



By Gregory Ramey, PhD, child psychologist at Dayton Children's and *Dayton Daily News* columnist

## Questions from readers

### Question:

I'm thinking of asking a 14 year old neighbor boy to babysit for my 6 year old son. This teenager seems rather odd, but he has been over to the house a few times and my 6-year-old loves him. However, I'm concerned about any male babysitting my son, but I don't think I should pass judgment on this teen because of his gender.

### Answer:

As you may know, sexual abuse is much more likely to occur by males than by females. Therefore, using a male babysitter does place your child at a statistically higher risk than if you used a female babysitter. However, I concur that you shouldn't make a judgment about an individual based upon the characteristics of a group. I'm more concerned by your description of this teen as "odd." Why would you entrust the care of your son to such an individual?

Irrespective of the gender of the babysitter, I hope by now you have had several discussions with your son about issues of privacy and sexuality. While you don't want to make your child fearful of teens or adults, the high rate of sexual abuse does require parents to have on-going and specific conversations so that their kids are safe.

### Question:

We adopted our 12 year old daughter when she was an infant. We've always been very open with her regarding the adoption. We actually know a great deal about her biological parents and even have pictures of them. Throughout the years we have mentioned this to her, but she has never asked questions or shown any interest in learning more information.

I feel an obligation to help her understand her heritage and the reasons her parents placed her for adoption. Would it be wrong for me to discuss these issues with her? As far as we can tell, she appears to be a happy, loving and academically gifted child who gets along great with her parents and others.

**Answer:**

Why would you even consider upsetting your child's world by introducing such material to her? This seems more like your need rather than hers.

You've done a great job in making her aware that such information exists. It's now up to her to decide when, if ever, she wants to learn more about her biological parents.

**Question:**

Why doesn't time out work with my 5-year-old? I've tried everything, including spanking but nothing works.

**Answer:**

While it's not possible to know precisely what might be going on with your child, here are the four key things to remember when implementing time out.

1. Use it only for very specific behaviors (e.g., "hitting," rather than "not listening").
2. Make certain that your child stays in time out until he/she is quiet for about five minutes.
3. Avoid lecturing, explaining or talking too much. Your corrections should be limited to no more than ten words (e.g., "Tommy. No hitting. Sit until you are quiet.")
4. Remember to always reward positive behavior, rather than just punishing bad behavior.

**Gregory Ramey, Ph.D., is a child psychologist and vice president for outpatient services at The Children's Medical Center of Dayton. For more of his columns, visit [www.childrensdayton.org/ramey](http://www.childrensdayton.org/ramey).**