



P.O. Box 8082
Shawnee Mission, Kansas 66208

TEACHING GUIDE



PUBERTY: A GIRL'S JOURNEY THROUGH THE PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES

NO. 9574

Recommended for Grades 4-6

Part 1: Ella is concerned about a permission slip received at school so she confides in her older sister, Emily, that she is scared and embarrassed that her class will be discussing puberty. In response, Emily provides some reassuring information on what physical changes to expect.

Part 2: While Ella and her friends are at a neighborhood cook out, older sister Emily and her friend Andrew discuss many of the emotional and social changes that both boys and girls experience during puberty.

Part 1, Topics Include:

- Physical Changes
- Female Reproductive System
- Hormones
- Premenstrual Syndrome
- Perspiration and Acne
- Hygiene and Health

Part 2, Topics Include:

- Respect for yourself and others
- Body Image
- Peer Pressure
- Bullying
- Self Esteem
- Feeling Socially Awkward
- Cliques
- Exercise/Sleep/Nutrition

SCRIPT

Part 1-Physical Changes

Mom: Hey, you might need . . . this! Have fun at Ella's sleepover, and remember I'm only two doors down if you need me.

Madison: Thanks Mom. And don't worry! I'm just two doors down if you need ME!!

Dad: OK, well, have a good time. You have your cell phone, Hannah?

Hannah: Got it - bye Dad!

Sister: Mom's working tonight, so text me later and check in. You're going to have so much fun!

Sasha: I know. I've been looking forward to this for a month!! Bye!! Hi Madison! Hi Hannah!

Girls all talking at once: I brought that book you asked for - can I borrow some socks - what are we eating - how late can we stay up?

Mom: WOW!

Emily: Was I like that?

Mom: You were worse! But everybody goes through it!

Emily: I guess it's just part of the journey!

Emily: Hey Ella. Everything ok in here? What are you doing in here all alone? Where are the other girls?

Ella: Oh, they're downstairs watching a movie. I . . .

Emily: Well, what is it? What's wrong?

Ella: Next week they're going to be teaching us about puberty and human development in health class, and I have to get Mom to sign this permission slip. It's just so . . . EMBARRASSING. . . . and weird . . . and kind of scary.

Emily: Well, it doesn't have to be embarrassing, or weird, OR scary. And mom can be really good to talk to about all of this puberty stuff.

Ella: Really?

Emily: Yes, she really can be - you might be surprised. Puberty happens to everybody. I went through it; all my friends went through it. Yes, even our parents went through it! Every girl and every boy; we all go through puberty! And there are bound to be times when you feel awkward, or clumsy, or self-conscious. But when you know what's happening to you, and why you don't have to be scared or confused.

Ella: I just wish I knew what to expect!

Emily: Well, would it help if I filled you in on the things I learned when I was your age?

First of all, for girls, puberty usually starts between the ages of eight and sixteen. There are many different glands that provide a variety of substances our body needs to function. There are oil glands and sweat glands. Other glands produce chemicals called hormones that are carried in the blood stream to different organs in the body. Hormones are what cause the many changes that happen during puberty. It all starts with the pituitary gland, which is located at the base of your brain.

The pituitary gland is sometimes called the "master gland" of the body because it controls many body processes, including growth and development. The pituitary gland produces hormones that stimulate the reproductive glands, located in the pelvic region. The reproductive glands send out MORE hormones, estrogen and progesterone, to start all kinds of changes in your body.

During this time your height and weight will increase and you'll start to look like a young woman. Your breasts will begin to develop and might become more sensitive. Your hips will start to round out as the bones of your pelvis widen. You'll start to grow hair in your pubic area, under your arms, and on your legs. Some girls shave their legs and armpits for cosmetic reasons. But you really need to check with Mom or another trusted adult before trying this yourself. And you shouldn't share razors with anyone since that can spread viruses and bacteria.

During puberty, sweat glands in your body become very active. The purpose of sweat – perspiration – is to help cool the body. The sweat glands that start working at birth are called eccrine glands and they produce clear, odorless perspiration.

