

THE RATIONAL ENQUIRER

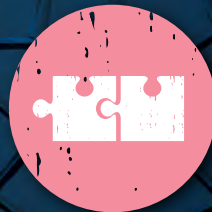


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INTRODUCTION

This is a special edition of The Rational Enquirer magazine – special because this collection of stories spans diverse topics from young people throughout Oregon. The articles, poems and artwork were selected especially for this publication to reflect the experiences of youth over the last four years. However, that time period shows us that our lives are ever changing. Those who contributed to this publication have changed too. What you see is a snapshot of their thoughts and feelings when they wrote their stories.

Additionally, this edition commemorates the closing chapter of the Oregon Adolescent Health Alliance (OAHA), formerly known as the Oregon Teen Pregnancy Task Force (OTPTF). OAHA members have a long-standing history of supporting youth sexual health throughout Oregon and have sponsored The Rational Enquirer for 27 years.

People are multidimensional. Sexual health is so much more than birth control and abstinence. It is vitally interconnected to racial equity, suicide prevention, healthy relationships, consent, mental health, sexual identity and sexual orientation.

As you read these articles, perhaps you will find some that reflect your experiences. We hope you will find a new perspective, compassion for the rights and well-being of others, and impetus to advocate for action.





IDENTITY

The part of the closet you can never leave

I always assumed when I finally came out, I'd be at the top of a hill of struggle and self-acceptance. I would look back at three years of climbing, fighting against Mormon teachings, a conservative family, the isolation of the journey, and I would smile, finally at peace. Most people think that after coming out everything gets better, and the struggle of being gay is over. I thought so, too. Now I know better. Now I know that hill is a mountain, and I'm still climbing.

It's 8 o'clock on a Saturday night. The Winter Formal. My friends are excited to dance and spend the next three hours flirting the night away. I end up telling them I'm tired, that I'm just gonna head home. But as soon as I get into my silver Subaru, I'm shaking. Unbearable feelings cascade out of me. I start the engine, and I can't stop sobbing. Why do my friends get to have fun and spend the night doing normal high school stuff? Why can't I ever have the same chance at love?

Being a gay high schooler in a small town is so very lonely. At school dances, I don't get to flirt with other guys. My shot at romance is limited to the three other people at my school who are out, but everyone else has thousands of options. This bitterness has plagued my junior year. I hate it. I want to dance, hold hands, kiss a guy.

The Winter Formal is long past, and my friends and I are gathered in a cabin around couches and a recliner. The fire gives a warm, orangey glow. Sex, specifically the loss of three of my friends' virginity, is the dominant topic of the night. But my friends don't ask for my input. I get quieter and sadder. After trying to figure out what is going on, the answer slams to the front of my mind: gay. It's because I'm gay. My friends have always said they can't relate to the few romantic experiences I've had, and I know they aren't intentionally ignoring me. I know they aren't trying to hurt me. They think their token acknowledgement or support is enough. But it hurts.

People assumed that after I came out, everything would be suddenly fine, that I'd finally be happy, that I'd accepted myself, that I would stop internalizing so much and finally open up. They believe that by accepting me, they are doing enough. Sounds pretty, doesn't it? Yeah, it does sound pretty — "It gets better!" and all that. But you know what? It doesn't

get better. It gets more difficult. Because of coming out, my friends treat me differently. Everyone does. People define me by my sexuality. I wish so badly that I weren't gay. I hate how much it affects my life, the memories I'll make, and how people react to me with discomfort, hatred or smugness at how progressive they think they are. Yes, I'm gay, but I'm also a son, a brother, a friend, a student, the best coworker anyone could ask for, a powerful public speaker, and a patient understanding human being.

I'm still climbing my own excruciating mountain. Something tells me I'll never reach the top. Maybe the top doesn't even exist. People think accepting the fact that you are gay only happens once, but it's continuous. I will have to keep fighting for the rest of my life. I won't have the same high school or life experience as most others, and I really hope one day I will be OK with that. People tell me I'm "brave" for being gay, but this has always made me uncomfortable. How can I be brave for something I didn't choose? I didn't run into a burning building to save a life. I'm not brave. I'm Mason.

~ Mason

Oregon high school student

More than just pronouns

More and more young people identify as gender non-binary. Unfortunately, society's lack of knowledge about and support for non-binary teens can create devastating consequences. Of the non-binary teens surveyed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, 41.8% have attempted suicide. Non-binary teens can experience rejection and bullying that increase their risk factors for suicide. (1)

It is important to support non-binary teens so they know they matter. Other teens play a particularly important role in supporting non-binary teens because they can intervene to stop bullying and help non-binary people not feel alone. Also, being non-binary and having non-binary friends is something to celebrate! It is a real gift to have people in our lives that see the world in different ways.

Things to know about gender and pronouns

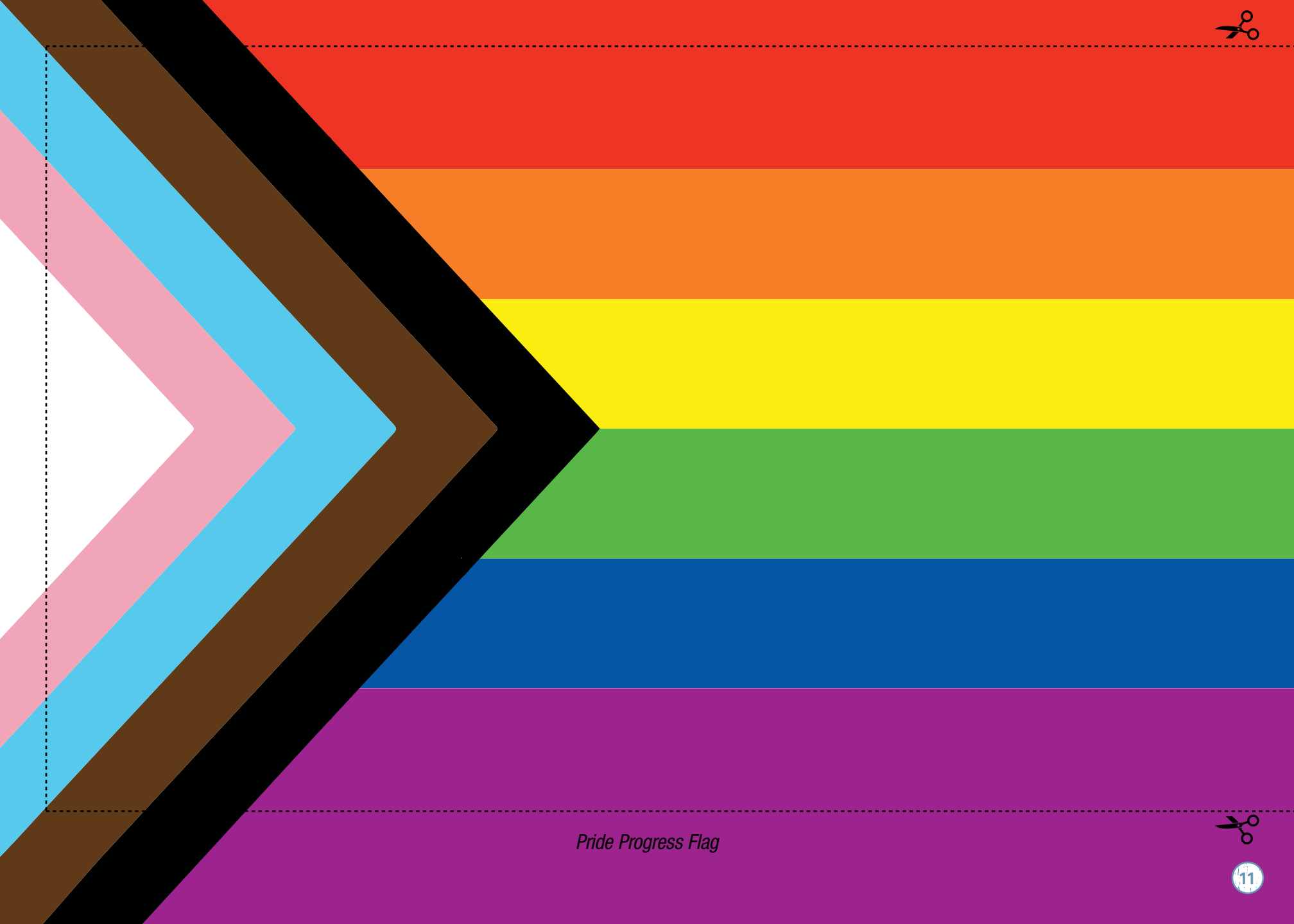
Gender expression and gender identity are not the same thing.

Non-binary people do not all dress or act the same way. Gender expression is how one expresses their gender identity, which may not align with stereotypical portrayals of one's gender. However, gender identity is the gender that one identifies with. (2) For example, a non-binary person may dress like a stereotypical female, like a stereotypical male, like both a stereotypical male and a stereotypical female, or like neither a stereotypical male nor female. Gender identity is an internal instinct that everyone chooses to express differently.

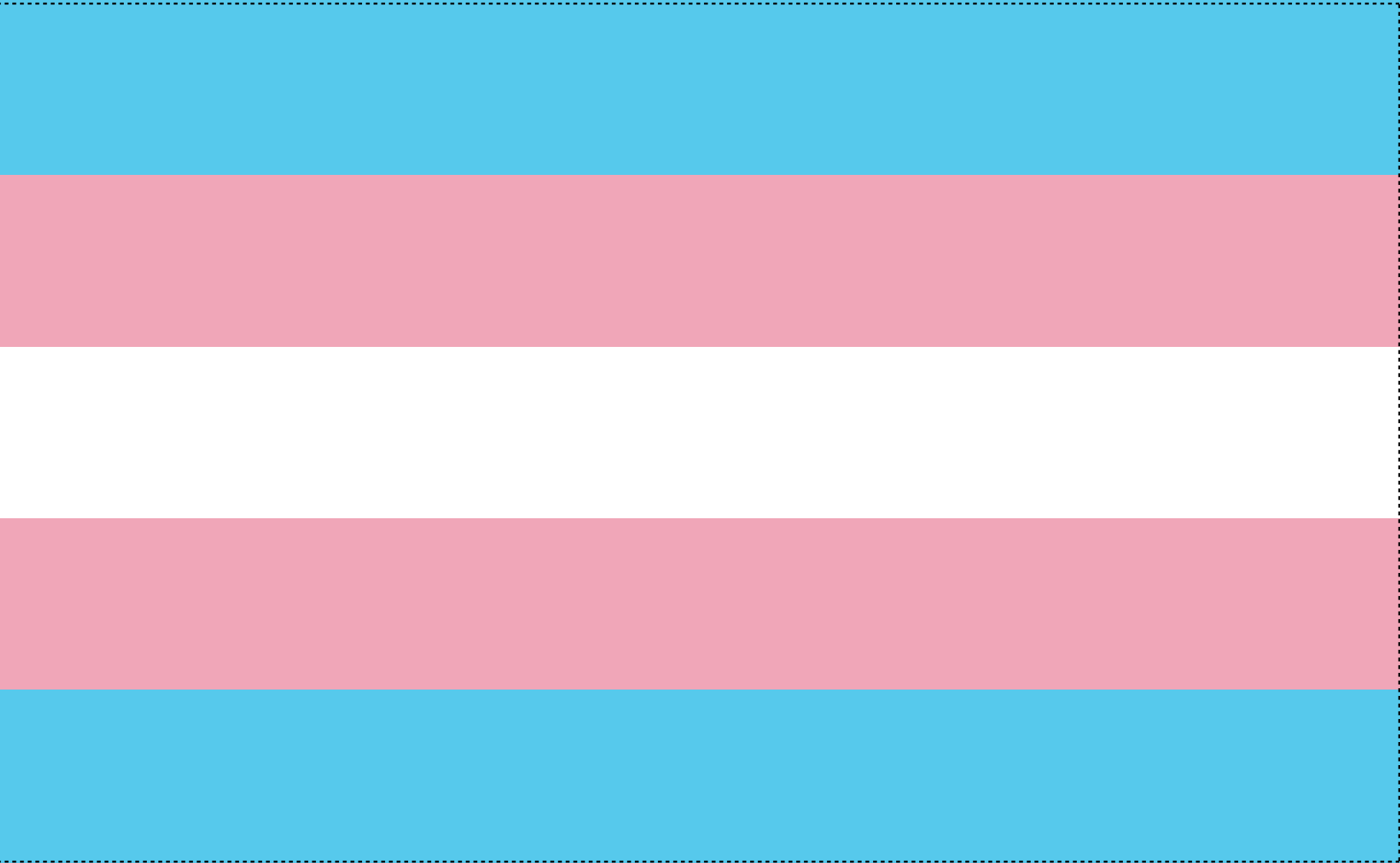
Using gender neutral pronouns is not the same as being non-binary.

