

## Grade 4, Theme Three

### Family Letter

Dear Family,

We are ready to begin Theme Three of *Fully Alive*, our family life program. Because the partnership of home, church, and school is so important, this letter is written to let you know what we talk about in class, and to offer some ideas for your involvement. For more information for families, please go to [www.occb.on.ca](http://www.occb.on.ca).

### About Theme Three

Theme Three of *Fully Alive* is called “Created Sexual: Male and Female.” God made us male and female, and all of God’s creation is good. As in earlier grades, this theme is presented through a continuing story. The message of this story is that we begin life as a result of the love our mothers and fathers shared. No matter what happens later, nothing can change that. It is part of God’s plan that we grow and are sheltered in our mother’s body before birth. After we are born, it is our family that loves and cares for us.

### In Theme Three we will:

- read a story during this theme about the Casey family, including the parents’ celebration of 30 years of married life, the promises they made when they married, and their efforts to adjust to the changes in their lives after Mr. Casey’s serious accident.
- learn that husbands and wives participate in God’s power to create new life.
- explore some of the gifts we receive at conception; and the gift after birth of ongoing love and care from family, friends, and others.
- discover more about the development and birth of babies, and learn the difference between identical and fraternal twins.
- explore the stages of human development, including adolescence and adulthood.

### Looking Ahead

New terms introduced in Grade 4 are *amniotic sac*, *amniotic fluid*, *ova* (the plural of *ovum*), and *sexual intercourse*. The term *sexual intercourse* is used in the student book, but does not include a physical description. The Grade 4 teacher book has a simple explanation of sexual intercourse that may be presented by the teacher, depending on the readiness of the class. This information is not included in the student book until Grade 5. In Grade 5 the students will learn about the reproductive systems of males and females, the gift of fertility, and the changes of puberty.

## **Working together at school and at home**

- Ask your child to tell you about the story of the Casey family. What did your child learn from the story? Does your child have any questions? You will find detailed information about the topics in this theme in the Online Family Edition of *Fully Alive* ([www.occb.on.ca](http://www.occb.on.ca)).
- Although the topic of puberty is not discussed until Grade 5, some Grade 4 girls may begin to show the first signs of development. It's important to talk to your daughter about this, and prepare her well in advance for the beginning of menstruation. Again, you will find helpful information in the Online Family Edition of *Fully Alive*.
- Your child will be bringing home a sheet about family stories. Children like to hear about older relatives (grandparents, great-grandparents, great-aunts and uncles), and how family traits and interests are often passed on in families. Be sure to tell your child about some of the people in your family.

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Theme Three Topics**

In Grade 4, Theme Three is developed through six topics. The theme opens with a gathering of the Casey family to celebrate their parents' 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Topic 2 continues to explore the meaning of marriage, the relationship of husband and wife, and their participation in God's power to create new life. Topic 3 considers the gifts children receive from parents, both those that are inherited and those that are received through ongoing love and care. Topics 4 and 5 review and extend what the students know about prenatal life and birth. The final topic is about growing up, and presents the life stages of adolescence and adulthood. This completes the overview of the cycle of human development that began in Theme One (Topic 3) with information about infancy and childhood.

### **Talking to Children about Sexuality**

Before children begin school, they often ask their parents about where babies come from and about the differences between boys' and girls' bodies. These are natural questions and parents are the best people to answer them. No one else has such a special relationship with the child or knows the child as well as parents.

God made us male and female and his creation is good. We are made to be images of God's love and this includes our bodies. In marriage, one of the ways we express this

love is through our bodies, in sexual intercourse. This special expression of love creates a deep bond between husband and wife. Through sexual intercourse, they can share in God's creation of new life and welcome new children into their families.

Sexuality, of course, is not just about bodies, male and female reproduction, or how babies are born. It is mainly about people, who are male and female. Parents teach their children a great deal about what it means to be men and women. It isn't something parents talk about, or at least not often, but something that they do and are. The way a person feels about herself as a woman and the way a person feels about himself as a man are communicated to children. When parents respect each other, and the work that each parent does, children are learning about sexuality. When children see parents co-operating, helping each other, speaking lovingly to each other, and touching each other affectionately, they are learning very important lessons about sexuality.

Most parents want to talk about sexuality with their children, but many find it difficult. They feel shy because of a natural sense of modesty and because they are somewhat unsure of what to say. It's important to realize that the exact words you use don't matter. It is letting children know that you are happy to answer their questions that matters. By this age, some children are becoming more aware of sexuality, although their interest is still childlike. Before the changes of puberty begin, they need to talk about sexuality and to know that it is normal to be curious about the body, and the special relationship between men and women.

