

# LIFESTYLES

7A  
THURSDAY  
September 30, 1993

## Sex Practice Is Viewed As Taboo

This column is a continuation of some of the many letters received on the subject of sex. My responses follow the letters.

1) "Dear Dr. Faulkner:  
I have reason to believe that my girlfriend has herpes because I noticed some sores on certain parts of her body. I have two questions: How can I be sure if she has herpes? And, could it have come from somebody else?"



Coping

**CHARLES FAULKNER**

Mr. K., Buffalo, N.Y."

Dear Mr. K:  
Although you can have sex safely, if you engage in intercourse when herpes is in remission, a mistake in timing can transmit this highly-contagious disease. If you want to know for certain

whether your friend has herpes, demand that she have a physical examination by a physician. If she refuses, you can continue to engage in sex only at your own risk. There is no present cure for herpes, even though there are medicines to treat it. Some people are "carriers," and they can contract the herpes virus without catching it, but they can pass it on to someone else who can catch it. If you are certain that you do not have the virus, it is obvious that your friend picked it up from someone else, if she has it.

2) "Dear Dr. Faulkner:  
You don't get into the sex nitty-gritty in your articles and talk about the realities of sex, such as oral sex. Is oral sex okay?"

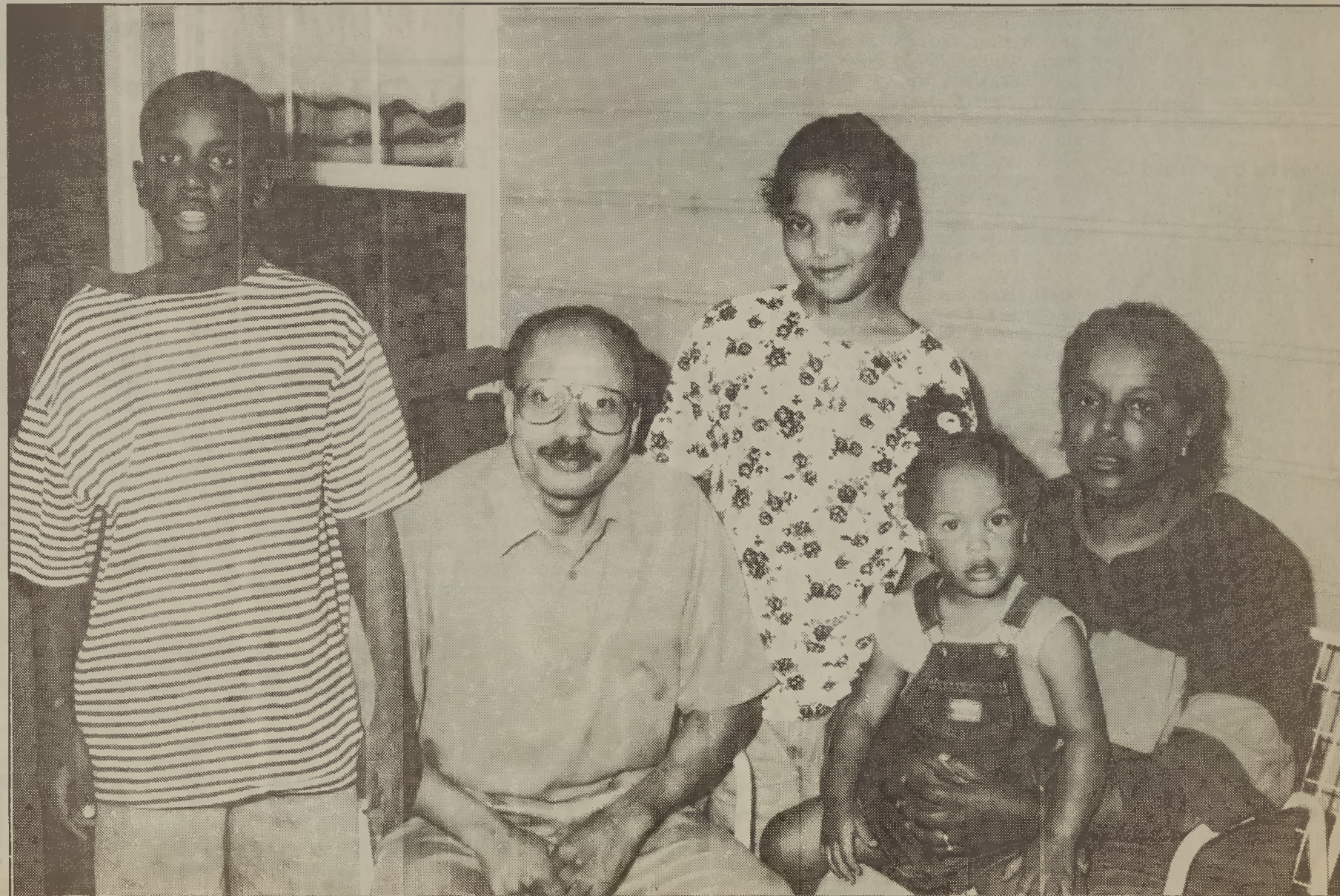
Inquisitive, Daytona Beach, Fla."

Dear Inquisitive:  
Previously, I have focused on the general topic of sex and the most common issues related to it. Recent studies show that 70-90 percent of the population engages in oral sex. As far back as 1948, research done by Kinsey showed that 60 percent of our better-educated citizens indicated their occasional participation in oral sex. So, this category of sexual participation is very popular. Many couples indicate that they engage in oral sex as a means of varying and rejuvenating a dying relationship. Is it okay for one partner to bring the mouth into contact with the genitalia of the other? There is no physical problem, if the two participants are healthy and clean. For unclean people, the danger can be disease. The psychological difficulties are another matter, however.