But body odor is triggered by your apocrine glands; the sweat glands that kick in during puberty. The apocrine glands produce perspiration that can smell bad when it comes in contact with bacteria on your skin. Since lots of apocrine glands are under your arms, many people use underarm deodorants or antiperspirants to combat body odor. You can also help reduce body odor by taking a shower or a bath every day and wearing clean clothes every day will help too!

And, of course, don't forget to brush your teeth in the morning and at night...and floss, too.

Your skin contains glands that produce oil to keep it healthy. During puberty, those oil glands increase their activity and produce more oil which can become trapped in a pore, causing a pimple or blackhead to erupt. The best way to fight pimples and black heads is to keep your skin clean. Wash your face gently with a mild soap and water or cleanser at least twice a day. Keeping your hands clean and avoiding touching pimples will also help. Talk to a parent or the school nurse about finding a cleanser that is best for you

One of the main things I learned when I was going through puberty is to RESPECT the fact that everyone is different. We all start changing when our bodies are ready. Some of my friends started developing before me and some started after me. If we stick together and support each other it will make all these changes so much easier to handle. Just remember, you'll start puberty when YOUR body is ready.

Ella: We're going to be learning about the reproductive system. It just seems so . . . COMPLICATED!

Emily: Well, it's a LITTLE complicated, but it's pretty amazing, too!

A female's internal reproductive organs are located within the pelvis and include the uterus, the ovaries, the Fallopian tubes, and the vagina.

The uterus is shaped a little like an upside-down pear, and is about the size of your fist. The uterus contains some of the strongest muscles in the female body.

The ovaries are located on each side of the uterus and are connected to the uterus by - the Fallopian tubes.

The uterus leads to the vagina; a hollow tube that connects the uterus to the outside of the body. The opening of the vagina is located between the urethra and the anus. The urethra and the anus are not part of the reproductive system. The job of the urethra is to discharge liquid waste as urine. The job of the anus is to discharge solid waste as a bowel movement.

Ella: So why do girls have a period?

Emily: The job of the reproductive system is to make new human beings.

We talked about the pituitary gland starting all of the changes in your body. Well, the pituitary also produces hormones that stimulate the reproductive glands. In girls, the reproductive glands are the ovaries.

The ovaries store thousands of reproductive cells, called eggs or ova. Approximately once a month, beginning during puberty, an egg reaches maturity in an ovary and is released into a Fallopian tube. The release of an egg is called ovulation.

After ovulation, the released egg travels through the Fallopian tube on its way to the uterus. It is during this journey down the Fallopian tube that the egg can be combined with a male reproductive cell, called a sperm or a sperm cell. If a sperm cell joins the egg, we say the egg has been fertilized, which also means the woman is pregnant.

During the month, the uterus has built up a soft lining of blood and tissue in preparation to receive a fertilized egg. A fertilized egg will attach itself to the wall of the uterus, where it will be protected and nourished as it grows into a baby.

Ella: Some of the girls in our class have had their first period, and some haven't.

Emily: Every girl is different. Every girl starts at a different time; whenever her body is ready. Let me tell you how it works!

Most girls start their period about 2 years after their breasts develop, and after the growth of body hair. Here's what happens:

If a female's egg is not fertilized by a male's sperm cell, it does not attach to the uterus wall. Instead, the built up inner lining dissolves and slides off the uterus wall. Then, over a period of three to seven days, the blood and tissue from the lining, and the egg, flow out of the body through the vagina. At the same time, a new egg is maturing in an ovary, and the process begins again. This process is called menstruation and the days during which it happens are called the menstrual period.

At first, your menstrual period may not be regular, but eventually, you can expect to menstruate for about three to seven days every 26 to 32 days. Every girl is different, and every girl has her own cycle. These differences are completely normal. It's very important to respect the fact that every girl starts her period at a different time. Be there for your friends, when they start their period, or when they're waiting and wondering.

Ella: Were you scared when you had your first period?