The physical changes of puberty are not taught in the school program until Grades 5 and 6. Information about puberty is, however, included in this Online Family Edition for Grade 4 at the end of Topic 6 of this theme. With this information, you will know ahead of time what will be presented, and be encouraged to begin talking to your child about the changes of puberty. The way you approach this topic will depend to some extent on your child's development. It's good for all children to be aware that their bodies will change in a special way as they approach adolescence, and that it is normal for these changes to begin at different times for different people. If your child is showing signs of early physical development, however, you will want to prepare her or him with more specific information.

Another important reason for talking to children about sexuality is the important responsibility parents have to protect their children from sexual abuse. All children need to know that, with a few exceptions (for example, if the doctor needs to examine them), no one is allowed to look at or touch the private parts of their bodies. They should also be told that they should not look at or touch the private parts of another person's body, even if that person asks or tells them to. They should say no and tell you right away. It's important to reassure children that if someone is touching them in a way that makes them uncomfortable, or acting in a way that worries or frightens them, they can always talk to you and you will know what to do.

In our society, it is very difficult to shield children, even when they are young, from explicit information about sexuality. Television, the internet, popular music, movies, and newspapers all contribute to the situation. Parents can, however, try to limit what children see and hear with clear rules for using the internet, and by carefully monitoring the media to which children are exposed.

In the years to come, despite your best efforts, your children will be exposed to ideas about sexuality that are not Christian. If you have never talked about sexuality with them, they are unlikely to confide in you. That is why it is so important to begin to talk while they are young. Parents who have found it difficult to talk to their children about sexuality are usually pleasantly surprised when they begin. Once started, it gets easier. And if your child asks a question that you don't know the answer to, just say so. You can always ask someone else or look it up in a book, and then give your child an answer. Your child doesn't need an expert. Your child needs a parent who cares and is willing to talk and listen.

## **Topic 1 — A Family Celebration**

*The family is the first school. It is the only school no one can do without:*

*We learn to share with parents, brothers and sisters.*

*We are given a first glimpse of our own worth.*

*We recognize the dignity of each person.*

*We learn the all-important first steps in taking pride in being a man or woman.*

*We learn the beauty of truth.*

*All this life-learning should happen first at home.*

Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Curriculum Guidelines in Family Life*

## *Education*

### **Summary**

This topic helps the students understand the importance of loving family relationships and the joy of celebrating an anniversary. The teacher and students discuss a story about a surprise party for Mr. and Mrs. Casey, who are celebrating their 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, and identify some signs of love in the Casey family.

### **Main Ideas**

- The celebration of special events, like wedding anniversaries, is an important way of expressing family love.
- Loving relationships are especially evident during happy events when family members gather and reveal their pleasure in being together and their care for each other.

### **Family Participation**

- You and your child might enjoy reading about the Casey family celebration. You will find the story, “The Surprise,” at the end of this theme.
- You could ask your child about special anniversaries that are celebrated in your family. You might want to explain that wedding anniversaries are just one kind of anniversary. There are also birthdays, Christmas, Easter, or any other special day that the family celebrates each year. Which anniversary does your child think is the most important?
- If you have a wedding album, or photographs from various anniversaries, you might like to look at these with your child. Children enjoy hearing stories about how their parents met, what they thought about each other, and how they decided to get married.

## **Topic 2 — Love and New Life**

*In procreation parents become co-authors of life and in doing so assume all the love and creativity that inspires God to create and love humanity.*

Jack Dominion, *The Growth of Love and Sex*

### **Summary**

This topic helps the students deepen their understanding of marriage and the growth of a family. The teacher and students discuss the promises that Mr. and Mrs. Casey made to

each other when they married, and their desire to share their love with children. The student book offers a simple explanation of sexual intercourse, and the students learn that this is a special sign of love between a husband and wife. They also learn that it is through sexual intercourse that married people share God's power to create new life.

## **Main Ideas**

- When a man and woman marry they promise to love each other always and to try to be a good husband and a good wife.
- A husband and wife share God's power to create new life. They each have life-giving cells that can unite to create a new person.
- Children are a special sign of the love between a husband and wife.

## **Family Participation**

• Since this topic is important, the text from the student book, "Love and New Life," has been included at the end of this theme in the section Theme Three Stories and Poems. You may want to read it so that you can talk about the content with your child. If you want to talk to your child about sexual intercourse, but are unsure about what to say, you may find the following description helpful:

God made the bodies of men and women in a wonderful way. They can hold each other so closely that their bodies are joined together. The husband's penis fits inside the wife's vagina. This special way that husbands and wives share love is called *sexual intercourse*.

