

It's never too soon to have 'the talk' with kids

May 9 2013, by Nicole Brodeur

In the Internet Age, the average kid encounters pornography by age 10 - when they mistype a link while doing their homework, or when it pops up on the side of the screen while they're watching a cat ride a Roomba on YouTube.

"They're not seeking it out," Amy Lang said the other day. "It's unbelievable. They spend more time trying to avoid it than they are looking for it.

"It's an unavoidable part of childhood."

The trick is getting to them first. Before they follow a celebrity rumor into an X-rated site. Before they start dressing like Rihanna and don't understand why you're speechless. Or before they happen upon some drunken MTV hot-tub romp on the way to Nickelodeon, and wonder what they saw.

It is a delicate science around which Lang, 46, has built a business called Birds + Bees + [Kids](#), or BBK. She speaks to parent groups, holds in-person and online workshops on the subject, and maintains a busy website, www.birdsandbeesandkids.com, where parents can find answers.

Lang is also one of the founders of MamaCon, a meetup for overwhelmed mothers, scheduled for May 18 at the Bellevue Hilton.

Billed as "a cool conference for modern moms," the daylong event will

include workshops on talking with your kids about sex, but also other parenting and life-improvement strategies.

On the lighter side, there will be spa services, food, shopping, a reading by Nikki Knepper, author of "Moms Who Drink and Swear: True Tales of Loving My Kids While Losing My Mind," and a comedy show called "Honey, I Shrunk My Libido: A Comedy Show About Sex (Or Lack of it)."

They'll learn a few things, have some laughs, and admire their clean cuticles all the way home.

But within hours, one of those moms will be driving the family minivan when a little voice in the back seat asks what "I'd hit that" means.

Or a father may see his daughter end a dance class with a hip-swivel-and-thrust that would make Beyonce blush.

And they will say nothing, Lang said.

"There is still so much embarrassment and shame and confusion about how to talk to kids about sex," she said. "At the same time, there is so much information that parents worry about giving them too much.

"So they don't give them any."

Mind you, Lang is no buttoned-up prude. She was an educator at Planned Parenthood, when her own son (he's now 13) started "discovering his body." She, of all people, was flummoxed. So she designed classes for parents of small children focusing on biology, not sex; and another for parents of preteens and teenagers that include values and relationships.

But in recent years, Lang said, our culture has become "considerably"

more sexual and as a result, children more adultlike.

Consider the Katy Perry song, "Last Friday Night," which includes these lyrics:

"This a hickey or a bruise?/Pictures of last night/Ended up online/I'm screwed,

"oh well/It's a blacked-out blur/But I'm pretty sure it ruled"

There's also a line about a menage a trois.

"I've seen 10-year-old girls singing that at the top of their lungs," Lang said. "And their moms are like, 'Oh, my God.' But they let them do it."

Time and again, parents ignore their intuition.

"They send their 8-year-old out in high-heeled boots and a miniskirt and think, 'Oooh, inappropriate,' but then they don't do anything about it," Lang said.

So what do you say to your little Nicki Minaj?

"I think your outfit today is a little too grown up," Lang suggested. "You're a little girl and you aren't going to be able to run and play."

Start talking to kids about sex when they're no older than 5, Lang said, and keep the conversation going in short and sweet talks that stretch over years, rather than having The Big Talk when they reach puberty.

"There's no 'one talk.' It's not an event," Lang said. "Talking about sex should be a normal part of family life. It should be weird not to talk about it."

"You want to talk about porn before they see porn," she said. "Warn them that they may see it, that they should tell you when they do and they won't be in trouble."

Parents shouldn't be afraid to check their kids' browser history, or to say something when it seems like their kid is beginning a sexual relationship.

"If something happens, if you walk in on them or see a suggestive text," Lang said, "wait until you've calmed down and they're in a calm space."

Say something like, "Clearly you guys are intimate. I get that."

Admit that you're a little uncomfortable, but that your kid's health and safety is your No. 1 concern.

And if they tell you it's none of your business? What do you say then?

Lang played right along: "I can see you feel that way," she said, softly, then looked me in the eye. "But I'll be damned if I'm going to be a grandparent or you're going to get an STD."

More information: www.mamacon.net

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