Emily: Only a little. Mom had told me what to expect, and I had asked our school nurse some other questions I had. So here's what to expect:

During menstruation, the flow of blood must be absorbed. It's not a lot of blood and it doesn't come out all at once; about 4-12 teaspoons over 5 to 7 days. Some girls use pads. They attach to the inside of your underwear with self-adhesive strips. Pads are comfortable, and they can't be seen through your clothing. Some girls use tampons to absorb the flow of menstrual blood. Instead of being worn like a pad, a tampon is placed inside the vagina. You can also use panty liners, which are lighter and thinner than pads, just before you start, or toward the end of your period, when the flow of blood is lighter. Tell your friends to talk to their mother, or another trusted adult woman, like the school nurse, about whether pads or tampons are best for them. Change your pad or tampon at least every four hours. Feminine hygiene products should never be flushed down toilets. You can wrap the used ones in toilet paper to throw in the trash or use the bins that are often provided in restrooms. Keep up your personal hygiene and bathe or shower daily.

Ella: Do you get any warning that your period is about to start?

Emily: That is a very practical question!

Some girls experience Pre-Menstrual Syndrome, you know, PMS, a few days before their period starts. You might feel a little down, or notice that your breasts feel tender, maybe a few more blemishes, or a tired and bloated feeling like your clothes won't fit. But don't worry, it's all normal, and will pass soon. The best thing is to just BE PREPARED!

It's a good idea to carry a pad or a tampon in your purse, in case you start menstruating when you're away from home. At school, I always carry a Back Pack kit; a pad, a panty liner, and a change of underwear, just in case. And, in an emergency, you can use folded up toilet paper.

Your menstrual period shouldn't prevent you from enjoying your usual activities, including sports and if you use a tampon, you can even go swimming. A lot of girls experience cramps, caused by the contraction of the uterus. Cramps may feel like an ache in your stomach, your lower back or even down your legs. Usually a heating pad, some light exercise or even a warm bath will help you to feel better. If cramps continue to be a problem, talk to an adult, like Mom or the school nurse, for help.

Mom: Ella, why aren't you downstairs with all of the other girls?

Ella: Oh, I need you to sign this. We're studying puberty next week in school.

Emily: And I'm just kind of giving her the basics of what she needs to know.

Mom: Oh, I remember how nervous YOU were when it came time to learn about all those changes. Some of it is a little hard to go through. We can talk about more later if you like.

Emily: Just remember - every girl grows and changes at a different rate, starts their period at different times.

Mom: But everyone goes through it and it all leads to new experiences, and new adventures.

Hannah: There you are!

Sasha: What are you all talking about?

Ella: Oh nothing . . .

Mom: It's getting late. Remember, the Smiths invited us over for a BBQ tomorrow and they said you could invite your friends, so GET SOME SLEEP!

Emily: Goodnight girls!

Part 2-Emotional and Social Changes

Emily: Whew! Did you get ANY sleep last night?

Andrew: Not much, Matthew and the guys were acting pretty crazy!

Emily: TELL me about it!! Ella and the girls were bouncing off the walls!

BOTH: HORMONES!!

Andrew: And Matthew had some interesting questions for me!

Emily: I know! Ella was asking me all about puberty, and growing up, and all that stuff.

Andrew: Yeah, it made me remember how AWKWARD I was at their age.

Emily: And self-conscious.

Andrew: I remember those times. Sometimes it was painful and embarrassing and

BOTH: Exhausting!!

Andrew: But we got through it!

Emily: Just like everybody does!

Andrew: What we're talking about here is BODY IMAGE.

Emily: Almost everyone wishes there was SOMETHING different about their body. Some kids think their legs are too long, or not long enough; that they weigh too much, or they're too skinny. It's important to remember that not everyone grows or develops at the same time or in the same way.

Andrew: Those glamorous images of people you see on movies and TV, well those aren't exactly real! Magazines, websites, and entertainment use digital manipulation, airbrushing, special lighting and effects, to create unrealistic images of beauty and body development that can put pressure and false expectations on young people.

Emily: Part of growing up is being healthy - and happy with who you really are, and what you really look like. Respect yourself! Try to develop a positive body image. If you have a positive body image, you probably like and accept yourself the way you are, even if you don't fit some phony media ideal.

