

Public vs. Private Behavior: Masturbation

Developed by the Project Work Group

(Note: There is a vignette on the DVD based on this material.●)

Adolescents with fragile X syndrome experience sexual arousal just as all adolescents do.

Mother: I've seen Will put his hands in his pants a lot more recently.

Father: I've noticed that too.

Mother: We had to leave the mall yesterday because it got so bad.

Father: It could be a problem if he starts doing that at school or around the neighborhood.

Mother: At the last Fragile X conference, I went to a session where a speaker talked about sexuality, and she said that boys are going to do this.

Father: And? What should we do?

Mother: The first thing she said was: Don't overreact.

Father: It's hard not to when we're in public.

Mother: I know. This is part of normal development, part of life... it isn't something he's going to grow out of.

Father: And it isn't something that can be stopped with a behavior program or medication.

Mother: I think we should talk to Will and let him know that it's okay to do, but only in private.

Father: I'll talk to him.

Later that day...

Father: I told Will that he has grown to an age where some parts of your body get sensitive and feel good to touch. He was a little embarrassed, but I told him it's a normal part of growing up and everyone has the same feelings. But I stressed that it isn't okay to touch yourself in public; it has to be in private.

Mother: What did he say?

Father: He asked if it was okay to do in his room and I told him either there or in the bathroom were both okay. I didn't make a big deal out of it, and I hugged him and let him know we're with him on this, and we'll help him.

A week later...

Mother: I've only had to remind him a couple of times. I think your little talk helped.

Father: He is doing much better.

It may not be this easy with all adolescents, but it is important to address it as often as needed so it does not become a serious problem.