- Children enjoy hearing about how their parents met. It's good to explain that it took time to know each other before you could make the decision to marry. You might also mention your anticipation and excitement as your family grew.
- When there has been a separation or divorce in the family, it is very important for children to know that despite the difficulties that happened in later years, their lives began because of the love of their parents. This can be difficult for parents to talk about for many reasons. But from the child's perspective, the reassurance of knowing that the family began in love is essential.
- This topic provides an opportunity to talk about adoption. Here are some questions that children this age often ask and some suggested answers you may find helpful.

### **• Why do people adopt children?**

You could explain that husbands and wives adopt because they want to share their love with children. Sometimes they can't have children because of some physical problem. So they decide to adopt a child. But people who already have children also may decide to adopt. They have a loving family and want to share their love with

others.

- **Why doesn't the baby's mother keep her baby?**

It is a very hard decision for a mother to give up her baby for adoption. Perhaps she and the baby's father were very young and were not ready to care for a little baby. Perhaps they were not married and did not have people who could help them with a new baby. Or there could be some other reason. But the mother wanted the baby to have a good home and loving parents. People who adopt thank God for this special gift of love.

### **Topic 3 — What Makes You You?**

*At the moment your life began, everything was there that would make you the special person you are. Already God knew whether you would be a boy or girl, what colour hair and eyes you would have, and how tall you would become. And at the centre of this life was your soul, which was created with all the joy and glory of God's love, because he wanted you.*

Joan Lowery Nixon, *Before You Were Born*

#### **Summary**

This topic helps the students understand that they received some gifts from their parents at the moment of conception, and other gifts after they were born. The teacher and students discuss inherited characteristics like eye colour, height, or a special talent for music, and also the gift of the love and influence of their families and other people who help them grow and develop.

#### **Main Ideas**

- The cell that is created at conception is filled with information from the mother and the father. This information includes some of our physical characteristics and any special abilities we may have. Our sex is also determined at conception.
- Our families also give us the gift of love and care. The care and attention we receive in our families, and our experiences with friends and other people, are part of what makes us who we are.
- Adopted children receive gifts from their birth parents and from their adoptive parents.



## **Family Participation**

- Children enjoy hearing stories about past generations of their families. Since this topic is about the gifts we receive from our parents, including aspects of appearance, characteristics, and special talents, you could discuss some of these inherited traits with your child. In what ways does your child look like other members of your family, or have similar characteristics and talents? Be sure to mention grandparents and other older relatives. In some cases, your child may never have met some of these people, but when you talk about the gifts your child shares with them, it is a way of introducing them. It is good for children to realize that many characteristics are passed from generation to generation. Each one of us is an important part of the past, as well as the future.
- Children are always fascinated by small traits that are passed on, although they appear in only some members of the family. The two examples the students learned about at school are the ability (or inability) to roll the tongue into the shape of a tube, and having either attached or detached ear lobes. These two traits are part of the information in the single cell at the time of conception. Your child may enjoy surveying relatives on these two traits.
- If your child is adopted, this topic provides an opportunity for you to talk about the two sets of gifts she or he received — love and care from your family, and unique characteristics from birth parents. If you know something about the genetic inheritance of your child's birth parents, you may want to discuss this with your child.

## **Topic 4 — From a Tiny Cell to a New Baby**

*For you it was who formed my inward parts;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
that I know very well.*

Psalm 139: 13-14

## **Summary**

This topic helps the students extend their knowledge of the development of new human life in the uterus, and also introduces the difference between identical and fraternal twins.

The teacher and students discuss the growth of the developing baby from a single cell and the way in which the needs of this new life are met.

### **Main Ideas**

- The baby is attached to the mother by a cord (the umbilical cord), and develops inside a sac (the amniotic sac) that is filled with liquid (amniotic fluid) to protect the baby. The umbilical cord goes from the centre of the baby's body (the navel) to the placenta, which is attached to the side of the uterus and is filled with blood vessels.
- The baby receives nourishment and oxygen from the placenta, through the umbilical cord. Wastes from the baby's body are filtered out of the baby's blood by the placenta and pass into the mother's blood stream.
- Identical twins develop from a single ovum and sperm that join together and form a single cell. Then the cell splits into two separate cells, and each of these cells develop to form two identical babies. Identical twins are always the same sex.
- Fraternal twins develop when two ova (egg cells) unite with two sperm cells, and each of these cells develops to form two babies. Fraternal twins do not look any more alike than any brothers and sisters do, and may be the same or different sexes.