Andrew: The same hormones that cause all these physical changes also cause some emotional changes.

Emily: Sometimes you'll find yourself being happy one moment and grumpy the next. Sometimes you might feel angry about nothing.

Andrew: Don't let these feelings get the best of you. Remember that what is happening has a physical reason, and choose to react positively.

Emily: And remember, you're not the only one with these feelings.

Andrew: If you feel sad or mad, confused, or frustrated.... talk to someone such as a parent, the school nurse or another trusted adult. They've been there/done that, so they can give you helpful advice.

Emily: During puberty, your self-esteem goes through changes, too. Self-esteem is about how you see yourself as a person.

Andrew: It's about how valuable and worthwhile you think you are, and how good you feel about yourself.

Emily: Feeling good about yourself can affect how you act, how easily you make friends, how you get along with your family, and how much fun you have.

Andrew: I remember sometimes feeling like I was an outsider; like I just didn't fit in.

Emily: I know what you mean. I remember having times when I felt like everyone was cool and had it together except me.

Feeling socially awkward happens to almost everyone at some time in their life, especially during puberty. All the body changes, voice changes, new feelings, new awareness, can make you feel like you're an alien on the wrong planet!

Andrew: Take a deep breath - you'll get through this. Some good techniques to help with social awkwardness are:
Be a good listener. Ask people questions about themselves. Most people like to talk about themselves. AND it's a good way to find out who has interests like yours.

Emily: Respect other people. Don't get caught up in gossip or social games. The best way to make good friends is to BE a good friend. Say what you mean, and mean what you say. The people who appreciate you for who you really are those are the friends you want to keep.

Andrew: And if you really freeze up in social situations, it can help to rehearse in your mind what you will say and do. Practice asking interesting questions, finding subjects to

talk about; areas of common interest. This can really help when you have one of those “brain-freeze” moments!

Emily: During puberty, almost everyone becomes more self-conscious. Getting used to your growing body can take some time.

Andrew: But being self-conscious can also mean getting to know yourself better!

Emily: Get to know the things you are good at, the things that make you feel good about yourself and things that help others to feel good about themselves!

Andrew: Your friends, your peers, are people around your own age who you like to be around! Probably you share some of the same interests and experiences. You’ll find that these are the people you like to spend time with.

Emily: This is usually a good thing! It’s human nature to listen to and learn from people your own age. And this is where you make your best friends. You might find that you spend more time with your friends than you do with your parents and siblings.

Andrew: Besides close friends, your peers can come from groups you belong to, like people in your class, your youth group, sports teams, or a dance group. These peers can influence you by the way they dress and act, the things they’re involved in, or the attitudes they have.

Emily: But sometimes, cliques develop. A clique is a group of kids who leave other kids out on purpose. They are often run by kids with strong personalities, who decide who can and can’t be part of the group.

Andrew: Cliques sometimes try to control who you can have as friends. This is not a good thing. If one of your peer groups starts acting this way, be brave! Either change the dynamic or change who you’re hanging out with.

Emily: People are influenced by peers because they want to fit in; to be like the friends they admire; to do what others are doing or have what others have.

Andrew: Sometimes, though, the stresses in your life can actually come from your peers.

Emily: The pressure to do what others are doing can be very strong. Everyone wants to fit in and be accepted.

Andrew: A person might feel pressure to do something just because others are doing it; or they say they are. Some peer pressure is relatively harmless, like dressing a certain way. But other peer pressure can have serious consequences.

Emily: Peer pressure affects just about everyone. Even with your very best friends, you will sometimes find yourself in a situation where you have to make a difficult decision.

Andrew: Respect and trust your instincts. If the situation makes you uncomfortable, then you probably know it's not the right thing to do.

Emily: It's a good idea to plan ahead. How you will handle pressure situations?

Andrew: Think about it. Learn to say no. Even rehearse what you will say and do.

Emily: Have some good excuses ready: "I have a big test Monday" or blame your parents. Say "It's not worth all of the trouble I'll be in if my parents find out - and they always find out!"

