  - Parental and peer (re)enforcements
- Masturbatory substitutes
  - Rocking, riding

Schoolagers…
- Sexuality ‘sublimated’ into industry
  - Doesn’t mean ‘asexual’
  - Cognition
  - Social interaction skills
- More self concept and body image
  - Inter-relationship depends on environment
  - Chum-ship
- Some mid- and late schoolagers are sexually active
  - Development of secondary sexual maturation occurring earlier in US

Answering questions about sex…
- Open acceptance
- Answer what is asked
  - Know the facts!
  - Be honest
- Don’t skip information because initial response is ‘Oh, I know that…’
  - Also, don’t include too much information in one sitting

Adolescence
- Establishing sexual identity or self concept
  - Involves understanding roles, values, duties and responsibilities as well as physical responses
  - Sexual orientation is a continuum
- A personal evaluation of one’s sexual feelings and actions
  - Accommodating adult erotic feelings
  - Experimental sexual behaviors
  - Dealing with behavior choices

Biology vs. Psychology
- Physical sexual response cycles in men and women only understood since the 1970’s
  - Masters and Johnson
    - excitement, plateau, orgasm, resolution
- Most people closely tie physiology with emotions
  - Sex for sex’s sake vs. sex for love’s sake
  - Sex for procreation vs. recreation
  - Abstinence is not a dirty word

Young adults
- Developmental level and chronology often not synchronous
- Making love and having sex aren’t the same
- There aren’t any ‘abnormals’ in sexual relationships if the behavior is acceptable to both parties
- Overtly or covertly, everybody cares about and is interested in sex, whether or not they act on it
Adulthood
- Developmental stages of partners impacts quality of relationship
- Stresses of everyday life can negatively impact sexual expression
  - ‘Being all things to all people’
  - What to do with the kids…
- Fatigue and poor communication greatest impediments to positive sexual behavior
  - Creativity and time management
- Loss of partner from divorce or death

Aging and sexuality
- Age should not be a barrier to sexual expression
- Social circumstances might be – but can be changed
- Attitudes and expectations may be problematic
  - Those who are aging
  - Relatives and friends

Talking to adults about sex...
- Appropriate for health care professional to ask about sexual activity
  - Are you currently sexually active with a partner?
  - Is the experience satisfactory?
  - Are there any specific questions with which I can help?
- Boundaries important
  - Personal proclivities vs. professional persona