### **Family Participation**

- Most children find the topic of life before birth very interesting. In particular, they are fascinated by the way the baby gets food and oxygen, and eliminates wastes. There are several books available at the library with many pictures of the baby at different stages of development that your child would probably enjoy.
- Another subject that children generally find fascinating is multiple births. Since the students have been learning about identical and fraternal twins in this topic, you may want to watch for newspaper stories about triplets or quadruplets to share with your child.

## **Topic 5 — The Baby Arrives**

*... the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

Luke 2:6-7

## **Summary**

This topic extends what the students have already learned in previous grades about the birth of a baby. The teacher and students discuss some examples of birth announcements, the process of the birth of a baby, and some of the reflexes that new babies are born with, like rooting and sucking. An interest feature on premature births is also included in the topic.

## **Main Ideas**

- When the baby is ready to be born, the uterus begins to contract, at first slowly and then more frequently.
- These contractions cause the bottom of the uterus to begin to open. When the opening is wide enough, the baby moves out of the uterus, through the birth canal (vagina), and into the world.
- Babies are born with several reflexes, including rooting and sucking. If softly touched on the cheek, the baby will turn in that direction, which is called rooting, and try find something to suck on.
- Sometimes babies are born after only six or seven months in the uterus. These babies are called premature, which means they arrived too early. They need very special care in the first weeks after their birth.

## **Family Participation**

- The students will be bringing home a sheet to be completed with information about their births. Your child will need some help for you to fill in this sheet. Children love to hear about their birth. Did they arrive in the middle of the night? Was it a surprise because it was a few days early? Was it a long labour or a short one? What did they look like just after birth?
- At school, the students read some newspaper birth announcements as part of this topic. You may want to help your child find some other examples from the newspaper. The teacher and students discussed the kind of information in the announcements and the family members that are usually mentioned.
- In talking with children about the birth of a baby, it's not a good idea to say a great deal about the pain of childbirth, even if it was a difficult delivery. If your child asks about

pain, you could explain that there is some pain, but after the baby is born the mother and father are so excited that the pain is forgotten.

- Children are often interested in topics related to pregnancy and birth, such as premature births, miscarriages, or Caesarian sections. Here are some questions children ask and some suggested answers that you may find helpful.

- **Why does a baby sometimes die inside the mother before it is born? (What is a miscarriage?)**

- There could be several reasons why a baby growing inside its mother dies before it is ready to be born. The placenta might not be securely attached to the wall of the uterus or there could be something wrong with the baby. When this happens, it makes the mother and father and the other members of the family very sad.

- **Why do some mothers have an operation (Caesarian section) to get the baby out of the uterus?**

- Sometimes a mother has difficulties when the baby is ready to be born. Perhaps the baby is very big or the mother is quite small. Or maybe the baby is in distress and needs to be born quickly. To keep the baby and the mother safe, the doctor helps by making an opening in the mother's body and taking the baby out. This operation does not harm the baby and the mother recovers in a few days.

- **Why are babies born before they are ready (premature births)?**

- Often the reason is not known. Among the most common known causes are problems with the placenta, a pregnancy with more than one baby (twins, triplets, or more), or problems with the bottom of the uterus opening too early. When doctors know ahead of time that there is a risk of the baby being born too early, they usually advise the mother to rest in bed for the remainder of the pregnancy.

## **Topic 6 — Thinking About Growing Up**

*There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in.*

Graham Greene

### **Summary**

In this final topic of Theme Three the Casey family anniversary party comes to an end, and on the trip home, Tim Casey has a dream about growing up. The teacher and students

discuss some characteristics of the life stages after childhood — adolescence and adulthood. The topic ends with the students reading a poem, “Growing Up,” which you will find at the end of this theme.

### **Main Ideas**

- Adolescence is the stage of human life after childhood and before adulthood. It’s a time of change. Your body grows and changes, and your feelings, mind, and spirit change and develop, too.
- Adulthood is the last stage of human life. Some adults are young, some are middle-aged, and some are old. You don’t stop learning and changing just because you’re an adult.
- In a few years we will leave the stage of childhood and become adolescents.

### **Family Participation**

- You might ask about what your child thinks about growing up and becoming a teenager. You could talk about the way privileges and responsibilities will change. Most children think more about the greater freedom they will have as they grow up than they do about responsibilities. If this subject comes up, it’s a good opportunity to help your child begin to see that freedom and responsibilities are connected. You could also ask your child about the ways in which the whole family will change by the time she or he is a teenager.
- Your child might enjoy writing a letter about growing up, and describing some of his or her hopes and dreams for the future. This could be sealed, kept in a safe place, and then opened several years from now.
- It is also good for parents to reassure children that growing up is not something that happens overnight. Some children are not eager to grow up and can be alarmed by a lot of discussion of the changes of adolescence. They need to know that they won’t suddenly have to abandon their childhood.
- As you are talking about growing up with your child, you may want to mention some of the physical changes that happen at puberty. You could explain that both boys and girls begin to grow quite quickly, and that their bodies begin to look more like those of adults. You might also mention that most girls and boys are quite sensitive about their bodies during this time of change. It takes time to get used to a new appearance. A certain

amount of teasing is probably unavoidable, but it's important to let your child know that it can be very hurtful to people who are beginning to develop.