Andrew: Most importantly figure out who your real friends are.

Emily: Chances are, if you have an inner voice that tells you a situation isn't right, there's someone else who has that voice inside them, too.

Andrew: Hang with people who have similar values, and who will respect and support your decisions.

Emily: And be there for them when they are the ones feeling peer pressure.

Andrew: There can be lots of different kinds of peer pressures, but sometimes things just get out of hand.

Emily: We're talking about bullying! This is a time when young people are finding their strengths, finding out what they're good at, and figuring out how to interact with others.

Andrew: Unfortunately, some people find their strength, and find out what makes them feel good is to make other people feel bad!

Emily: If someone exerts power over someone else by threatening or intimidating them; that's bullying!

Andrew: If someone spreads rumors, sends threatening texts or emails, posts mean or embarrassing messages or pictures, that is bullying; cyber bullying!

Emily: And if someone verbally or physically attacks someone else...

Andrew: That is definitely bullying!

Both: So what do you do if you are being bullied? Here are some tips:

- Tell the person to STOP! Say it directly and confidently
- Use humor - say something funny to disarm the situation

- Walk away. Bullies are usually baiting or daring you to argue or fight with them. **Because you ARE going to...**
- TELL AN ADULT. Bullying isn't just mean. In some cases IT'S ILLEGAL! Tell your teachers; your principal; your parents. They will make it STOP.

Emily: Even if you are not the person being bullied, you should say something, or do something if you see someone else being bullied.

Both: Again, tell an adult. While it's happening, after it's over, even the next day. Tell a trusted adult what happened.

- Don't give the bully an audience.
- Don't laugh, don't support it.
- Encourage your friends to join you in saying stop.
- Be a brave friend. If you see someone being bullied, encourage them to walk away with you.
- Be kind, and let them know that you support them.

Andrew: Wow! A lot to think about!

Emily: There are so many physical and emotional demands on you during puberty.

Andrew: Here are some things you can do to make sure you feel your best. Pay attention to what you eat. It's a good idea to stay away from junk food. Try to eat healthful foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables. And breakfast truly is the most important meal of the day.

Emily: Try to drink less soft drinks and more water and skim milk. Sometimes, all that growing and changing can make you feel tired. Don't worry about being a little tired. It's completely natural. Be sure to get enough sleep. You need at least 8 to 9 hours every night.

Andrew: Try to set a regular bed time. Go to sleep at about the same time every night, and try to get up at the same time every morning. This sets your body clock, and makes it easier to go to sleep, AND to get up.

Listen to your body. When it says it's tired, give it a rest. Exercise is important. If you enjoy sports, that's great. Find a team that works for you.

Emily: If sports aren't your thing, there are still a lot of fun ways to get exercise. Even taking a walk can give you the exercise you need. Just 60 minutes a day, 6 times a week, will make you feel better, look better, and have more energy.

Andrew: There can be a lot of pressures at this time in your life!

Emily: That's why it's a good idea to find an adult you can trust, someone you can talk to about your feelings.

Andrew: Someone who can answer your questions. A parent or a special care giver is the best person to go to. Your parents have a lot of experience they can share with you, and they have your very best interests at heart.

Emily: But a school counselor or nurse, or a teacher can also be a good listener and advisor.

Andrew: Growing up isn't always easy, and some days it might seem pretty hard.

Emily: But everyone gets through it, and so will you.

Girl: Do we have time to go to the park?

Girl: What time does the movie start?

Boy: Hey, we need to get going if we're going to get there on time!

Emily: Don't worry - we'll all get there . . .

Andrew: It's all part of the journey!

