

## What will you say when your child asks you one of these questions?

Tuesday, March 18th 2008, 4:00 AM

Forget "Where do babies come from?" These days, it's "Where do prostitutes come from?" (Hint: No matter how true, the answer shouldn't be "The upper East Side.")

Kids are surprisingly attuned to the world around them, which means [New York](#) moms and dads can thank Dina and [Jim McGreevey](#) and detail-dishing driver [Ted Pedersen](#), along with former [Gov. Eliot Spitzer](#) and new [Gov. David Paterson](#) for the squirm-inducing questions inspired by headlines of the last eight days.

"I've usually stuck to explaining it in more 'silly' rather than 'bad' terms," says [Debbie Skolnik](#), senior editor at [Parenting magazine](#) and mother of two. "The rule of thumb is to answer what they asked - no more, no less, simply and honestly."

She should know. She's fielded some tough questions herself this week - from kids wondering what a "ho" is.

The good news: It is possible to turn an awkward interrogation into a teachable moment. Just take a deep breath - and check out this expert advice.

### What is a threesome?

"You don't have to answer this if it's not age-appropriate," says psychologist [Cooper Lawrence](#).

"There is no reason for your 5-year-old to know what a threesome is. However, if you think they will keep asking and [if] you don't answer their question, someone else will, you can calmly say, 'It's something private that adults do and we can discuss it more when you're older.'" Kids may do a little digging. "The child could say that it means that three people are playing together," says [Lois Braverman](#), president of the [Ackerman Institute for the Family](#). "And you can say, 'Yes, you were right.'"

### Why would someone have 'unprotected' sex?

"The best thing to say is that when two people have been together a long time, they are safe from diseases that they could come in contact with if they were seeing other people as well," says [Dr. Don-David Lusterman](#), a family psychologist and author of "Infidelity: A Survival Guide." For kids who do have a basic understanding of sex, answer directly while recommending responsible behavior. He

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suggests saying, "I want to tell you, as a boy or as a girl, as you're maturing, that it really is not fair to the other person."

### **What's a prostitute?**

First, ask them, "What have you heard? What are your friends saying?" advises psychologist [Dr. Michele Borba](#), author of "Building Moral Intellegence." "The level of detail you go into depends on the age. Tell tweens: 'It's a person who gets paid for having sexual relations with a man who chooses to do so with her.' That's enough info for most kids."

"My 4-year-old asked me over the weekend, 'Mommy, what's a skanky ho?'" says Skolnik, of Parenting magazine. "She heard people talking about the Spitzer thing," says the New York-based mother of two. "I said, 'Well, it's a not-nice way to talk about a woman.' And for 4 years old, that was enough."

### **Have you ever been with a prostitute?**

The way you choose to answer this question depends on your child's age. "If a 5- or 6-year-old asks that question, they're asking something they don't even know the meaning of. If a 13-year-old asks it, that's a whole different conversation," says [Diana Sterling](#), author of "Parent as Coach." "For an older child, you should ask what's behind the question. Find out what they already know and why they want to know."

### **Why is [Ashley Dupré](#) a prostitute?**

Lusterman's answer is: "For reasons that are sometimes hard to understand, some people think that a way to take care of themselves is by selling their body sexually to people. It's not a wonderful thing." He explains, "I'm always trying to avoid negative judgment."

### **Have you ever cheated?**

"No matter how old your child is, infidelity is a personal matter and, frankly, none of your children's business," says Lawrence. "Instead, ask them about how they feel about it, what they want from their future relationships and how they will avoid getting into that situation themselves. It's an opportunity to have a conversation about the importance of trust in any relationship, but especially a marriage."

### **Why did Spitzer get in trouble?**

"There's a teachable moment parents can seize to try your best to instill respect for the government," says Skolnik. "So what you say is, 'The governor is a very important person. He is supposed to work hard for us. We count on him to do good things and to behave in a way that's nice to people. ... When he does things that make us think he won't be able to do his job well anymore, that's when he has to stop doing his job, because it is such an important position.'"

### **Why did it cost so much money?**

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"Be ignorant!" says Borba. "Say, 'I don't know, I was amazed myself. Maybe they were flying in jets?'" She suggests stalling if you're taken by surprise. "Say, 'Let me find out and get back to you,' and use that time to prepare an answer." Ultimately, brevity is the key. "Kids usually want briefer pieces of knowledge, rather than a long lecture. Children don't always know how to ask the right questions."

### **Why do people get divorced?**

"It's when people stop being married for some reason, like they don't get along anymore, and it has nothing at all to do with the kids," is what you should say, according to [Ada Calhoun](#), editor in chief of parenting site [Babble.com](#). She suggests something like: "You know Amy and Josh and Lucas and Eleanor, how all of them have parents who live in different apartments? And you know their parents still love them as much as ever? Divorce is very sad, but it's not the end of the world. Everyone still loves each other even if they're living apart."

### **When parents are mad at each other, do they still love their kids?**

Tell your children, "Of course!" says Calhoun. "Everyone always loves their kids. They may be bad at being married or even bad at being a good parent sometimes, but no matter what, everyone loves their kids." Compare parental love to nature: "It's biological, like how cats catch mice or ducks swim. Once you become a parent, your kid is the most important thing in the world to you for the rest of your life. Nothing can ever change that, not divorce or fights or anything."