Some non-binary people do not use gender-neutral pronouns. In fact, a non-binary person can use multiple types of pronouns, gendered pronouns or gender-neutral pronouns. Their decision to use specific pronouns depends on who they are, how "out" they are, where they live and other personal factors. Xe/xim and ze/hir are examples of other gender-neutral pronouns they may want to use. Some people who are cisgender use gender-neutral pronouns for various reasons. (3) Identities that fall under the umbrella of non-binary include agender, gender fluid, gender non-conforming and genderqueer.

Continued on page 13



Pride Progress Flag



Transgender Pride Flag

Ways to support your non-binary peers

- Avoid using formal, gender-linked language when trying to be polite (e.g., “ma’am,” “sir,” “Ms.,” “Mr.,” “Miss”) unless someone tells you that is what they prefer. Formal, gender-linked language can feel alienating for non-binary people.
- Even if you think everyone in a group identifies a certain way, avoid using gender-linked language (e.g., “girls,” “boys”). Instead, use terms such as “students” or “people.”
- Don’t ask people questions about their body parts, organs or bodily functions such as menstruation. Let non-binary people share with you on their own terms rather than asking them personal questions. It is OK to ask questions on how to be more supportive.
- Recognize that not all non-binary people dress androgynously. Those that do not are still non-binary, and it is important to recognize them as that.
- Avoid creating situations where a person of any gender will feel singled out or left out. Accept all people regardless of whether they do untraditional things, and don’t announce it when they do.

~ Erica

Oregon high school student

Note: Original article was edited for length.

Resources

Gender Spectrum provides resources for allies, non-binary and transgender teens to learn more about gender and transitioning. It covers basic information on gender and gives resources for legal affirmation (e.g., changing one’s birth certificate). It also provides crisis resources to help non-binary people and their supporters.

<https://www.genderspectrum.org/>

Trans Lifeline is a hotline for non-binary and transgender people and their families and friends to get support and resources from transgender operators, especially during crises.

877-565-8860

<https://www.translifeline.org/>

GLAAD is a well-established organization that supports LGBTQ+ people and their allies.

<https://www.glaad.org/transgender/allies>

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2. Adams C. The gender identity terms you need to know. CBS News, 2017 March 24 [cited 2022 May 13]. Available from: www.cbsnews.com/news/transgender-gender-identity-terms-glossary/.
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To my people who

To my people who go
Unhappy because of legal status.
Sitting not understanding.

To my people who are told
You aren't this because you don't
Speak this.

To my teen moms who go without
So their babies have everything. You are
A great mom. Don't let others tell you
Different. Keep pushing.

To my teen fathers who are scared,
Be brave. You will soon see it is the best
Thing you have ever done.

To my people who sit without making
A sound, with streams running down your face,
Who self-harm or are unhappy with life.
You got this. It will get better with time.

To my people who only have enough
Belongings to fit in a bag, be strong.
Be brave.

To my people who fight the dark, keep fighting.
You will soon see the rainbow. You are strong.
We Love you.

To my people who are children of ex-cons,
Gangbangers, and users.
Mom is finally
Mom again.

To my people who are children of
Mentally ill parents, they can't help it.
But don't settle for what you
Don't deserve.

To my people who aren't confident,
Wear it. You will look beautiful.
Put on that shade of lipstick. You will rock it.
Do what you love to do. Others will learn
To love it.

To my people who fight the voices that say
End it all, who fight themselves every day to see
Another. Keep fighting. Make it through
The night. There is always a better day. Your pain is
Temporary. Your pain will just transfer to others.

To my people who are survivors, you
Made it out alive and I wish you all the
Best looking forward.

To my people who work to survive,
One day you will have all you need.
Keep Praying.

To my people who have a non-existent
Parent, you will still make it. It's their loss
That they can't see you succeed.

To the precious blessing, stop growing so fast.
Who has become too big to hold. Learn to love
Yourself because you are perfect. To the angel who
Is so very smart, I love you. Don't forget that.

To the mom in the back so tired yet still pursuing
Her education. To the hard working parents with aching
Bones, thank you. You are appreciated.

To the parents who had no choice in having the
Little angel. You are strong. They need you. To my fellow
People who try their best every day, we applaud you, and
They look up to you.

To the little kid who just wants to grow up big
Like mommy, I hope you never go through the
Pain of wondering why me. To the little angel who
Sleeps peacefully, I hope you never wake up in terror.

To my survivors of assault, the hurt will soften. The
Nightmares will end. The shadows will stop. You will
Be free from what once was uncontrollable loss.

To my people who have a higher
Privilege, stand, and fight for those who can't.

~ **Maricela**

Oregon high school student

Broken body, worthless girl, and other lies I called truth


Dear Kayla,

The word “disability” covers a huge range of conditions: I’ve been thinking about you a lot lately. I know it’s not mutual — anything past age 20 seems like a lifetime away to you, and in some ways it is — but I miss you. I miss your certainty that you can do anything you want, even if you don’t know what that is yet. I miss the easy smile you offer strangers as though it costs you nothing. I miss your endless hope.

Well, not endless. You are only human, despite the way others expect you to be pure of heart and strong of spirit, as though your wheelchair were

a talisman imbuing you with some saintly essence. They foist their surety on you the way the fairies bestowed their gifts upon Aurora: You are innocent, you are pure, you are good. You nod and thank them. What else can you do?

Do you remember when you first realized you were broken? I don’t. I was just me. Different than the other kids, sure, but I must have made the leap from different to worse at some point. Maybe it wasn’t a leap, though. It’s not such a great distance from one to the other when you’re small and the world is big. (The world is still big, I hate to say, but you are too.) Maybe it was no farther than the space between breaths. As I said, I don’t remember.



It doesn't much matter, anyway. The point is, you were broken and you knew it, but you also didn't because you were just you. You had a beautiful smile (everyone said so) and hair like spun gold (at least according to the bus monitor that one time). You liked to wear Dr Pepper Lip Smackers, and one day you started wondering if other people liked you wearing it, too. You wondered if boys liked it. If they noticed your beautiful smile and golden hair. You figured they must, because they noticed the other girls.

But you weren't like other girls, were you?

Other girls didn't have two metal rods screwed into their spines to keep them straight. They didn't lean to the right constantly, their clothes always off-center. They didn't dance with a head bob and some jerky arm movements. They didn't drag along several hundred pounds of wheelchair everywhere.

Other girls were beautiful.

Other girls were desirable.

You learned early (so very early) that desirability was the goal. It didn't matter that you liked your reflection if boys didn't like it, too. You came

up with so many scenarios for your first kiss: by a lake under the full moon, during a study session after school, in a dark movie theater. You'd create these mini-plays, arranging the sets and fleshing out character motivations, but you never made it to the climax. When the big moment came you couldn't work out the logistics — Would he be sitting too? Standing bent over? Would your chair get in the way? Of course it would; your chair always gets in the way — and so you ended the fantasy early.

In some ways it was easier to fantasize about sex. You had no idea how that worked even for able-bodied people, so you mostly replayed sex scenes from movies in your head. Sometimes you'd insert yourself in the scene, sometimes not. You felt guilty either way. You'd touch yourself, but it was always fast and quiet and hard to enjoy. After, you'd worry you had done it wrong, and then you'd worry it was wrong to do at all.

You didn't know if other girls masturbated (I can tell you now that many of them definitely did), but you knew no one expected *you to do so*. Your body was broken, after all. You weren't interested in sex, surely. Not you with your innocence and purity and goodness. You still wanted to be those things, and you were terrified someone would find out you weren't.

It didn't help that all your closest friends in high school were devoutly Christian. They were waiting until marriage. Sure, they might talk about their crushes or whichever male celebrity was popular, but then they'd pray together for their future husbands. You'd all gather in a circle, hands clasped, heads bowed, and say, *Jesus, we pray for the men you'll bring into our lives one day. We pray that they've stayed away from temptation. We pray that you'll prepare our hearts for them and help us keep our bodies pure for them. Amen.* You said those words, too, but you didn't mean them. Not because you wanted to have sex before marriage (you didn't, but oh you also did), but because you knew there was no husband in your future. It wasn't a conscious knowing — you hoped someone would find you attractive someday — but the kind of knowing that fizzes under your skin.

You're about to start college now, aren't you?

About to move out for the first time, live on your own, make new friends and take new classes. I can tell you it'll be even better than you hope, but that's not the whole story. (It rarely is.)

Your very first semester you'll fall hard and fast for one of your new best friends. He'll be intelligent and

passionate and you'll laugh more than you ever have before. Maybe even more importantly, he'll flirt with you. You won't realize it at first, but soon you'll notice the way he looks at you as though you two share a secret. You'll notice how he sits close sometimes and brushes against you. You'll notice how his voice changes when he jokes with you, and how your voice changes, too. You'll worry this is all in your head, but that won't stop you from hoping. This is college; anything could happen, right? Maybe here you aren't broken.

Maybe here you're just like the other girls.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry to tell you the rest of this story, because it's going to hurt to hear. It'll hurt even more to experience, though, so maybe knowing it's coming will soften the impact.

You'll go dancing one night. You'll spend forever getting ready because he'll be going, too. He's never gone with the group before. You'll put on your makeup and imagine the dark, crowded club, wondering if it'll feel different with him there, so close.

You'll be pleased with yourself that night. You won't worry about how you look dancing even once, because you know you're gorgeous tonight, and you feel too good to care about anything beyond the music pulsing through your body and his smile in the dark.

After, the group will head back to the dorms. You'll all congregate in his room, like usual, still sweaty and smelling like smoke and beer (which none of you drank, but it's a sticky scent). Someone will ask him if he had a good time. He'll shrug and say, "It was fine, but the ratio was off." Ratio? What ratio? He explains: There were more guys in our group than girls.

