

Sex education need of the hour, feel parents

CONCERN OVER LOWERING CONSENT AGE | BUT ACCEPT TEENS ARE SEXUALLY ACTIVE

Hetal Vyas | TNN

Bangalore: Sunethra Sriram panicked when her 14-year-old daughter asked why she couldn't date her classmate when her cousin in the US, also 14, could. It's a worry shared by many parents of teenaged children, especially in the wake of the Centre proposing to lower the age of consensual sex from 18 to 16 years. But there are others, unlike Sunethra, who accept that teens are increasingly sexually active.

While the Centre's proposal has opened a Pandora's box, the growing consensus is that children should be taught sex education in schools. Says Sukanya S, a family therapist and mother of two: "While I am not comfortable with this proposal, I believe the world and probably Indian society is highly influenced by western culture. We have to accept that we can't control children today. So we need to open communication about sex and educate them at a young age."

Vani Murthy, a homemaker and mother of two, too believes that sex education is the need of the hour. "We must accept that teens experiment a lot about sex. It does not matter if the legal age is 18 or 16. What matters is they must be taught early about the disadvantages of such activities," she pointed out.

The law can be misused, fears Nilesh Sanghavi, a businessman. "Children are not mature enough at 16. Such a decision by the government will affect their psychology," says the father of two teenaged daughters.

Roshan Menezes, administrator, Carmel High School and PU College, agrees it is a debatable topic. "A child may be mature emotionally or socially to indulge in physical relationship at this age, but medically (s)he is juvenile. We need to educate them about the harms of indulging in sex at early age," says Roshan.

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CONSENSUAL SEX AT 16?

The Centre's proposal to bring down the age of consensual sex from 18 to 16 years may not go down well with all parents. While some feel educating children on sex is the best way out, many others fear children won't be mature enough to take such a decision at 16. The need for such a discussion itself is the worst fallout of aping Western culture, they feel.



How can the govt ensure that the law, if implemented, is not misused?

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SPREAD AWARENESS FIRST

The government must first spread awareness about sex education and then moot such a proposal. If children are not educated in time, it will harm them mentally and physically. If we call them children at 16, how can a child indulge in sex? Many problems won't occur if parents are bold enough to talk about sex with their children

Meera Ravi | CHILD COUNSELLOR



Age of consent is when an individual is considered competent enough to understand the consequences of indulging in sexual activity. Today, youngsters report consensual sex before they turn 18. The main concern over increasing the age is, it would criminalize sexual activity between consenting 16- and 17-year-olds.

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If the age of consensual sex is kept at 18 or above, it ensures that girls or boys who have been coerced into sexual activities by will be protected legally

Dr Shaibya Saldanha | GYNAECOLOGIST AND CO-FOUNDER, ENFOLD TRUST