Although, many people participate in and enjoy oral sex, the historical taboo lingers. Oral sex is regarded as "dirty," "abnormal" and "sub-human." Yet, it is continually practiced by millions of people. The dirty concept originates from the

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## Conference On Disabilities Set



What happens from day to day is what is normal for the Roberts family. From left to right Charles, 12, Eric, Jennifer, 10, Amber, 3, and Beverly.

Photos/PAUL WILLIAMS III

By Cassandra Wynn  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The Roberts have learned that dreams aren't necessarily shattered. They are more often changed or altered.

That's the way parents of children with disabilities have to look at things contends Beverly Roberts. When her son Charles, 12, was diagnosed at 2 1/2 as being mentally retarded, her first thought was, "How do we live with this? Charles is no longer Charles; he becomes Charles with mental retardation."

She thought upon hearing the diagnosis that she wouldn't be able to die in peace. "My child may not grow up to be independent. Making that transition into adulthood is an important issue." In time, she learned to put things in perspective. "I have learned things I can change and things I can't. My focus is to give my child skills to be as

independent as possible."

Having to adjust to being the parent of a disabled child did not end with the diagnosis of mental retardation. When Charles was 5, she was told he was autistic.

For some, there is a grief process that parents go through. "You may experience the death of the child you thought you had."

"There is an adjustment in terms of expectations of family life," Roberts said. "The trap is that it can become the focus of life. We have bad days just like everybody else. What's done day to day is normal to me. You have to get out of what's normal."

Roberts emphasizes that she still wants what is best for Charles. "I have dreams for him."

With two other children, Jennifer, 10, and Amber, 3, Roberts and her husband Eric work hard for structure in their household. "When Charles comes home from school, he has to have activities that are structured. Free time for him is hard. We

can't be as spontaneous as some families. A family has to look at the needs of the people in that family and go from there."

What concerns Roberts is that families with children who are disabled, especially minorities, often become isolated.

"It is not easy to be a parent. Disabilities can make people feel uncomfortable. People have to understand we are no stronger than anybody else. Life hits you just as hard as it does anybody else. It hurts no matter what race you are."

A conference designed for minority parents with disabled children is being planned for Oct. 23. The conference is being sponsored by the Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC), a non profit parent organization in Davidson.

The purpose of the conference is to keep parents from feeling isolated. Often parents don't know their rights, Robert said. "It's im-

portant for parents to realize they are not alone." The theme of the conference is "Coming Together."

"Over 50 percent of the students who have disabilities in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are minorities. But the minority parents were not calling the center," said Roberts, who is working at the ECAC part-time.

The conference is for parents of children with any kind of disability, from learning and physical disabilities to attention deficit disorder, sickle cell disease or mental retardation.

"I started like every other parent. I had to learn my rights," Roberts said. "My first attempt at being an advocate was with my son's preschool program in Winston-Salem. There was no speech therapist, no physical therapist. There were things not being done. Parents were not involved and not getting encouragement. I felt like I had to do something."

Roberts arranged to meet every Friday with the school's director to talk about her son's activities.

But not every parent is aware that their children are guaranteed an appropriate education, Roberts said. "Empowerment is knowing your rights."

Roberts described the Oct. 23 conference as "parent friendly." Among the topics to be addressed are parenting, community resources, and writing educational plans. There is also a special session for fathers. The keynote speaker will be Beth Harry, an assistant professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of Maryland at College Park.

"The deadline for registration is Oct. 18. The conference is free to parents and the cost is \$30 for non parents."

For information, call the parent information line 1-800-962-6817.

## Health Issues On Family Week Agenda

By Cassandra Wynn  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Health issues will be on the agenda for the 10th annual "We Are Family Week" that will take place Oct. 11 and 12 at the Government House Hotel on South McDowell Street.

"We wanted to look at strategies for helping families help themselves," said Dona Patterson, executive director of the Family Outreach and Counseling Center Inc. which is sponsoring the conference with the Charlotte Area Health Education Center. "The health issues will include mental, social as well as physical health. We need to look at the family from a holistic standpoint." Conference organizers ex-

pect nearly 100 people to attend. "We want to talk about prevention more," Patterson said. "We want to look at the total person to see what will work."

The strengths of African American families are important to talk about, Patterson said. "We don't have a lot of people looking at strengths. We see a lot of negatives about the family. We know our weaknesses."

Robert Hill, director of the Institute for Urban Research, will deliver in the keynote address and talk about strengths of the African American family. Patterson said that innovative approaches to dealing with problems should be looked at. "If people would be honest, they would admit

that some traditional approaches have not worked. We often try to hold on to them."

The controversial approach of segregating black males in schools will be discussed. Spencer Holland, executive director of the Center for Educating African American Males in Baltimore, will talk about "the epidemic of academic failure of the black male," and his radical gender specific approach, Patterson said.

Blacks suffer more from serious health problems than whites, said Neysa Dillon Brown, chairperson of the Family Outreach and Counseling Center Board of Directors. "Given that national health care is a big issue now, the conference comes at a good time. We want to discuss ways

that families can become more committed to improving their health. We are hoping to reverse the trends."

Barbara Pullen Smith, executive director of the Office of Minority Health in Raleigh, will talk about the "gaps in health status for blacks," Patterson said. "She will give an update on the status of AIDS, diabetes, cancer, infant mortality in the black community. She will also ask for assistance in developing recommendations in reversing trends."

Getting more African Americans in the health care professions is another concern that will be taken up by conference participants. "Key information doesn't al-

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**Family Outreach & Counseling Center**

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