There weren't, you'll think.

"There weren't," you'll say. "Four girls, four guys."

"Yeah," he'll say, "but you don't count."

You don't count. You aren't like the other girls. You don't count. Your body is different, broken, worthless. You are. You are worthless. You don't count.

You always knew, but no one had ever said it before. It was a truth you kept hidden even from yourself most of the time, a static you could pretend to ignore. No one had ever said it, but now someone does.

I didn't know how much it could hurt to be right.

Maybe I can spare you that moment. Maybe I can get to you first, now that I know the truth: He was wrong, and so were you.

You are not broken. There is nothing wrong with your body. You are beautiful and desirable, and those are not the most important things you are. You are worth more than all the stars and all the galaxies and all the mysteries of the universe combined.

You count.

You matter.

I love you.

I want to tell you another story now, if I may. You're sitting in Starbucks, waiting. You look up anxiously every time someone walks in, then let out a disappointed, stuttering breath. Until one time you look up and there she is: your date. "Kayla?" she asks. You nod. She sits down, smiling and beautiful. She buys you coffee and you worry the whole time that your carefully applied lipstick is rubbing off, probably smearing all across your face. You laughingly mention your concern. Later, she texts you: "i wanted to kiss the rest of that lipstick off you."

You only go on one more date with her — turns out you weren't such a great fit. You never do kiss her, but she wanted to and you chose not to. You've never felt more powerful.

You're going to learn a lot in the coming years. You're bisexual, for one thing, although you won't figure that out or quite what it means until your early- to mid-20s. You'll discover a passion for writing, a joy in creating something from nothing except words and intention. You'll finally master eyeliner.

You'll find feminism, a word that is so much more than its few syllables. You'll marvel at the way it feels to say, "I am a feminist." Like both the bravest of declarations and nothing more than the most basic of truths.

I am: my life.

A feminist: has value.

You'll learn to love yourself. It won't be easy, but it will be worth it. Of course, sometimes you'll still look in the mirror and wonder how anyone could ever want to touch you, but then you'll remember two things:

i wanted to kiss the rest of that lipstick off you.

and

I count. I matter.

Love,
Me

~ Kayla

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Here We Are: Feminism for the Real World blog

WHO AM I?

I am a woman

No, scratch that ... I am a black woman
Feminist movements of our time feel like a rewind,
Calling to mind the words of Sojourner Truth – “Ain’t I a woman”

Who am I?

I am the daughter of immigrants
My ancestors weren’t slaves of this land,
But my parents continue to slave away to support my sister and me
Hoping that we, one day, achieve their American dream

Who am I?

I am a young black woman
Whose black girl magic feels like it is running out
Told from childhood to grow up, that I am not enough
Some days I’m magical but other days I just want to be

Who am I?

I am a broke girl living in a broke world
Looming over my head are student loans
And the sociopolitical issues of our time
Equality for all they say, but I am still waiting for it to be reflected in my pay

Who am I?

I am a “fat” black woman
Curvy in all the right and wrong ways
Even though I eat healthy and exercise,
I can’t remember the last time the doctor didn’t tell me to lose weight

Who am I?

I am more than enough
Despite society beating me down,
Today I stand proud because,
Without these pieces of my identity, I wouldn’t be me

WHO ARE YOU?

~ Deanna





LIFE

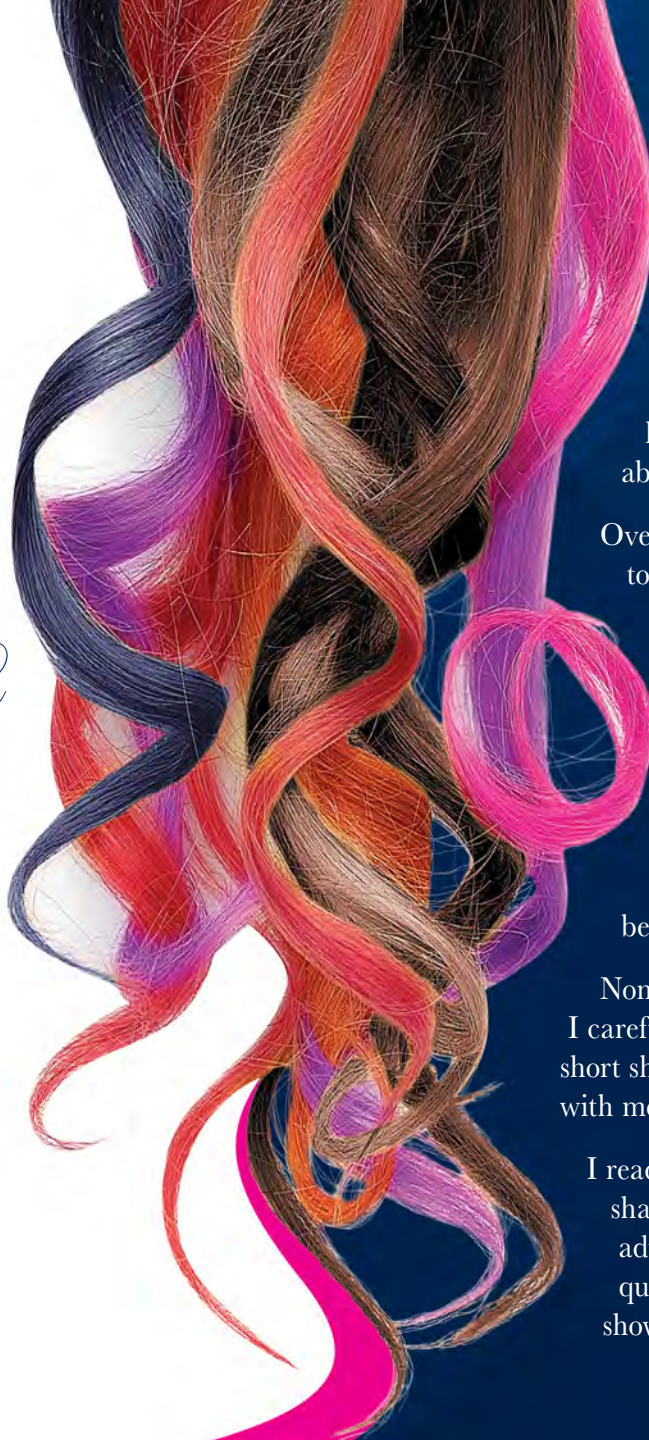
Hair, there and everywhere

As a child, everyone raved about my curly hair. It was thick and dark and grew like a weed.

At the age of 9, I began to go through puberty.

You know that thick, dark, fast-growing hair on my head? It started to grow just about everywhere else.

Except, this time, it was even darker and much coarser — and no one who knew I had it expressed envy of any kind.



My body hair first became a problem for me when I was 10. One summer day at the pool, I looked down — there was pubic hair showing out of the bottom of my bathing suit. I was absolutely horrified. I had never heard of anyone having such a problem. I knew it was normal to have pubic hair, but surely this was abnormal. I felt like such a freak.

Over the next two years or so, I continued to do my favorite summer activity — swimming. However, time at the pool was now a balancing act consisting of hiding my unavoidable hairy bikini line by wrapping a towel around my hips, wearing a pair of jean shorts, or physically being in the water. Hiding my shame at being a healthy, natural woman had become an obsession.

None of my other friends had this problem. I carefully studied them from the sanctuary of short shorts. There must be something wrong with me.

I read a question in Teen magazine about shaving your pubic hair. The columnist advised against it, simply telling the questioner to “**just trim**” if anything showed past their swimsuit.

Just trim? How on earth would **“just trimming”** help if there was actual hair growing past my bikini line down my legs!? I flung the magazine across the room.

I finally raided my mother’s bathroom when I was 12, stealing a razor and banishing (for about 12 hours or so) all hair from my legs, underarms and bikini line. I was left with unattractive red bumps, but it seemed to be a definite improvement over the hair that tormented me so.

Since then I’ve attempted various methods of hair removal with limited, if any, success. My skin is dark enough to make bleaching hair look odd. Shaving irritates my skin and produces results that last less than 24 hours. I tried Nair, leaving it on twice as long as safely recommended — and no hair came off. Waxing and sugaring take off plenty of skin and cause bleeding, but the targeted hair, for the most part, stays put.

As stubborn as I am regarding control over my body hair, it appears as though my hair is even more stubborn than I am. My enemy’s persistence is never ending.

However, this isn’t to say I haven’t tried going (growing?!) with the flow. When I was 17, I decided to do an experiment: What would happen if I simply didn’t shave under my arms?

My senior year of high school, I shaved my pits twice: once for homecoming and once for prom.

None of my friends treated me any differently — although rumors that I was a lesbian and a crazy feminist did surface. They did get the feminist part right, but I was fairly sure that I dug guys.

The entire time, I only had one **“Oh My God I’m a Freak HELP!”** moment. It was during the winter, when I was making out with my first real boyfriend. He was a couple of years older, and because he didn’t attend my school, he wasn’t around to hear the crazy-feminist-lesbian-who-doesn’t-shave rumors.

Because it was winter, he had never seen me in a sleeveless top.

He started to take off my shirt — which seemed like a good idea to me, too, until I realized ... the hair! He doesn’t know about the hair! Panic set in. I had no idea what to do.

“I DON’T SHAVE MY PITS!!!”

I announced to the entire neighborhood.

“Umm, OK,” he said, looking bewildered at why this would be an issue in the first place. I guess when you’re doing fun, sexy things with someone you care about and are attracted to, underarm hair — regardless of your personal preferences — isn’t that big a deal.

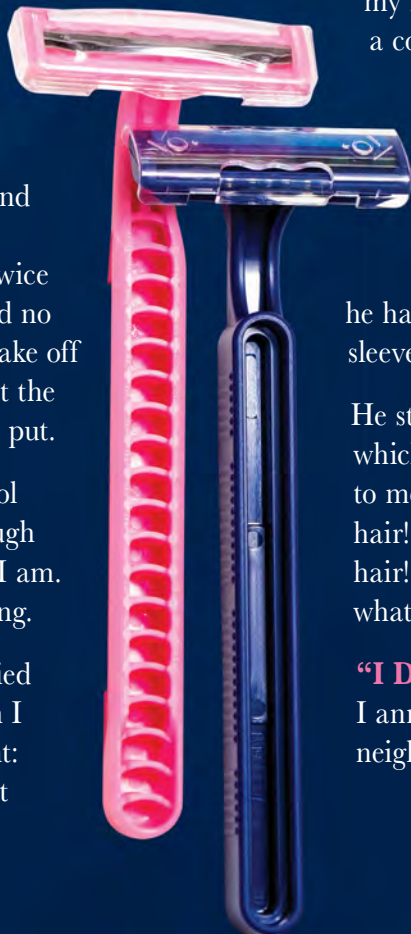
I wish I could say that was the end of my body hair woes but, in the five years since then, being hairy is something I’ve continued to struggle with. I’ve continued to feel like an ugly, hairy freak, despite the reassurance from friends and lovers that I’m fine as is, hairy, shaved or in between.

Two weeks ago, I returned to school and decided: Enough is enough.

I haven’t shaved anything anywhere for two weeks and am feeling just fine. I’d forgotten how it feels to have hair where I’m supposed to. And, just as I remember, it’s thick, dark and grows faster than the speed of light. I’m certainly not saying that I won’t ever shave again, but I’m thinking that, at least every now and then, giving up the battle with my body hair and just letting myself (and my follicles) be is the way to go.