- The topic of puberty is not included in the school program until Grades 5 and 6, but it is a subject that you may want to begin to talk about at home. Naturally, girls will be most interested in how girls develop, and boys in how boys develop. But both boys and girls should have some understanding of how the opposite sex changes during puberty.

Information about these changes are included at the end of this topic in the section, The Physical Changes Of Puberty. The material in this section is for your use, and may give you some ideas about what you would like to say. There are also a number of books on puberty, both for parents and for children, that you may find helpful. You will want to be sure that these resources reflect your values.

- Information about preparing girls for menstruation is also included at the end of this topic in the section, Preparing Girls for Menstruation. Although the average age for first menstruation is 12½ this event can occur at age 10 or 11, or, rarely, even earlier. It is essential for girls to understand what will happen and to be reassured that this event is a sign of their development and will not create a major change in the regular activities of their daily lives.

- As the occasion arises, it is good to help children understand that we grow up for a reason. We have something important to do with our lives. God has a plan for each one of us, and part of growing up is discovering what that plan is.

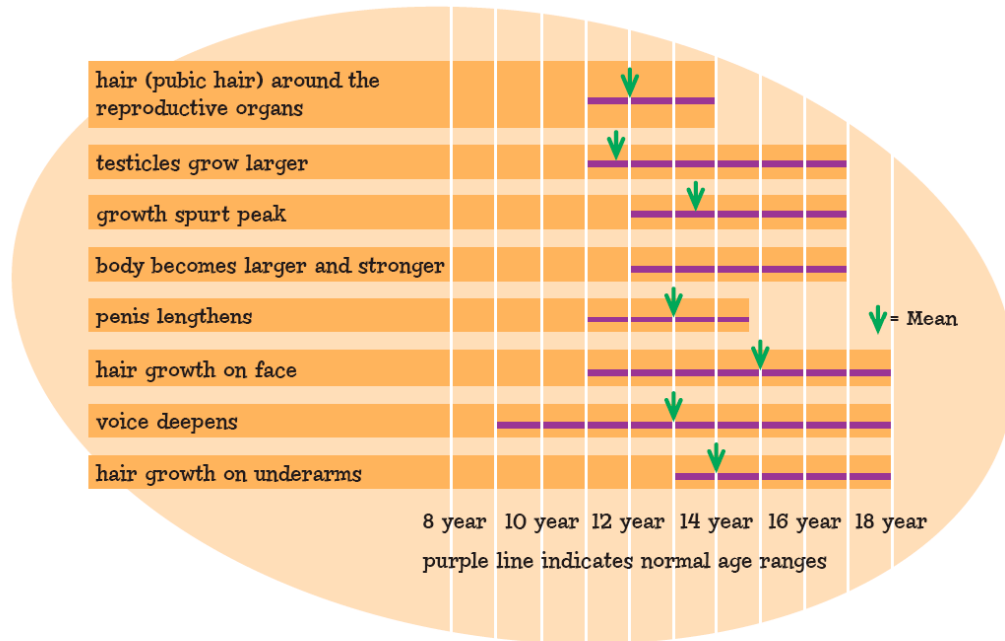
### **Physical Changes of Puberty**

- Built into each person's body is a special "time-clock" for puberty. A gland inside the brain called the *pituitary gland* controls this biological clock. The pituitary gland releases chemical messengers called *hormones* into the bloodstream. Certain hormones carry messages from the pituitary gland to the ovaries in girls and the testicles in boys. These messages tell the ovaries and the testicles to produce their own hormones. Only then do the bodies of boys and girls begin to develop the physical characteristics of adult men and women.

- Some children start to develop when they are quite young; others develop several years later. Also, girls generally begin the changes of puberty earlier than boys do.

- These charts show the physical changes of puberty for boys and girls, and the average age at which the changes occur. As you can see there is a wide range of ages for each of these changes.

