



**Connected with the Net, Disconnected from the Body
Sexuality in Times of Virtuality**

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The importance of sex education and/or spaces where this can be discussed spontaneously, with quality information, and in a sincere, balanced and respectful way, is already known by many, especially in times of globalization, internet, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), prevention of child sexual abuse and exploitation, sexual orientation and expression, among others. Since the discoveries of Sigmund Freud published between the years 1900-1915, childhood sexuality is no longer something obscure or motivating fear and scandal - on the contrary, the psychoanalyst pointed out how healthy it would be to address this with children and young people whenever questions arise. . Many health professionals and thinkers later confirmed this hypothesis and argued the importance of sex education for the healthy cultural and preventive development of the general population. However, it is clear that despite knowing the importance of spaces for debate, information, education and guidance, we realize that such movement and initiatives still suffer repression, attacks, are avoided, silenced and turned off.

Working as a psychologist and psychoanalyst in mental health, social and educational institutions, it was noticed how the theme of sexuality and Brazilian sexual education remains very inaccessible to those who would benefit the most from it. It was noticed the great difficulty that adults have in talking openly about sex and sexuality. It is still taboo and a reason for shame, guilt, fear. So what about approaching this with children and young people? In contrast, we have an excess of appealingly sexual images and content to which we are exposed daily in our narcissistic, immediate and eroticized culture.

I started the sex education work within the psychiatric hospital in 2001 with parents and educators. Later, in social and educational institutions with children and young people, as well as the necessary family guidance and education professionals who accompanied these children and young people. I always noticed shame, resistance, fear, confusion of adults approaching such a “thing” with younger people. As if there was still a denial in relation to the sexuality present in their bodies, and a subsequent difficulty in approaching it. An adult difficulty that later turned into mutism, resistance or indifference. Not to mention neglecting the matter, consciously or unconsciously. It was commonly young people who, through their interest and doubts, maintained spaces for sex education, and educators pointed out how important it was for them in the sense of information, guidance, discipline, development, participation, self-esteem and space for expression.

In recent years, from lectures focused on sex education for private schools in São Paulo, some recurrent themes have emerged from the doubts of young people from the 7th grade of Elementary School onwards:

Cyberbullying ; Harassment, humiliation and exposure on social media; Sexting ; DeepWeb ; _ Prostitution; Abusive relationships; Pornography; Violence and sexual abuse; Child sexual exploitation; Exhibitionism. That is, these themes, however heavy, difficult and indigestible they may be, were in the “tuning”, “connection” and “imagination”, in reality, of these young people.

It has become clear, in recent years, with the advent of the internet, tablets, mobiles and various electronic devices for accessing the network that, the sexual has entered in a more open, scandalous and

without proper guidance and healthy beacons in Brazilian homes and schools. Health and education professionals have been denouncing this factor for some time now.

To cite some examples published in the media: In an article by El Pais (2019) “It is necessary to talk about pornography in the classroom from childhood. Hanna Björg Vilhjálmsdóttir argues that porn culture normalizes sexual violence and children are already exposed to it”. In text by Collera (2019) we have: “Watching pornography has never been easier. It has never been consumed so early. Boys start today at age 9. Free and accessible 24 hours a day, the sexually explicit content that floods the Internet has become the sex education of the 21st century in the absence of specific training. It is a source of confusion for teenagers in their first adult relationships(..)a territory forbidden to parents” . Doctor Kate Howells says that many young people consume pornography: "to educate themselves (...) This in itself can cause problems because pornography is a sexual act, but not in the context of a relationship. It is often exaggerated and different of normal sex (..) pornography can also have a detrimental effect on people's attitudes towards consent, sexual health and body self-image” (Evans , 2020).

This is just to name a few examples. Aside from exposure to information that is often incorrect or inconsistent about sex, bonds and relationships, young people consume pornography as a reality, not fiction. They learn that it is like that and that way. And with that, they feed expectations and fantasies that lead to many mismatches, missteps and misrepresentations. Sex, Sensual, Erotic, Aggressiveness, Collective, Exposure, Privacy, Intimacy, Limits, Compulsion, Relationships, Passion, Addictions, Porn...all together and mixed. A confusion. Both in the relationship between oneself and one's body, as well as with the other and his/her body.