~ Nicole

Reprinted with permission from Scarleteen
www.scarleteen.com/



IS CATCALLING ever acceptable?

As an 11-year-old, I was oblivious when I first experienced catcalling. It was a sunny June day. As I walked in a floral skirt and tank top down Fremont Street in Northeast Portland, a man probably three times my age whistled and said something that I didn't register until it was too late.

"Hey girl, nice skirt!"

I didn't even realize it was directed at me until later, which is unfortunate because I never got to stand up for myself.

Street harassment is a scary thing that girls start experiencing at a really young age.

An online survey conducted by stopstreetharassment.org showed that 99% of female respondents had experienced some form of hassling in their lives.

"I remember the first time it happened to me it really freaked me out," Harper Jensen, a junior at Northwest Academy, says. "I called my mom to come pick me up because I was having a panic attack on the street."

Why is it OK to sexualize girls' bodies? And why are we teaching our girls it's their fault because they wore the wrong thing? Why are we normalizing young girls having panic attacks because someone couldn't control their words?

Three weeks ago, I ordered velvet shorts on Amazon. I was pretty excited to wear them with some form of tights. When I came downstairs the next morning, my dad told me I couldn't wear them. It wasn't that my dad thought I was trying to say something or I was asking for it. His reasoning was that somebody was going to get the wrong idea if I wore them in public, no matter if I had tights on or not.

For me though, it didn't matter if someone got the wrong idea. I didn't feel as though I should have to change what I want to wear because someone can't control themselves.

My dad didn't know where the line was between showing too much skin and not, something my parents and I have argued about ever since I decided my body was my body and I could put on it what I wanted.

Eventually, my dad came around and told me he was either going to come up with a legitimate reason why I couldn't wear them, or he was going to let me.

I showed up to school a week later wearing them. I went to Safeway that day for lunch and, inevitably, a man probably four times my age wouldn't take his eyes off of my legs.

The worst part about that is I feel like if I hadn't been with two of my friends, the man would have said something to me rather than just staring and smiling before walking away.

Street harassment should not be something we have to go through, no matter if they think they are complimenting you or not.

When I was in seventh grade, I had been taking TriMet home for a few months. I always rode bus 77 with my friends, from a block away from my school to a few blocks from my house.

One day, near the end of the school year, my friend and I got onto the bus, sitting down next to each other in clear eyesight of the driver. At one stop, a man, clearly drunk, stumbled on. He was wearing a large trench coat with a bottle of Jack Daniels in his pocket.

We were used to people of so many different mental states coming onto the bus, but something seemed off about this man. I made eye contact with him as he walked right past the bus driver and started to walk toward me and my friend.

My stomach was doing flips at this point, and it seemed to drop into a black hole as the man came over and sat down on my lap. He reeked of whiskey, and it was starting to make me lightheaded. When he reached into his pocket, my mind flashed to all sorts of things. Does he have a knife? A gun? How fast can I get him off of me?

Luckily it wasn't a gun, but flowers ... fake, white, plastic flowers. He started to shove them in my face, saying, "These are for you, pretty girl. Smile a little."

That was one of the scariest moments of my life, and it is something that will stick with me for a long time. I still get nervous whenever I get on a TriMet bus or the MAX.

Some people didn't think my experience with that man was a big deal, or a deal at all. It was treated as if that was something I should expect to happen. In fact, more often than not, people's immediate reaction was, "Well, were you sitting in sight of the bus driver? Maybe if you had been closer it wouldn't have happened."

But I was sitting in eyesight of the bus driver, and it didn't change a thing.

There are so many forms of catcalling, from whistling to following someone, and it happens a lot more than once a month for most girls. Some street harassment can get scary and cause girls to fear for their safety. There are even instances where girls don't feel safe saying anything at all.

"I was walking down my block and there were three guys, two on my left side and one on my right," Rachel Gunnerson, a senior at Northwest Academy, says. "I had a feeling they were going to say something, you know? I had headphones in and the guy on my right was smoking a cigarette, and he actually tried to put his cigarette out on my arm to push me into the other guys."

Even though most cases of street harassment don't get violent or physical, some do. It's an ingrained fear in girls and women that a seemingly harmless whistle could turn into something more.

A defense mechanism commonly used by girls and women while walking alone is to put their keys in between their fingers to scratch or cut anyone who tries to touch, grab or overpower them.

Almost everyone agrees it's not OK to physically hurt girls, so why is it considered OK to talk to them in ways that could psychologically hurt them? We should not have to fight against other humans who sexualize our bodies, and we should not be taught we exist for the sole purpose of being objects for the entertainment of men.

It is not our fault that people look at us as objects. We can wear the shortest skirt and the lowest cut shirt, and our bodies are still our bodies.

~ Maura

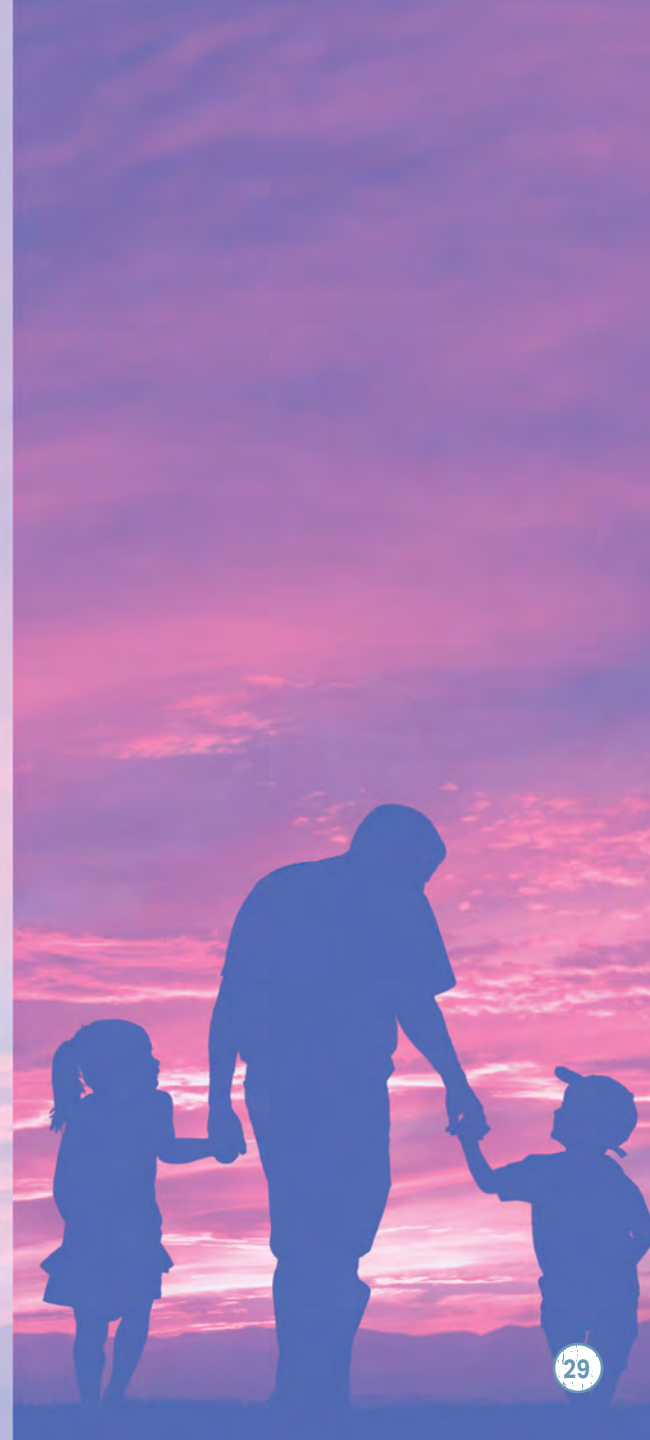
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JUST LIKE MY DAD

My brother Tom and I were toddlers when my mom got news about my dad. He was at his desk and just collapsed, head first. My dad's boss found him soon after. My mom screamed when the two old ladies from his work came over to break the news.

William, or Bill as everyone called him, died of a heart attack 13 years ago. Only later did we find out that he knew he was unwell. His doctor told him he needed to change his diet; his heart wasn't healthy. My grandfather, my dad's father, also died of a heart attack. He was warned to watch what he ate. My dad ignored the warning. He didn't want to upset my mom, so she only found out after he passed away. Mom tells me the last thing they said to each other was, "I love you."

My mom once told me Tom was her kid and I was my dad's. I was his girl, but I don't have any memories of him. It's true that it would be



different if he were still alive. I think about that a lot. I made up connections to him so many times that I started to create memories and remember them. I'll think I remember him taking me out for a walk in the snow, but that false memory probably comes from a picture in my room of the two of us in the snow.

His face was round. His ears stuck out like my brother's do. He wore glasses and his curly brown hair matches mine. I'm smiling in all the pictures where he is holding me. There's one where we're both napping on the couch together and our mouths are open, snoring in unison.

I think about whether or not it would be worse to have an actual memory of him. Maybe of a day he took me antique shopping in Hermiston with my aunt, because they liked to do that together. The sun reflecting in the windows of shops would blind us. We'd walk in and he'd run straight to the silver. He collected so much silver that we donated it to a museum when he died. My aunt would roll her eyes and then point at some old fabric she thought was pretty. I would laugh as the two bickered about prices and point to some pretty old doll or earrings I wanted.

My mom didn't want me to get earrings until I was 12. I like to think my dad would be the type that would take me to get my ears pierced and only tell my mom after. My aunt wanted to do that with me. Aunt Mary taught me to be good with money, so she would probably make me pay for the earrings myself. I hope my dad was like that.

Mom says he was smart. So smart that he ran the finances for a company after he caught someone embezzling funds. She tells me I'm smart like him because I like math and it comes easily to me. I stick my tongue out when I'm concentrating really hard on something, like my dad did. People tell me I look like him, which stings because strangers knew him better than I did. Sometimes someone will bring him up at a party. I hate when anyone talks about him when I don't ask. It's like throwing something hard at me without yelling: "Catch!" It takes so much to hold back tears, and it turns a completely fine conversation awkward. I usually force a head nod or two. I mean, I don't even know my own father because he died. That's a cruel thing to remind someone about.

One time when I was younger, my mom told me I smile like him. That was difficult to hear. I guess it was nice to know there are parts of me that come from him, but it's painful. It makes my mom happy because she knew who he was, but it just reminds me how little I did know him. He was supposed to be there when I came home from school with a bad grade, and he — not my aunt — was supposed teach me how to ride a bike.

Aunt Mary tells me about him sometimes. She offered to help my mom by taking us in on the weekends after he died. It became a tradition, and I never spent a Friday night at home. Pizza and movie nights were what my brother and I looked forward to, then Buzz Lightyear cartoons on Saturday

morning. Mornings at my aunt's house were always the best parts of the weekend; I'd run into her room and jump into her bed to listen to the stories she told. My brother always came in later, slumping up the stairs because he didn't want to miss anything his big sister was doing. Aunt Mary taught me how to bake and Uncle Ed taught Tom how to play basketball on the raggedy hoop outside.