### Puberty: When Male Sexual Characteristics Develop

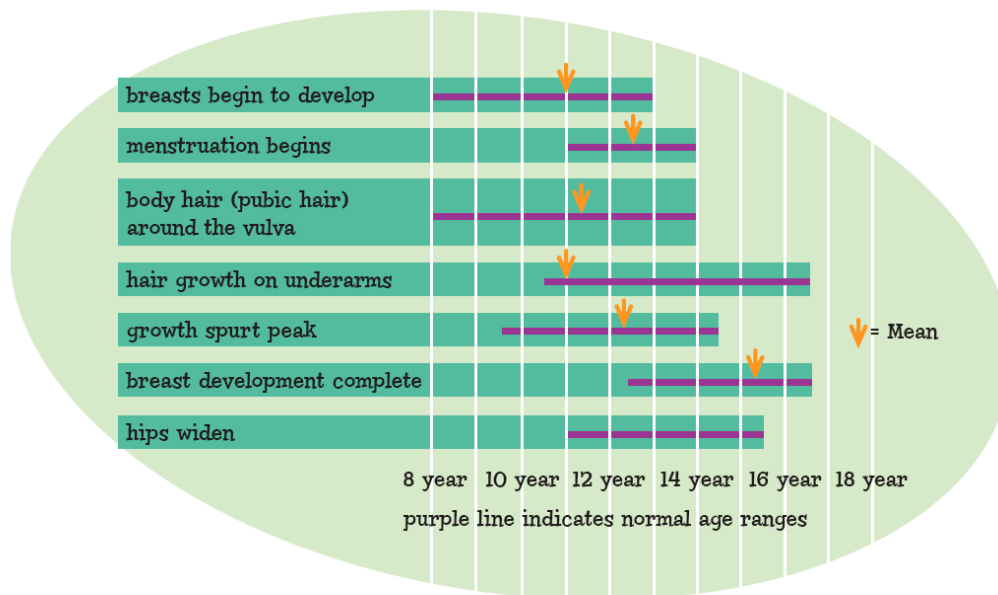


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- Most boys show some signs of puberty by age 13 or 14. But it could be a few years earlier or a few years later. Once puberty has begun, it usually takes about 4 or 5 years for the body to complete the physical changes from boyhood to manhood.
- Since the physical changes of puberty begin at different times, one 15-year-old boy may be quite tall and well developed, while another boy the same age may be at the very beginning of puberty and still look like a child. Even when males are fully grown, there are differences among them. Some men are taller and heavier than others. Some have thicker beards and more body hair than others. Each person is unique, and that includes physical appearance.
- Sometime after a boy's appearance has begun to change, the testicles begin to produce sperm cells. His body also begins to produce the special fluids that nourish and protect the sperm cells. This means that his reproductive system is maturing. There are special

storage areas for the sperm cells and sometimes these storage areas become too full. When this happens, the body expels semen through the penis. This process of clearing out extra sperm starts to happen a number of years after a boy begins puberty. It can happen so gradually that it may not be noticed, but sometimes it happens all at once, usually when the body is at rest. This is called a *nocturnal emission* because often the semen leaves the body while it is at rest during the night. This is a natural body process that is a sign of male fertility.

### Puberty: When Female Sexual Characteristics Develop



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- Most girls show some signs of puberty by age 11 or 12. But it could be a few years earlier or a few years later. Once puberty has begun, it usually takes 4 or 5 years for the body to complete the physical changes.
- These physical changes begin at different times. One girl may notice the earliest changes of puberty at age 9 or 10. Another girl may be 15 or 16 before her body begins to take on the appearance of a woman's body. Even when females are fully developed, there are differences among them. Some women are taller and heavier than others. Some have wider hips and larger breasts than others. Each person is unique, and that includes physical appearance.



- Sometime after a girl's appearance begins to change, she menstruates for the first time. For most girls this happens when they are between eleven and thirteen years old, but it could be one or two years earlier or later. This first menstruation is an important sign that her body is maturing. Menstruation is often called a period, because it is something that happens about every three to five weeks for a period of about three to seven days. But when girls first menstruate, their cycles are not like those of adult women. Instead of three to five weeks, it may be several months between their periods.

### **Preparing Girls for Menstruation**

- Breast development generally precedes menstruation by one to two years as does the beginning of the growth spurt. Sometime before first menstruation, some girls notice a periodic discharge on their underwear. Since they are often concerned by this and think that something is wrong with them, it is important to reassure them that this is a normal part of development. It is something that all women experience, and so there is no need for them to be worried or embarrassed. This is normal and is caused by the hormones produced by the ovaries.
- As you explain menstruation it's a good idea to mention that when girls first begin to menstruate, their periods are often quite irregular. They may have their first period, and then not menstruate again for several months. For many girls it takes a number of years before a regular pattern of menstruating is established.
- Most often, girls' concerns about menstruation include whether it hurts, the amount of blood that is involved, and how quickly a period starts. You will want to reassure your daughter that there's no reason for menstruation to interfere with any of her activities. The amount of blood that is lost is actually quite small. Explain that periods normally start very slowly with a few drops of blood, which she will notice on her underwear, and that other people will not know that she has started menstruating. Sometimes girls are surprised or worried because the colour of the blood is brown. You might mention that this is what happens when blood is exposed to the air and dries.
- You need to explain that often there is mild discomfort at the beginning of a period, which is caused by contractions of the uterus, but this is not anything to worry about. Although a few girls have very painful menstrual cycles, it is not a good idea to mention this since it is the exception rather than the rule.