And, as adults, we know, we are in new times. “Globalized” and “ hyperconnected ” times. Times of immediacy and virtual reality. Times as pointed out by the sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman , of “liquid modernity”. It is in this scenario and cultural moment that young people are immersed and developing. New

paradigms, new challenges, new ways of relating and communicating. If it was already natural to have a certain distance between the generations of parents and children, this has become more evident and enhanced today. Technology, the media, the internet, applications have an enormous power of seduction on children, young people and adults. Adults create technology, children are born immersed in it. Therefore, the younger, the more difficult the perception and differentiation of the concepts of reality and fantasy. Of the real and the virtual. Of touching, in the physical sense, and of being in contact, in the virtual sense. From chatting in person, eye to eye, chatting in apps, strumming. The encounter and relationship with the other in the physical and intimate sense is an experience, full of challenges, misunderstandings, affections and emotions, on the surface, meaning and resignification . The virtual encounter is an ideal and unreal mask. Full of expectations and illusions. It becomes an illusory protection promoted and maintained by easily molded, vain, fashionable, impulsive avatars with a very low frustration threshold. Any difficulty: “ You are blocked”. It is erased, canceled or deleted. No further consequences. Not much consistency. And the limits? Well, the limits and borders in the virtual world are ephemeral. In case we are not clear about the boundaries in our daily life, in living in society, in relational exchange, with our body and health... these will be even more ethereal and difficult to define in the virtual world.

In this way, technology, its set and language came to add and came to stay. They can be a huge addition to our economic, communicational and even social development. We still don't know about its limits and borders, as it is still a growing and evolving world, but we do need to know about our limits and our borders. It is important to address this with our children and young people as they begin to enter this world, this network, this web. Create a space for expression and exchange to identify and deal with dangers, risks, circumstances that will show up and arise in the present and future. It is not a bogeyman, but like everything else in life, it has positive and negative points, possibilities and excesses, perspectives, forms, responsibilities and consequences.

Through experience in schools and institutions, it was clearly perceived that sexual exacerbation and the phenomenon of seeking sexuality is greater in places where there is no space for debate or information about sexuality. Children are seen talking about sex in a robotic way and with no real notion of the subject, just repeating what they saw or heard on programs or from other colleagues. Or the violence they were witnesses or victims of in their family and/or sociocultural context. The difficulty of finding a space in which the subject is informed naturally and spontaneously, makes them seek their answers alone - a path, today done through electronic devices, full of misunderstandings and dangers. Sometimes encouraging inappropriate and disrespectful forms of bonding and relational exchanges.

The topic of sexuality is broad and complex. We constantly need to update and deepen ourselves. It usually asks us to return to it in different ways and at different times. It is always changing and moving. The ideal would be to go little by little, as the themes, questions and subjects arrive and manifest themselves in the children/young people. Each thing in turn and in its proper language. In this way, it depends a lot on the understanding and context of the child/young person. The language needs to be accessible, intelligible, so that the child/youth can bring this into their world. Depending on age, much of what will be said will be woven with fantasy and imagination. For this reason, it is important that parents, if they have difficulty in this regard, seek help from someone who can mediate such a conversation and explanation. It can be a doctor, psychologist, teacher, or a family member, friend close to the family who is comfortable with the subject and close to the child/youth.

To then, respectfully and closely address differences, limits, risks, possibilities, what is allowed and what is private. As stated by Modelli (2018): “ the most important thing in a conscious sexual education for children is to teach what it is to love, to relate, what affection and privacy are, as well as to identify what abuse is. That is, to recognize, respect and defend one's own body and the body of the other”.

From the moment, in our society and culture, when the topic of sexuality becomes more accessible, smoother and a reason for bringing parents and children, educators and students, doctors and patients closer together, the approach to topics such as: difference between male and female , loving – affective – sexual relationship, uses of the body in modernity, sexual orientation and expression, sexual diversity, healthy and abusive relationships, sexual harassment, pornography, eroticism, preventive care with STIs, family planning, privacy , intimacy , self-care, respect, responsibility, alterity...will flow more easily and without so many roundabouts, remorse, confusion, fears, prejudices and trivializations.

I always check again that children and young people are open to dialogue and exchange. They have many doubts and are amazed with the world that is shown in front of them. They have their own way of talking, dressing, feeling, expressing. In this way , I seek ways to connect and exchange with them. It is essential to make some presentations in relation to this world that is shown to them. Not that life has an instruction manual, but seeking to enable conversation, exchange, reflection, problematization, debate is essential to mature this journey through life. Providing guidance, telling experiences, questioning and allowing yourself to be questioned and listening to what blossoms from this. After all, we all have a body, little by little we learned and got used to it... never completely, because it surprises us. From this surprise, from this newness, I create.

And together with the other, I co-create .

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