Home was different. Tom and I had a nanny named Wendy who was round and huggable. She shaved her head and got a wig so she could donate her hair to charity, but she said something disagreeable around my parents and I didn't see her after that. Julie was the next one. She said "like" too much and was always talking, but everyone loved her. She took us out to movies and picked us up from school for five or six years. Then my mom decided she felt guilty for not being with us more often, and Julie found another job. I cried a lot the day she left, and I was pretty mad at my mom. I thought she was being selfish. I think I attached myself to our nannies in an unhealthy way. I got sad when they left each day, as if they wouldn't be there around 10 the next day. I told Julie everything about my life as an 8-year-old.

My mom was dating a nice guy she knew before my dad passed away and, by my fifth birthday, he had moved in, although I never remember him not being around the house. They didn't get married until I was 9.

Spending time with my mom seemed rare and, besides my aunt, I didn't spend much time with any other adults. My stepdad tells me I was always good at talking with adults but, looking back, I think I was kind of a brat. At school, I got out of class and visited the school counselor almost every day. I was alone most of the time at recess. I stayed quiet in class and got good grades, but not all of them were deserved.

My mom and I are a lot alike. We think alike, and often times I can finish her thoughts before she can. My stepdad and I are complete opposites. I never know what he's thinking, and sometimes it's hard for me to understand what he's trying to say. He seems to get along well with Tom. When I hang out with my brother and my mom, I have fun and it feels like family. But when my stepdad hangs out too, I feel like the black sheep. He and Tom gang up on me every chance they get. My stepdad points out how I don't like sports and everyone else does, and he and I always have fights about what we believe in.

When I came out as bisexual, it was easy to tell my mom and my brother. They didn't care. They loved me anyway. My stepdad was almost the same way, but he told me multiple times not to tell very many people. He was worried I would be discriminated against, even though I live in Portland, Oregon. The first time I asked a girl out, in eighth grade, she said yes and I was ecstatic. Him? Not so much. I was surprised he was letting me go at all. The date ended up never happening because, when she came out to her parents, they wouldn't let

her date girls. We liked each other, but she wasn't willing to disappoint her parents.

Sure, I love my stepdad. We have pleasant conversations sometimes, and we always get along right after he comes back from a long trip and I haven't seen him in a while. He raised me for part of my life, but I don't think it was anything close to what living with my real dad would have been like. I think about summer nights when the family sits around the fireplace in our living room and what it would be like if my dad were there. We would watch one of his favorite movies. My mom would be happy and she would smile, nuzzling her head on his shoulder. Tom would laugh at all the jokes in the movie my dad laughed at. Maybe it would be a slapstick comedy or a fancy film noir from the '40s. Maybe I would think it was boring, but I wouldn't mind falling asleep in his lap while he stroked my hair. I could hear him breathe, his laughter causing his chest to rise and the air would shake each time he did.

My brother is one of my best friends. My favorite part of the night is cleaning up the kitchen after dinner with him, because we have so many inside jokes we throw back and forth. He never ceases to make me laugh. Tom tried out for a basketball team near the start of the school year. He had a health exam, which uncovered something strange with his heart. My mom took him to the doctor the next

day, and luckily, they found nothing. But my dad and his dad both died in their mid-40s, and my family has a history of heart problems. It scares me so much that Tom could have an issue later in life. Tom hopes to play basketball in college, so hopefully he will have regular checkups when he's older. There's no telling what my mom or I would do if anything comes up with Tom's heart. No doubt we would both give him lectures about him eating pizza so often.

I'll never know my dad's voice. I won't know the pitch, or the things he repeated every day, or his laugh, or what it was like when he was around. I don't know what sound his footsteps make when they go downstairs, but I can place my brother's and my mom's. I won't know the faces he made when he's happy. What scares me more than anything is I know the laugh of someone who I've only known for a week but not my father's. I will never know my own father.

~ Elena

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Note: *Original article was edited for length.*

What's your money personality?

Directions: For each question, pick one answer you relate to the most. Make note of the letter of each answer you pick. You will need these letters to figure out your results.

NOTE:

This quiz is for entertainment and is meant to spark your interest in how you think about money. It isn't legal financial advice. If you are interested in learning more about finance, we recommend talking to a parent, guardian or trusted adult or visiting <https://bettermoneyhabits.bankofamerica.com/en> and <https://www.moneyunder30.com>.

How does spending money make you feel?

- A.) Spending money makes me feel nervous.
- B.) I prefer to save money to spend on things in the future.
- C.) I enjoy spending money I have worked hard for.
- D.) Spending money makes me feel good.
- E.) Spending money makes me feel important.

Why do you save money?

- A.)** I save money because it makes me feel secure.
- B.)** I save money so I don't have to buy wish list items using a credit card.
- C.)** I have little or no savings.
- D.)** I don't mind working to pay for things, but I would rather have them now.
- E.)** I don't save money. I am hoping to win the lottery.

Which statement most resembles your money habits?

- A.)** I will not buy anything without shopping for the best bargain.
- B.)** I save 10% of every allowance or paycheck I get.
- C.)** I want nice things, and I think about them until I can afford them.
- D.)** I often borrow up to my credit limit.
- E.)** I had to put all my debt together and get rid of my credit card.

How would you describe your spending or saving habits?

- A.)** I never throw away leftovers.
- B.)** I bring my own lunch to school or work most days.
- C.)** I buy whatever I can afford.
- D.)** I buy clothes in all of the latest styles.
- E.)** I buy more expensive things when I have more money and less expensive things when I have less money.

Which statement is more like what you would do?

- A.)** I go across town to do my grocery shopping at a store with more discounts.
- B.)** I don't go shopping.
- C.)** I always have one major debt I am trying to pay off.
- D.)** I take a lot of trips or go to a lot of concerts.
- E.)** I owe money to a lot of different people.

Regarding money habits, which statement is most like you?

- A.)** I would rather use more blankets in the winter and open the window in the summer than turn on the heat or AC.
- B.)** I don't buy anything new when the old one is still usable.
- C.)** I always pay my bills on time.
- D.)** I love to treat my friends and leave big tips.
- E.)** I agree to buy things even when I don't have money to pay for them.

What's your money personality?

Results:

Mostly A – You are a big saver.

You prefer to minimize any and all spending even if it requires extra work on your part. You are not concerned with being on trend. You are resourceful and creative, but you don't underestimate the value of your time. Sometimes your resourcefulness may cost you more in the long run.

Mostly B – You are a conscious consumer.

You prefer to pay your future self first. You do your research before you make any big purchases and you probably enjoy thrifting. You are cost conscious and money smart, but your future focus can prevent you from enjoying the present. Don't be afraid to mindfully "splurge" on present wants and needs.

Mostly C – You are a casual consumer.

You prefer to make financial decisions as your income changes. You are most like the average consumer who works to manage their money in the now. However, your lack of savings can have negative effects in the future. Try to save a little bit of money each month for emergencies and financial goals.

Mostly D – You are a big spender.

You prefer to live life to its fullest in the here and now. You love to be on trend and are willing to spend money on friends and family. However, it can come at a cost if your impulses lead you to buy things on credit. It could be helpful to sit down and take a deeper look at your expenses, debts and basic needs.

Mostly E – You are an overspender.

You prefer to view money as a status symbol. You often live way beyond your means and changes in income have drastic impacts on your day-to-day living. It could be helpful to spend time re-evaluating your relationship with money and work to better manage your expenses and debts.

~ Deanna

Written for The Rational Enquirer

Learning about myself and others through community service

In high school, people assume volunteering is just hours we need to be able to graduate. Community service is more than just hours. For me it's about helping and bringing benefits to people around me.

I performed my community service with Rahab's Sisters, which offers radical hospitality to vulnerable and exploited women in the Portland metro area, especially those who have been affected by the sex industry, domestic violence, poverty, substance abuse and homelessness. Rahab's Sisters takes advantage of its location on Southeast 82nd at Saints Peter and Paul Episcopal Church. The organization's vision is for all women to be safe from physical and sexual exploitation in the city. They open their doors on Friday nights to offer a warm safe environment and conversation, along with food, hot coffee and personal hygiene necessities.

Throughout my junior year, I took pleasure in how much I learned at Rahab's Sisters. On my first day, I volunteered as part of a girls' club at my high school by serving dinner to women and their children. After, we split into teams to organize the clothing closet.

My last visit at the organization was my favorite volunteer night because I was able to have personal conversations with the women. Rahab's Sisters was having a spa and beauty night for all women to feel relaxed. My job was simply to paint their nails. However, there was more to that job. While I was painting their nails, we talked about how our day had been, our background, stories and family. One of my clients that night was a Vietnamese woman, so we both communicated in our mother tongue language. When I was painting her fingernails, there were many leftover scars. She shared those scars with me, coming from picking up broken glasses on the streets when she lived in Vietnam. She also gave me advice on what I should value in my life, including my family, and to always love myself before I love someone else.

Toward the end of the night, the volunteers were invited to have dinner. Nikki, Clara and I were eating and talking about our life. I asked Nikki, "What are you doing when you get home?" She replied, "I will shower first, then watch TV and go to sleep." During our conversation, a woman across the table joined us by saying,

"You guys are so lucky to have a place to shower, a bed to sleep in and a home to live in. Please don't take it for granted. Be thankful for what you're having right now. I am homeless by choice, but I do regret it sometimes."

After that lady left the dining table, Nikki and I both looked at each other because we felt guilty and sorry for what that woman has to face every day. What made this volunteering night so memorable was each woman I talked to had a different story to share. Each of these women showed me their vulnerable side. How they deal with their life problems is so unique and empowering for me as a teenager.

The service at Rahab's Sisters taught me the stereotype is not true that all women who are struggling in life have chosen that path. When women come to this organization on Friday nights, the majority of them are financially and emotionally unstable. When I researched these women's issues, I found it was related to the "feminization of poverty" – where women are especially affected by being houseless, jobless and hopeless about their future. For example, a young woman told me how she regrets not going to school and not working hard enough for her family.

After the conversation, I realized how poverty continues when women lack the tools to empower themselves and are

behind in education. It is essential they have a knowledgeable foundation in order to stay out of poverty.

Rahab's Sisters is mostly run by volunteers and not by staff, so that made me feel like we were a big family more than a community; since these volunteers are women, we have common values and intentions in helping these women have human dignity and respect, and to be able to get back up on their feet again.

Another huge takeaway from this service is how I see the word "hope" and "believe" portrayed in the lives of these women during bad and good times. They each believe in themselves that they are strong and capable of solving their own problems no matter how challenging. It is important to have that light of hope that the future can get better, especially when God is always there to protect.

As I move through life, I think I will always be involved in community service. Not just because I think it is important, but because it is something I enjoy and look forward to. I love bringing joy and, through community service, I feel I can accomplish that. By volunteering at Rahab's Sisters for more than a year, I learned more about myself as well as my career path in becoming a businesswoman, and how I can advocate for these women who are still facing feminization of poverty in our society. This community service is one of my biggest commitments in life so far as a teenager.

– Y

Oregon high school student

ABORTION

Have you ever been watching TV and your favorite character had an abortion? Do you wonder what actually happens in the operating room?

An abortion is a procedure that terminates a pregnancy. Many women have these in their lifetimes. However, it is a very controversial subject. It is important to always keep an open mind and accept that someone else's opinion might differ from yours.