The End

Written and Produced by
Bob Walkenhorst

Photographed by
Larry Brewer

Narrators
Daria LaGrand
Cooper Scott

Cast

Brooklyn Funk	Joseph Brown
Sawyer Nevins	Marquis Quinn
Malachi Deason	Delaney Danner
Kay Kay Jurries	Myla Wilkes
Rick Tamblyn	Lori Plank Allen
Ashley Kennedy	Becca Stabno
Chris Anderson	

Educational Consultant
Shelby Rebeck
RN BSN MSN
Health Services Coordinator
Shawnee Mission School District

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VOCABULARY

Part 1:

Apocrine Glands
Anus
Blackhead
Bowel Movement
Cramps
Eccrine Glands
Estrogen
Fallopian tubes
Fertilized
Hormones
Menstruation
Menstrual Period
Ova
Ovaries
Ovulation
Perspiration
Pimple
Pituitary gland
Pre-Menstrual Syndrome
Progesterone
Puberty
Pubic area
Reproductive system
Sperm
Vagina
Urethra
Uterus
Urine

Part 2:

Body Image
Bullying
Cliques
Cyber Bullying
Embarrassing
Peers
Peer Pressure
Respect
Self-conscious
Self-Esteem
Socially Awkward

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To describe the physical, emotional and social changes girls will experience during puberty.
2. To identify the structures of the female reproductive system.
3. To explain the menstrual cycle.
4. To reassure students that the changes they experience are normal and healthy.
5. To show students productive ways of dealing with peer pressure and bullying.
6. To promote self-esteem and a healthy body image.
7. To emphasize the benefits of good nutrition and regular exercise.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. Puberty classes help students learn about the physical, emotional and social changes that will happen to them over the next few years. For some students, this will be their first exposure to the topic. There may be some students who don't know basic information and may be anxious about having to learn about it. Open with a discussion regarding typical reactions of students learning about puberty (feelings range from curious and comfortable to embarrassed or disgusted.)

Work with students to construct a list of ground rules that will increase their feelings of safety and comfort while discussing puberty, i.e. no personal questions or sharing of private information; respect yourself and others; use dictionary words when discussing body, etc. Make sure students know the correct name for body parts and functions. Include a box for anonymous questions.

2. Create a list of behaviors that are common during puberty. Ask students to raise their hands if the behavior applies to them. Help students realize that everyone has something they would like to change. Some examples are "How many of you...
 - Would like to sleep later in the morning?
 - Would like be older than your current age?
 - Have felt awkward in social situations?
 - Wish you could change something about yourself?
3. Ask students to create a "Perfect World." In this world, would everything look the same? Would everyone look and behave the same? If so, how would this change our world as we know it? How does diversity make our world more interesting?
4. Have students list the milestones in their lives, such as when they took their first step, started preschool, learned to ride a bike, etc. Ask students to include the physical/emotional changes that made each milestone possible.

Students can then make a list of the milestones they are looking forward to, such as going to middle school; driving a car; graduating from high school, going to

college. What physical/emotional changes will be needed to achieve each of these goals?

5. Discuss the roles of the media, parents, peers or other influences that affect how students feel and behave. Role play situations of peer pressure and techniques for managing choices that may be different from friends' choices.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some typical changes that girls can expect to experience during puberty?
2. How does your body know when to start puberty?
3. Do boys experience changes during puberty too?
4. What is the function of perspiration?
5. It helps to talk to someone about the changes of puberty. Are classmates a good source of information? Why?
6. Define peer pressure. When is peer pressure a good thing? When is it detrimental? In what other areas of life do you experience peer pressure from outside influences?
6. What should you do if you are being bullied or you see someone else who is being bullied?

RESOURCES

Related Titles From MarshMedia

A Baby Is Born
A Boy's Guide to Growing Up
A Boy's Guide to Puberty and Personal Safety
A Girl's Guide to Growing Up
A Girl's Guide to Puberty and Personal Safety
Growing Up! For Boys
Growing Up! For Girls
Just Around the Corner – Boys
Just Around the Corner – Girls
Let's Just Talk! – For Boys
Let's Just Talk! – For Girls
Meet the New You-For Boys
Meet the New You-For Girls
Straight Talk About Anger
Straight Talk About Peer Pressure
Straight Talk About Puberty – For Boys
Straight Talk About Self-Confidence
Straight Talk About Self-Image and Identity
Straight Talk About Sex, Gender and Media
Straight Talk About Sexual Choices
We're Growing Up!
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Call 800-821-3303
marshmedia.com
info@marshmedia.com