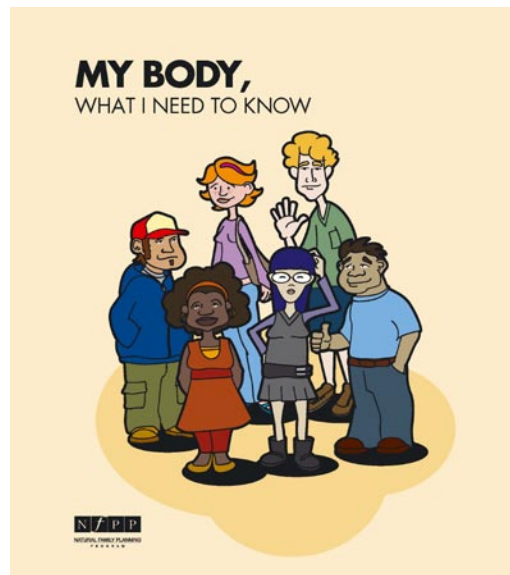


'My Body: What I Need to Know' Natural Family Planning

Cheryl Curnow

The Natural Family Planning (NFP) Program has been providing services in fertility management and sexuality to the Australian community for over thirty years. Initially the majority of people who attended NFP agencies were Catholic couples wanting to space their families in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church. While many of our clients today simply want a family planning method that is natural, it must be remembered NFP is not contraception; it is about relationships and using knowledge of male and female fertility to avoid or achieve pregnancy.

Why did we develop 'My Body: What I Need to Know'?



Everyone is unique and gifted, and deserves to realise their human potential. We felt people with a disability, like all members of the community, are entitled to understand and appreciate their sexuality, and form meaningful relationships – including sexual relationships.

The Board of the Natural Family Planning Program saw the need to develop a resource for teaching people with a mild intellectual disability, and with funding from the Commonwealth Government, set out to achieve just that. We were looking to develop a handbook, which would systematically and sensitively build on concepts and knowledge that would enable people with a mild intellectual disability to be empowered to better understand their own sexuality and make more informed decisions in this important area of life.

What is 'My Body: What I Need to Know' about?

The handbook starts with the concept of cyclic change and how it manifests in nature, in seasons and in us. The handbook then focuses on increasing an awareness of self, with numerous interactive activities designed to reinforce the uniqueness and value of each individual. Next is the wonder of how our own body functions. The last module talks about sexuality and explains male and female fertility and the process of fertilization.

The structure of 'My Body: What I Need to Know' is flexible. The facilitator can use the handbook as an integrated program, or use some sections in isolation. As revision and reinforcement of previous concepts is strongly recommended, the time spent on each section is at the discretion of the facilitator.

'My Body: What I Need to Know' fills a special role in the teaching of people with a mild intellectual disability, and could be a valuable resource for parents, carers and others working with people with a mild intellectual disability. Queries are welcomed by the National Office on 02 6285 1843 or email nfpp@bigpond.net.au.