If you or someone you care about has ever had an abortion or is planning to, there is no reason to be ashamed. If you are having trouble coming to terms with your abortion decision, there are many hotlines that can help you.

Before a patient has an abortion, they will first talk to a nurse, doctor or health center counselor about whether abortion is the right choice for them. They will then get an exam, lab tests and an ultrasound to see how far along they are in their pregnancy.

For more information about abortion care, talk to your medical provider. This article provides medical information from Planned Parenthood.

During abortion care, the patient will receive medicine to help with cramping and they might get sedated. With some types of sedation they are awake and relaxed, and with others the patient is completely asleep. They will also receive antibiotics to help prevent infection. A nurse or doctor will then give the patient medication to help open the cervix before the abortion. Sometimes the nurse or doctor will use small dilator sticks called laminaria, which they will insert into the patient a day or a few hours before the procedure. The laminaria will help stretch open the patient's cervix.

During the procedure, a staff member will help the doctor or nurse and the patient. The doctor or nurse will examine the patient's uterus, put a speculum in to see the patient's vagina and inject a numbing medication into or near the patient's cervix. The doctor or nurse will stretch the opening of the patient's cervix with dilation rods and insert a small tube through the cervix into the patient's uterus. The doctor or nurse then uses a small hand-held suction device or machine to gently take the pregnancy tissue out of the uterus. They might also use a small surgical instrument, called a curette, to ensure the uterus is completely empty.

Abortions feel different for everyone who has them. It can be super painful or just a little bit uncomfortable. This can depend on which medication the patient has received and also how far along in the pregnancy they are. The doctors and nurses are not only there to complete the procedure but also to help make sure the patient is as comfortable as they can be. It is normal to have some bleeding and cramping after the abortion procedure.

It is also vital to note that abortion is a very controversial subject and each circumstance is different. Everyone is entitled to their own opinions and values, so it is important to not judge anyone for their views on the topic. If someone you know has had one, don't shame them for it. They are also a person who has an opinion, just like you.

– Elliana

Oregon high school student

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Some abortion hotlines:

All-Options

Connect with All-Options if you are pregnant and unsure how to feel or what to do next, or you want to talk about a past or current experience with abortion, adoption, parenting, infertility, pregnancy or pregnancy loss.

<https://www.all-options.org/>

888-493-0092

National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF)

NAAF connects you to organizations that can support your financial and logistical needs as you arrange for your abortion.

<https://abortionfunds.org/>

The Northwest Abortion Access Fund

This organization serves Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska.

Trained, compassionate volunteer advocates run its toll-free hotline.

www.nwaafund.org

866-NWAAF10 (866-692-2310)

Oregon Reproductive Health Services

Find a clinic in Oregon for reproductive health care services including abortion care clinics.

www.healthoregon.org/rhclinics





LOVE

SELF-CARE EVERYONE

WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

Self-care is more than just bath bombs and sheet masks. Simply put, self-care is caring for yourself (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). It is any activity that brings you joy, is relaxing, and allows you to take care of your mental, emotional and physical health.

Self-care is for everyone. It isn't girly or feminine, it is about taking care of yourself. It helps you reduce the negative effects of stress, while helping you refocus on what is important. Self-care isn't selfish because it is key to living a healthy and balanced life.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Self-care looks different for everyone. It is not what people think you should do; it is whatever fuels your soul. Self-care can also look different throughout different points in your life. It doesn't have to be expensive or time-consuming. It can be as simple as taking some time to breathe or a large commitment such as talking to a therapist or regularly visiting the doctor.

Self-care is about getting to know yourself. I like to practice self-care by having a mini dance party or cleaning up my room or social media feeds. Decluttering those spaces also helps me declutter my mind so I can focus on my tasks and my mental health.

Self-care can be a distraction, a way to create space to talk or think through things that are bothering you, or a way to maintain or improve your health.

FINDING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

Want to practice self-care but aren't sure what's right for you? Start by making a list of things (big and small) that bring you joy, are relaxing and help you take care of your health. Self-care isn't something you do once and are done. Aim to practice some self-care every day.

Be sure to check out the self-care bingo for some more inspiration!

~ Deanna

Written for the Rational Enquirer



HOW MANY HAVE YOU DONE IN THE LAST WEEK?

Getting five in a row is great. However, marking any one of these activities is a reason to shout “BINGO!”

Self-care is what we do to take care of our physical, emotional, mental and even spiritual health. Talk to a health care or mental health care provider about your specific needs.

SELF-CARE BINGO

Keep a journal	Stay hydrated	Celebrate small achievements	Take a break	Hug a loved one
Ask for help	Declutter your digital and physical spaces	Talk to a good friend	Practice a hobby	Go for a walk, ride or hike
Read a book	Sweat it out!	 Free space (You deserve it!)	Disconnect from your phone for an hour	Spa day!
Play with a pet	Stretch	Eat something healthy	Cry it out	Practice self-compassion
Give yourself a compliment	Get 7–9 hours of sleep	Listen to music	Care for a plant	Breathe/meditate



You can have a mental health condition and *a healthy relationship too*

It can be hard to talk about mental health in our society, and even more so with someone you're excited about dating. I've dealt with depression and anxiety most of my life and received a bipolar II diagnosis at age 22, which explained why I felt so down some days and high-strung on others. Finally, I was able to connect with the tools I needed to balance all of that out, but I felt like I couldn't talk to my partner about any of it. What if they couldn't handle it? What if it scared them off?

Despite how common mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression are, mental illnesses are just as stigmatized today as they were years ago. I cannot count how many times I've been labeled in a way that felt diminishing yet familiar all at once.

"Amanda, you're acting crazy."

"Ugh, why are you such a basket case?!"

Whether the people that said this knew it or not, casual remarks like these kept me from advocating for my needs in most of my relationships and kept me locked in unhealthy romantic relationships because I believed my mental health conditions made me a burden.

It took me years to understand my mental health conditions did not define me, and that a better understanding of them could help me and my partner love each other better. The secret to balancing a healthy relationship and mental health condition? Figure out what you need to stay well and talk to your partner about it — because everyone deserves a healthy relationship. These five tips will help you learn the ingredients of a healthy relationship while dealing with a mental health condition.



Learn to love yourself better.

I'll let you in on a little secret — mental illness does not make you undatable. The world can trick us into thinking our mental health conditions are a barrier to having a great relationship with a loving partner. Just like someone with a physical disability or illness, people with a mental illness have to take care of themselves differently, which is not a bad thing! It's an invitation to get to know yourself and your needs really well and be thoughtful in meeting those needs, whether it's scheduling extra time with a counselor when you're having a tough time or skipping a party to recharge at home.



Monitor negative self-talk.

There is still a ton of stigma associated with people that have mental illnesses, which can make it really tempting to keep it a secret. Eventually, the stigma associated with mental health illness caused me to develop negative self-talk about my conditions, which often kept me from speaking up about my needs in my relationships. I figured a partner would lose interest in me once they learned I battled depression, since the rest of the world had already given me that impression. To alleviate this, Child Mind Institute psychologist Alexandra Hamlet, Psy.D., suggests reframing any negative thoughts related to your mental illness.




“Make it less black and white,” she says. The truth is, “Your mental health condition is one piece of you — not all of you. A healthier way to think about it would be, ‘I struggle with mental health and I’m worthy of having a healthy relationship.’ Both are true!”

Practice [healthy] communication.

Getting on the same page with your partner can be difficult — even for the most loving couples! But people in truly happy and healthy relationships know that making open communication the heart of their relationship is key to both celebrating the good moments and getting through the tough stuff.

Healthy communication means you and your partner are comfortable speaking freely and honestly about the good, the bad and the ugly of your relationship without fear of being judged or shut down by each other. This is especially crucial when you have a mental health condition because your well-being may depend on being able to speak up when you need help, need some space or just have something on your mind.

None of us are mind readers! Letting your partner in on things can help them help you. Though your partner rushing to a problem-solving technique or assuming they understand what



you are going through can “make you feel invalidated,” Dr. Hamlet says, it is a classic mistake people make when trying to support their partner with a mental health condition.

When this happens, you have to “do your best to have patience with them if they need you to explain and clarify things so you can build a deeper understanding with each other.” Supporting someone with a mental health condition may be a whole new world for your partner, which is totally okay! It just opens up a new way for you to learn and grow together.

4

Embrace your independence.

It’s healthy to have a life that doesn’t revolve around your partner! Dr. Hamlet says, “Independence and doing your own thing can help you avoid unnecessary stress in your relationship, especially when you need extra support because of your mental health.” Of course, finding an inner balance between independence and a healthy connection with your partner is key.


Know that having your own life doesn’t mean you aren’t devoted to your partner. Having a therapist and support team isn’t a handicap, but your partner trying to be all of that could turn

into one. Caring for yourself and your mental illness is a team effort, and rightly so! There may be hobbies you need to do to stay balanced that aren’t your partner’s vibe. You may need to go on hikes to clear your head, while your partner may be more “indoorsy.” That’s OK! Again, having different ways of recharging doesn’t mean you aren’t compatible; it just means you’re two independent people learning to live life together.

5

Have a support plan.

Your partner may be a really fantastic, supportive person, but they shouldn’t be your only support. With a mental health condition comes an invitation to figure out what helps you get through difficult moments. I call this my wellness plan. It includes everything from getting pep talks from my best friends via group text, to going to hot yoga and therapy, to programming Alexa to remind me to take my medication in the morning. Dr. Hamlet calls this “emotional regulation” — she says it’s important to make sure you have ways to balance your feelings rather than always turning to your partner to solve every problem.



“They can’t be on call to neutralize every negative emotion, and it’s not fair or healthy for you to expect them to,” says Dr. Hamlet. In other words, think of doctors, therapists and other helpers (such as friends and family) as members of your personal network of support. They are there to support you in ways your partner simply may not have the tools for, such as helping you tell if your medication is helping you the way it is supposed to, or teaching you coping skills that will help clear your head if you’re having a hard time with anxiety.

Thrive in your relationships

The wise sage Drake once said, “Know yourself; know your worth,” and it’s good advice when it comes to navigating relationships. Even if your partner can’t relate to having a mental health

condition, they can still support you in taking care of yourself, and you can contribute wonderful things to the relationship as well!

Whether it’s obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), depression, a mood disorder or something else that challenges you in some way, you can have that and a relationship with a partner who supports you with care and compassion. Maintaining a healthy relationship takes work and effort for all of us. Mental health is just one of many things we may deal with in life, so try not to see it as something that will prevent you from being able to thrive.

Things such as depression and anxiety are extremely common in society — so know you’re not alone in trying to figure this out. Your mental health may be frustrating and throw you curveballs every now and then, but it certainly doesn’t mean you and your partner can’t learn how to knock your relationship out of the park.

~ **Amanda**

Writers Corps member



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www.joinonelove.org



When your inner critic is giving you a tough time


There's a gap between how you see yourself and how you think you "should" be. This gap is the playground of your inner critic.

Everyone has an inner critic who says in a hundred different ways, "You're not good enough." The critic is fed by negative messages society sends you about who you "need" to be in order to be worthy, smart, successful, rich, attractive, popular.

The critic can be especially loud in people experiencing anxiety or depression. Turning against yourself is one of the cruelest features of these conditions.