- Girls need information about caring for themselves during menstruation. At some point, you should explain how sanitary pads are worn. Many girls eventually use tampons, but generally not until a few years after they have started menstruating. They may have questions about tampons, however, and you could explain how they are used. Often, mothers feel that girls who have just started menstruating are too young to use tampons, and the majority of younger girls are not anxious to use them. Girls who are involved in sports such as gymnastics and swimming, however, can find it embarrassing to wear pads, and may want to discuss using tampons with their mothers.
- Girls who are expecting their first period in the near future are often concerned that they will start when they are away from home. They may want to be prepared by carrying a mini-pad with them. They should also know that they can ask their teacher, the school nurse, or the secretary in the school office. All they have to say is, “I think I’ve just started my period, and I don’t have anything with me.”
- It’s extremely important to present menstruation as a normal, healthy process. Girls may have heard menstruation described as the “curse” or that they cannot bathe, wash their hair, or participate in sports while they have their period. They should be reassured that menstruation is not an illness, but a normal part of life, and that they can engage in all of their regular activities.

### **Theme Three Stories and Poems**

**Topic 1:** This is the story about the party the Casey children planned for their parents’ 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

#### **The Surprise**

Mrs. Casey turned the car into Debbie’s and Marc’s driveway. “Not a light on in the house,” she said. “Are you sure that Debbie said we should come to dinner tonight?”

“I don’t think anyone’s home,” Mr. Casey said.

“It’s tonight. I’m sure,” Tim announced and he hopped out of the car. “Open the trunk, Mom. I’ll get your chair, Dad.”

Tim knocked loudly on the front door, but there was no answer. "Hey, the door's open. C'mon," he said to his parents. "Let's go in."

Suddenly, the lights went on and there was a loud shout, "SURPRISE! HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!"

It was the Caseys' thirtieth wedding anniversary. All of the children crowded around them in the front hall. There were Debbie and her husband, Marc, Debbie's twin sister, Jane and the two boys, Frank and Tim."

"Did you know about this, Tim?" Mr. Casey asked.

"He did," Jane said, "and we were sure he would blab, but he didn't. Good work, Tim!"

The family got settled in the living room, and Frank picked up his guitar. "A little song I made up for you," he said and he began to sing:

Oh, thirty years ago,  
Lizzie married Dan,  
And that was the beginning,  
Of the famous Casey clan!

Oh, first there were just two,  
Then Jane and Debbie came,  
The quiet, peaceful Casey clan  
Would never be the same.

The Casey clan just grew,  
They added on two boys,  
And up and down the sidewalk,  
You can hear the Casey noise.

Oh, thirty years ago,

Lizzie married Dan,  
And that was the beginning  
Of the famous Casey clan!

Frank ended his song with a bow while the family clapped.  
“What a surprise,” Mrs. Casey said. “Dan, we have wonderful children.”

“You can say that again,” Tim responded and everyone laughed.  
Jane stood up, and announced: “Let me introduce myself.”  
“We already know you,” Tim replied.

“Wise guy! Someone sit on him,” Jane said. “Now, to continue, I am the official wedding anniversary program director. We will start the evening with presents, followed by dinner. The chefs for tonight’s dinner are Frank and Marc.”

“After dinner,” Jane continued, “we have a small show to entertain you.”

“It sounds wonderful,” Mr. Casey said. “Let’s get started!”

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Marc and Frank had made a wonderful dinner. There was chicken, rice, and Cha Gio, which are Vietnamese spring rolls, a dish Marc learned to make from his mother. And for dessert, there was a delicious apple cake with thirty candles on it — one for each year the Caseys had been married.

“Frank, you are getting to be a very good cook,” his mother exclaimed. “And Marc, the Cha Gio was delicious! Maybe one day you could show me how to make them.”

“I didn’t do any of the cooking, but I did supervise,” Jane said.

“As always,” teased Frank. “Do this. Do that. She was born to be a boss.”

