

Why the Left Opposes Abstinence

by Janice Shaw Crouse, PhD.

A new Web site sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) — www.4parents.gov—features abstinence and, already, it is under attack from the left. The mainstream media widely covered Rep. Henry Waxman's (D-California) scathing critique of the Web site and of abstinence programs.

In a concerted effort, nearly 150 liberal advocacy groups (Planned Parenthood, Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, Human Rights Campaign and others) joined Waxman's largely trumped-up campaign against abstinence education. The liberal media made much of Waxman's minor or irrelevant criticisms.

For instance, one critic complained that data about the increase in oral sex among teens came from investigative reports by the media rather than university research. Others lamented the absence of materials for homosexual youth. Mr. Waxman also discredited the faith-based and/or conservative groups favored by the Bush administration.

I saw similar bias during the two years that I represented Concerned Women for America in a "National Consensus Process for Sexual Health," which involved leaders of more than 40 groups that overwhelmingly represented the liberal left.

For instance, during a strategy session I developed a "sex pyramid" similar to the food triangle for teaching children about

sex. Dr. David Satcher, former Surgeon General and organizer of the process, called the model "brilliant." The group agreed that the diagram had prompted a breakthrough in consensus and that it offered broad potential for use in sex education.

Alas, it was not to be.

Before the next meeting, the liberal groups had joined forces and came ready with multiple changes: Such as, "values" could not be the foundation of the diagram because values should not seem to be the most important aspect of sex. Further, the head of one of the organizations said she thought the pyramid would be perfect for some parents to teach their own children about sex, but she would strenuously oppose it for comprehensive sex education and oppose any federal funding for its use.

Why? After more than a decade of working with liberal advocacy groups, here's my assessment. Because promoting their ideology of condom distribution and abortion-on-demand is their *raison d'être*. Because these organizations' continued existence depends on federal funding — there is little grassroots support for their cause. Because the network of consultants and experts for comprehensive sex education survives on government contracts.

It is incomprehensible that leaders of organizations working with teens would oppose abstinence. The increase in abstinence programs has been effective in reversing trends that some believed were

irreversible. It is clear from the Beverly LaHaye Institute's analysis of official data that abstinence education is behind the current decreases in teen pregnancy and teen abortion.

This impact on long-standing trends is even more impressive given that funding for abstinence education still falls far short of the amount devoted to comprehensive sex education and contraceptive education. For example, in 2002, abstinence programs received only \$102 million in federal funding compared to at least \$427 million allocated to the other programs. This year, when President Bush proposed increasing funding for abstinence-until-marriage programs, more than 200 left-wing groups lobbied Capitol Hill in opposition.

CWA's lobbyists and our grassroots activists—you—went to work. Result: While funding didn't increase as much as the

President wanted, it wasn't cut.

While the left claims that abstinence education is a too-simplistic "just say no" campaign, the programs teach teens how to say "no" and give them the skills and character development that they need to be able to say "no" effectively. And many teens need to learn that sexually active girls regret their early sexual activity—nearly two-thirds (63 percent) state that they wish they had waited to have sex.

The Left claims that comprehensive sex education provides strong abstinence messages along with thorough sex education. Actually, most of the literature is filled with topics that parents find offensive,

such as recommending masturbation as a substitute for intercourse, promoting homosexuality, discussing oral and anal sex, etc., with only token coverage of abstinence. (Note that with more parental involvement and their outrage at sex-education programs, the objectionable materials are sometimes in the teacher's manuals and other supplemental literature rather than in the books and handouts that students take home.)

Many teens don't know the facts, and comprehensive sex-education programs do not inform them. A Maryland teenager, Stephen, was part of a conversation with non-Christian friends about how "everyone is doing it."

Stephen told them that, statistically, teens today are less sexually active.

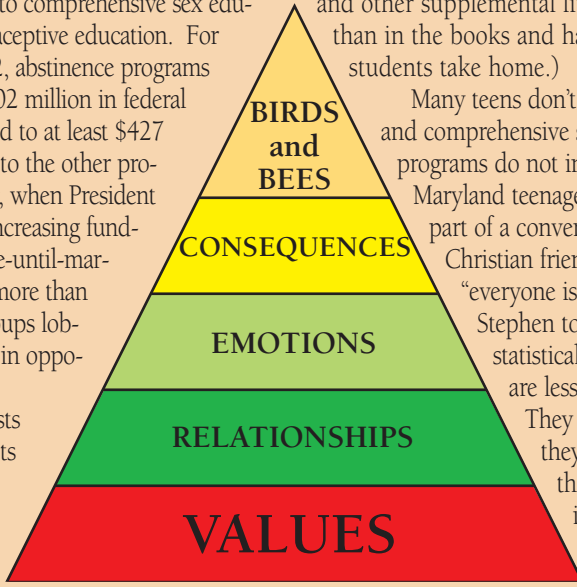
They were surprised; they had not heard that important fact in their so-called "full coverage" sex-education program.

Stephen

summed up our view when he said, "Don't you think they should tell us that more and more teens are choosing to stay abstinent and how they are doing it?"

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To Learn More: Read *How to Talk to Your Child About Sex: The Sex Pyramid and Abortion: America's Staggering Hidden Loss*, both by Dr. Janice Shaw Crouse. Visit www.cwfa.org, or call 1-800-323-2200 to request your copies. ■



The Sex Pyramid shows that values must be the foundation of sex education. © Dr. Janice Shaw Crouse.