How to start to change your relationship with yourself

Silencing your critic is difficult to do because it's probably been with you since childhood. Your critic may have even convinced you that you need it in order to stay motivated and not get lazy. But the benefits of starting a kinder relationship with yourself can be life-changing.



Here are six things to remind yourself when your critic is giving you a hard time:

1

Having an inner critic is not the issue.

The issue is believing what your inner critic says to you and acting on its advice. Work on getting some distance from your critic.

2

Write down your self-critical thoughts as if they were coming from someone else:

“you’re incompetent,” “you’re ugly.” How would you argue back if a stranger said this to you or someone you cared about?

3

If you’re constantly looking for information that confirms you’re not good enough, you’ll find it.

Focus your attention elsewhere on the things you’re doing well. Keep a journal and, each night, write down three things you did well that day. Look at these notes whenever your critic is really loud.

4

You can’t be everyone. Notice when you’re taking your own strengths for granted and focusing on what others do better than you. It’s hard to see your own skills because they’ve been with you for so long, and you think everyone has them. But they don’t.

5

Think about the faults of someone you admire.

How should they talk to themselves about these? What would that sound like for you?

6

Be a lifelong learner. Making a mistake doesn’t confirm your worst fears about yourself. View mistakes as learning opportunities. View yourself as someone who is always growing. Facing difficulties helps you develop the skills to bounce back and succeed next time.

Accepting your imperfections is one of the great challenges of life. Find tactics that work for you and return to them during difficult days when your critic is strong, stubborn and convincing.

A moment of self-compassion can push your critic from the driver’s seat into the back seat. You can still hear it, but it’s no longer steering your journey.

~ Reprinted with permission from Beyond Blue at www.beyondblue.org.au.



What is love?

Love ... is weird.

It can mean one thing,
and then another.

Love ... is a word.

Some use it freely, others
use it sparingly.

Love ... is passion.

Something you would die
for, that you won't let go of.

Love ... is connection.

Connecting on a deeper
level, one you can't
even touch.

Love ... is change.

Making yourself better,
improving in little
ways unconsciously.

Love ... is acceptance.

Learning to love yourself,
for who you are and who
you love.

Love ... is dangerous.

A game we have all in
or nothing in, we have
to try unconditionally.

Love ... is chance.

A new life, a new chapter
to rebuild.

What is love?

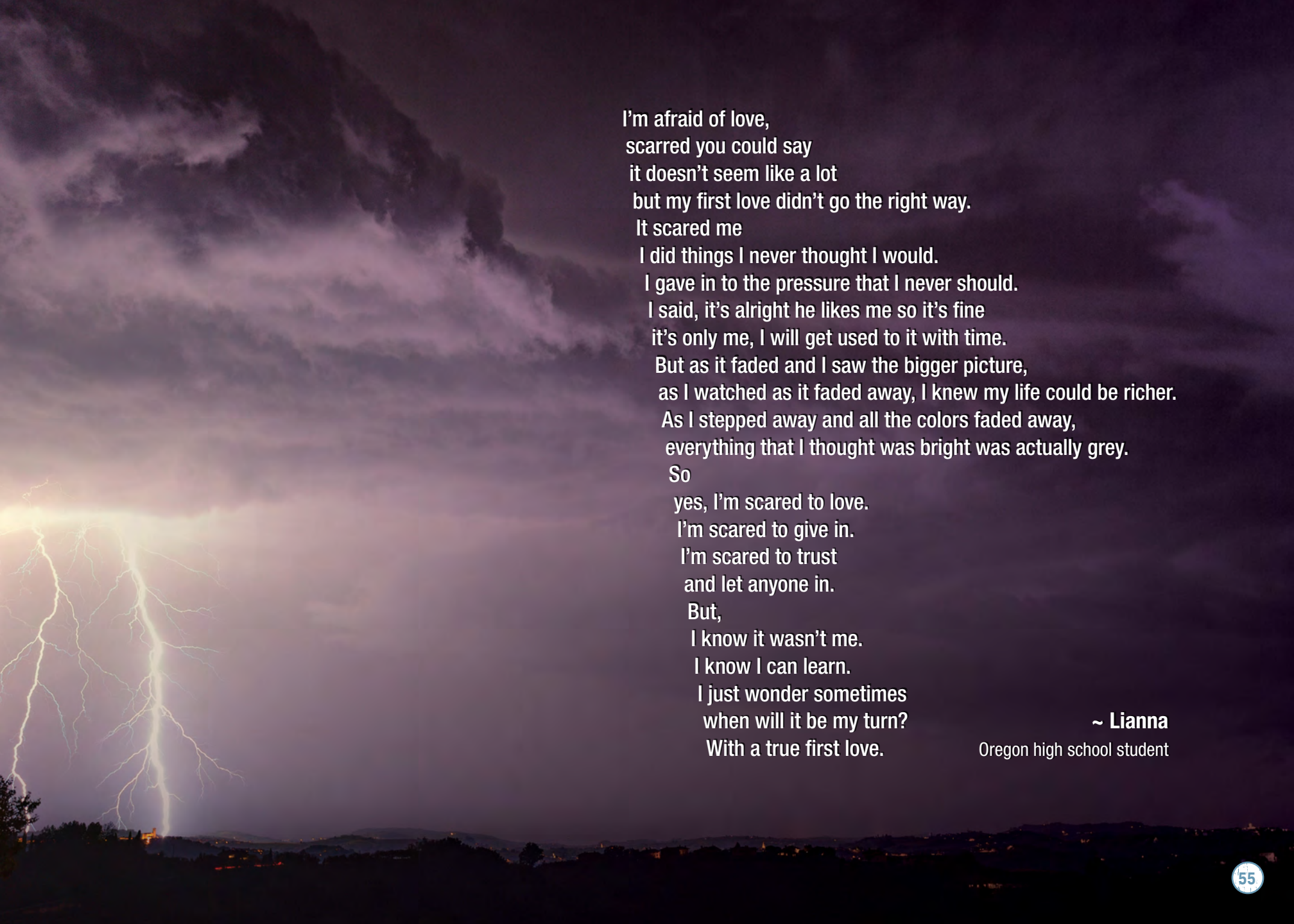
Love is love.

If only love were as perfect
as this moment.

~ **Lianna**

Oregon high school student

Africid



I'm afraid of love,
scarred you could say
it doesn't seem like a lot
but my first love didn't go the right way.
It scared me
I did things I never thought I would.
I gave in to the pressure that I never should.
I said, it's alright he likes me so it's fine
it's only me, I will get used to it with time.
But as it faded and I saw the bigger picture,
as I watched as it faded away, I knew my life could be richer.
As I stepped away and all the colors faded away,
everything that I thought was bright was actually grey.
So
yes, I'm scared to love.
I'm scared to give in.
I'm scared to trust
and let anyone in.
But,
I know it wasn't me.
I know I can learn.
I just wonder sometimes
when will it be my turn?
With a true first love.

~ Lianna

Oregon high school student

8 ways to get over a breakup

1

Trust your decision to break up. Don't rethink your decisions based on feelings of being alone or feeling guilty. The relationship ended for a valid reason. You don't want to be indecisive, going back and forth and back into a bad relationship that wasn't working for you or your ex. Acknowledge this feeling of being alone can be hard and trust the decision to break up was best for you.

2

Go cold turkey. Don't look at your ex's Instagram, Facebook or tweets. Don't move immediately into the friend zone with your ex and continue to talk, text and spend time with them. You need to give it time. You are still going to have those real emotions for them and you need to give yourself space.

3

Avoid revenge. After a breakup you will likely feel hurt, angry or sad. You may feel lied to or that your ex was deceitful. Learn from the breakup, but don't harness all your energy toward trying to hurt your ex or get revenge. Let it go and focus on taking time for yourself.



4

Don't become a detective of the past. After a breakup, you may find yourself trying to piece together all the clues you missed. Going through the details of what went wrong is only helpful if you want to learn from it and not repeat the past in your next relationship. But do not confront your ex to hash out all the details of possible lies and deceit. This is only wasting your time and energy and feeding your feelings of being mad or frustrated.

5

Write down your feelings. Writing things down is good for you to process and purge feelings. Get those things out and purge your thoughts and feelings through writing. Do it just for yourself; don't give what you write to your ex. Writing this out is for you to feel better and move forward. It's not for revenge or a way to show your ex how hurt you are or what they did wrong.

6

Get yourself together. Don't jump back into dating too quickly looking for a rebound. You'll start making the same mistakes you did with your ex because you are operating off insecurity, and you are trying to make yourself feel better in the short term. Take time for yourself and you'll start out your next relationship in a better place instead of starting a relationship from a dysfunctional place of self-doubt.

7

Get rid of memory triggers. Give away or get rid of gifts and items that consistently remind you of your ex because they will continue to bring up hard feelings. If you have things you cannot get rid of, work through those emotions. Acknowledge the feelings that come up for you can be hard.

8

Remind yourself of the negatives. Sometimes you may start thinking about all the good things about your ex. But remember, there's a reason you broke up. Instead of reminiscing about all the good things, remember the negatives too. Reminding yourself of why you broke up by looking at the negatives will help you move on. Do this for yourself. Don't share your negative memories with your ex to hurt them or get back at them.

~ Tariq Elite Nasheed Podcasts

Episode 409

Mack Lessons Radio

7 tips

for handling conflict in your relationship

Disagreements happen in all relationships, but what matters is how they are dealt with. The way you deal with an issue with your partner can determine if your relationship is healthy or unhealthy, so here are some tips to keep in mind that will help you handle your next argument in a healthy way.

1 Create a welcoming environment for open communication.

In a healthy relationship, you and your partner can communicate openly about what is bothering you and what is going well in the relationship. It's important to not only talk about the problems in the relationship, but also the positives so no one feels like they are doing everything wrong. If you feel like you can't talk openly about important things — such as life issues, money, aspirations and anything big picture that scares or matters to you — that is a sign your relationship may be unhealthy. If you can't express your feelings without fear of retaliation from your partner or their getting overly upset and defensive, you may be in an abusive relationship.

2

Maintain a calm and respectful demeanor during heated conversations.

Don't cross lines and start insulting your partner. Keep the focus of the dispute on the issue at hand and don't bring personal jibes and put-downs into it. Also, if your partner consistently gets very heated or aggressive or starts cursing, those are signs your relationship may be abusive. No matter what caused the argument, no one should yell at you, curse or otherwise make you feel uncomfortable and/or scared when you are arguing. You should never feel like you are being attacked or need to tread carefully to not make your partner any angrier.

3

Get to the root of the problem.

Sometimes when you argue with your partner it is because someone's needs are not being met. If it seems like your partner is sweating the small stuff, take a moment to evaluate whether there is a larger issue at hand. For instance, if your partner is upset that you are partying in the middle of the week, they might want

you to designate more time for your relationship or be worried about you keeping your grades up. Consider things from your partner's point of view and put yourself in their shoes — how would you feel if the roles were reversed? Be understanding of your partner instead of just trying to push your point across.

4

Watch out for arguments that stem from a need for control.

If you feel like your partner may be trying to control what you do, that is a **big** red flag. If your partner is mad that you text people of the opposite sex, doesn't like you prioritizing school and responsibilities over them, pressures you to hook up with them or tries to limit the time you spend with friends — those are signs your partner may be trying to control you. Even if they try to rationalize it by saying, "I'm just over-protective," "It's my trust issues" or "It's because I love you," no one should ever try to control you, especially not your partner. If any of these behaviors sound familiar, your relationship may be abusive and you should seek help.