“Children, children!” Mrs. Casey said, as Jane pretended to pour her coffee over Frank’s head.

“I’m stuffed,” Tim announced.

“It’s time to move on with the program,” Jane said. “Leave the dishes right where they are. The Casey Family Show is about to begin! Let’s all go into the living room and watch some old movies.”

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**Topic 2:** This is the text from the student book for Topic 2.

### **Love and New Life**

Remember when Beatriz received a gift from her grandmother, and you talked about the wonderful gift of your life?

God has a very special way of giving the gift of human life. A man and a woman learn to love each other. They want to get married and spend their whole lives together. Being married is an important commitment, and they ask God to help them make the right decision. And because they love each other so much, they want to share their love with children.

That is what happened to Mr. and Mrs. Casey. Thirty years ago they were married in St. Patrick’s church. Their family members and friends came to the church to be part of this important celebration. On the day of their wedding, Mr. and Mrs. Casey promised to love each other always and to try to be a good husband and a good wife. They also promised to welcome any children they might have.

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With God’s help, the love between a husband and wife grows and becomes a deep and lasting love. They share their thoughts and their feelings. They share their dreams for the future. They belong to each other, and day by day they build a life together.

That is what happened to Mr. and Mrs. Casey. They had a wonderful life together, but as time went on, one thing was missing. They longed to share their life with children. Then, several years after they were married they discovered they were going to have a baby. When that baby turned out to be the twins, Jane and Debbie, they were amazed and delighted.

Mr. and Mrs. Casey hoped to have more children, but the years went by without another baby. So they decided to share their love with another child by adopting Frank.

The woman who gave birth to Frank made a loving and generous decision. She and Frank's father were too young to look after him. They wanted him to have parents who could care for him and give him a good home. Frank's birth mother was sad to give him up, but knew that it was the right thing to do.

The day that the Caseys brought Frank home was a happy day for the family. He was just a few weeks old, and Jane and Debbie were eight. They used to fight over whose turn it was to push Frank's carriage or feed him his cereal.

Then, nine years later, something wonderful happened. Mrs. Casey was pregnant with Tim. Mr. and Mrs. Casey were overjoyed. They thanked God for the gift of their children and for their life together.

• • •

Children are a special sign of the love between a husband and wife. Together husbands and wives share God's power to create new life. This is a great gift and a big responsibility.

God made the bodies of men and women in a wonderful way. Men have special life-giving cells called sperm cells. Women have special life-giving cells, called egg cells or ova. One egg cell is called an ovum. About every three to five weeks, an ovum enters one of the two tubes that lead to the uterus.

When a husband and wife are alone they have a special way of showing their love for each other. They can hold each other so closely that sperm cells from the husband leave his body and enter his wife's body. This special sign of love is called *sexual intercourse*. It is also the way in which new human life begins.

During sexual intercourse, the sperm cells travel into the woman's uterus. From there, some of the sperm cells may reach the tubes leading into the uterus. If there is no ovum there, the sperm cells disintegrate in a very short time.

But there may be an ovum in one of the tubes. If a sperm cell reaches the ovum, the two cells may join together and become a single cell. This moment is called conception. Something wonderful and sacred happens at this moment. A new human life has begun.

Everything that is needed for a new human person is in the tiny new cell. Is it a girl or a boy? Will she be tall? Will he have blue eyes? We don't know yet. The new human life must grow inside the mother's uterus for nine months.

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The party the Casey children planned for their parents is a wonderful sign of family love. Debbie, Jane, Frank, and Tim wanted their mother and father to know how much they care about them.

An anniversary party is a happy occasion when people find it easy to show their love. But there have been many times when the Casey children and their parents didn't act or feel very loving. They have all had to learn to forgive each other for the times when they were impatient, did not respect each other, or hurt each other.

Mr. Casey's accident taught both him and Mrs. Casey a lot about love. It changed their lives in a way they could not have imagined. But their love for each other did not change. They have kept the promises they

made thirty years ago when they were married — to love each other always, to welcome any children they might have, and to build a life together.

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**Topic 6:** This is the poem the students read about growing up.

### **Growing Up**

Once I was a baby,  
lying in my crib.  
I slept, I ate, and sometimes burped,  
and spit up on my bib.

Then I was a little child,  
playing all day long.  
I liked to look at picture books,  
and hear a bedtime song.

Now I am a bigger child,  
learning more each day.  
I read, I write, I do my work,  
and join my friends for play.

One day I'll be a teenager,  
wondering what I'll be.  
Doctor, rock star, astronaut?  
I'll have to wait and see.

And then I'll be an adult,  
with many things to do.  
I'll wish I were a child again,  
for just an hour or two.

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