5 Find some middle ground.

Finding a balance between what both partners want and are comfortable with is very important. If you both care about making the relationship work, you will come to an agreement on things without feeling like you are making huge sacrifices for your relationship. Compromising is a key way to resolve conflicts, and finding a middle ground might be easier than you think! If you are arguing about spending time with your friends or your partner's friends, alternate days to spend time with each friend group or do your own thing for a night. If you feel like your partner is always eating all your food, ask them to chip in the next time you go grocery shopping.

6 Agree to disagree and choose your battles.

Sometimes we need to consider whether what we are fighting about is really worth arguing over. Is it just a matter of what to eat for dinner? Sharing the covers? What your next Netflix binge should be? If the problem is small, sometimes it's best to just drop it. If you won't be mad about it next week, it's probably not worth your energy. You won't agree with your partner on absolutely everything. However, if you feel like the issue is too big to drop, you should contemplate if you and your partner are really compatible.

7 Consider if the issue is resolvable or not.

Sometimes we argue with our partner about something that is **really** big and affects our lives — such as transferring schools, if you do or don't want kids, and where to live when you graduate. If you feel like you will need to sacrifice your beliefs, morals or dreams to make the relationship work, you should think about whether it is worth it to stay in this relationship. For a relationship to succeed, you and your partner should see eye-to-eye on the bigger picture. Having aligned goals, dreams, values and beliefs is a major part of being compatible with someone.

If you keep these tips in mind during your next argument, you'll be sure to handle your future conflicts in a healthy and constructive way. No one wants to be like Noah and Allie from "The Notebook" — never agreeing on anything and fighting all the time — even if it means you get to turn into birds together in the end. Constant arguing, overly heated battles and fights that spiral out of control are all signs of an unhealthy relationship.

If you or someone you know may be in an unhealthy relationship, check out www.joinonelove.org for more information.



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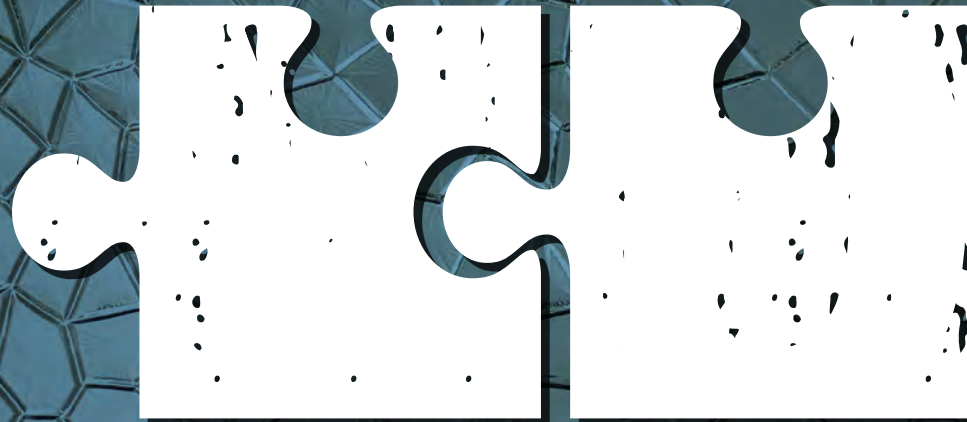
<https://www.joinonelove.org>

HEARTBREAK

One day they're there the next day they're not
All that we had forgotten and lost
What is it that you wanted from me?
To make me happy, make me believe everything was good
Then out of nowhere keep me from being with you
The laughs, the smiles, the tears
One day they're there the next day they're not
All that we had forgotten and lost
What happened to all those late nights?
Let's go get food, let's go on a loop
Your hands on mine and our lips pressed too
The sneaking around, the secrets we hid
One day they're there the next day they're not
All that we had forgotten and lost

~ Alba
Oregon high school student





SEX

SAFETY AROUND ANAL SEX

Even though it's not likely that someone will get pregnant by having anal sex, it is still important to be safe as if you were having vaginal sex.*

Most people think of anal as a pleasurable way of having sex without the repercussion of pregnancy, but most are unaware of the other consequences from it. These consequences include HIV, colon issues and bacteria spreading if it is performed wrong or the partners are not careful. No one wants to deal with any of these issues. That's why it's crucial to know the safety precautions around anal sex.

Studies show that anal intercourse is actually the riskiest form of sexual activity. This is because penetration can cause the tissue to tear in your anus, allowing bad viruses and bacteria to enter the bloodstream. When these organisms enter your blood, they can cause a sexually transmitted disease (STD) such as HIV. To prevent tissue from tearing, it's important to use lube, because the anus doesn't naturally have lubrication. It is also very helpful to use a condom for protection from STDs. You can purchase lube from a local drug store and get tested at a Planned Parenthood, which can also provide free condoms. You can book a testing appointment online at [plannedparenthood.org](https://www.plannedparenthood.org) or call 800-230-PLAN. Planned Parenthood is a great resource because they have everything to keep you sexually healthy – from birth control to treatment for STDs.

For more information about safe sex, talk to your medical provider.

* Anal sex doesn't cause pregnancy unless semen spills out into the vagina. However, both anal and oral sex can spread STDs. You can help prevent STDs by using a condom during anal sex, and condoms or dental dams during oral sex.

Source: Planned Parenthood
<https://www.plannedparenthood.org>

A big health issue around anal intercourse is having vaginal sex right after, which can then transmit infections into the vaginal region. This causes a problem because the bacteria from your anus then enters your vagina, giving most people with a vagina a urinary tract infection or worse. Also, having oral sex after anal intercourse can put you at risk for hepatitis, herpes, HPV and other serious infections. To prevent bacteria from spreading, it is necessary to put on a new condom before having vaginal or oral sex after having anal. To learn more about keeping yourself and your partner safe, visit teenclinic.org/anal-sex or text Planned Parenthood at “PPNOW” to 774636 for any questions about sexually transmitted infections. Teen Clinic is a valid source, especially for people to learn better techniques for safety and general information about sex.

It’s a teen’s decision to have sex, which also makes it their responsibility. This means they should be respectful to not just their partner but also themselves. They can do this by knowing their limits and safety guidelines. Also, if a teen is sexually active, it would be responsible to get a strong type of birth control and be tested often for STDs. With anal sex, personal responsibility is essential because it is such a risky way of having intercourse. As a young adult, it’s important to stay healthy. You can only do that

by keeping well and staying away from danger. That’s why if you do have anal, you should be prepared and protected from the dangers it could bring.

To answer more questions or get basic information, go to advocatesforyouth.org. Advocates for Youth is a great place to start learning about healthy sex and where to find programs for safety or health.

~ **Mallory**

Oregon high school student

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Porn: **fact** or **fiction**

Jane and Shambricia talk about videos and images you may see on the internet or on social media.



Jane: Oh wow, that's so big. I never knew it could be so huge.



Shambricia: Hey Jane, what are you looking at?



Jane: Oh my gosh, you have to come here and see this. It's pictures of yesterday's winners of the school annual vegetable growing contest.

I wonder how long the longest cucumber in the world is? Hey, that's not a cucumber!



Sometimes when you are on the internet, you might accidentally or intentionally end up on a website that features pornography, sometimes called porn.

Being curious about sex and looking at pictures or films of naked bodies or people engaging in sexual behaviors is perfectly normal. **But** you have to remember that porn contains some misleading messages, like bigger is better when it comes to breasts, penises or the duration of sex. Pornography often shows women as only existing to give men pleasure.

Lastly, porn might make you think that being sexual with another person has **nothing** to do with having an **intimate, trustful** or **respectful relationship**. Pornography can also have violent images or strange looking behaviors that may be scary or disturbing.

Don't forget, porn is like many movies: it's completely made up, a fantasy that could never exist in real life and **does not show realistic, healthy, intimate or loving sexual relationships** between two equal partners.

If you do come across something on the internet that makes you feel **uncomfortable or confused**, **talk to an adult that you trust**.

Adapted from the YouTube video "Porn: Fact or Fiction" with permission from [AMAZE.org](https://www AMAZE.org).

[AMAZE.org](https://www AMAZE.org) has a variety of educational YouTube videos on sexual health including puberty, healthy relationships, sexual orientation, gender identity, personal safety, HIV/STDs, pregnancy and reproduction.



What **Birth Control Method** is your **Sign?**

**This horoscope presents a fun way to think about birth control methods.
However, it is not how you should decide your birth control method.
Talk to a health care provider about the best method for you.**

For facts about birth control methods, go to
plannedparenthood.org/learn/birth-control and bedsider.org/methods.

✦ ✦ ✦ ARIES ✦ ✦ ✦



You are an IUD. As the first sign in the zodiac you act as a gatekeeper, only allowing what you want into your life. Much like an IUD, you are decisive, and you know what you are willing to let into your life. You are ready to stop anything that would get in your way.

✦ ✦ ✦ TAURUS ✦ ✦ ✦



You are the pill! As a Taurus, you respect your schedule and daily regime. You enjoy being in control of a consistent schedule without questions or surprises. The pill is a tangible, physical form of birth control, and you love the ability to have that form of autonomy over your life.

✦ ✦ ✦ GEMINI ✦ ✦ ✦



You are the patch! Gemini loves to communicate, and the patch is in constant communication with one's body. You also are fond of winging it and doing your own thing, and the patch allows for you to change your mind as needed.

✦ ✦ ✦ CANCER ✦ ✦ ✦



You are the diaphragm! You are sentimental and symbolic, and you are willing to support a method you know has had meaning in the past. You are the human embodiment of the “mom friend” and are always willing to support others and take care of them.



◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ **LEO** ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇

You are the implant! Leos love having a presence and being heard. Being a backstage player is not an option for you. The implant makes a lasting impression and is a representation of someone that likes to be observed.



◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ **VIRGO** ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇

You are the ring! Virgos are known for being loving and nurturing, so anything that allows for them to make a connection with their partner is perfect for them. They are comfortable with their inner selves and appreciate the comfort the ring allows.



◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ **LIBRA** ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇

You are the condom! Your distinct sense of justice allows you to be the only contraceptive that also allows for prevention of STDs. You like playing by the rules and ensuring that what you are doing is right.



◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ **SCORPIO** ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇

You are the withdrawal (AKA the pullout) method! You are secretive and like to ensure things happen on your terms, and you believe in being in complete control of yourself. You have been known to be a bit fickle, which can sometimes lead you to make last minute decisions. But if the situation gets too real, you know when to get yourself out.



✦ ✦ ✦ **SAGITTARIUS** ✦ ✦ ✦

You are spermicide! Sags are always trying to be every place at once, making it difficult for you to make decisions. You are always innovating, which sometimes forces you to put order and thought on the back burner. You are often winging it, making this method a great way to work with your mental process.



✦ ✦ ✦ **CAPRICORN** ✦ ✦ ✦

You are a vasectomy! Capricorns love to take care of business and check things off your to-do list. The vasectomy is a one and done answer. It makes sure you can achieve your goals. This commitment works well with your organized sense of being.



✦ ✦ ✦ **AQUARIUS** ✦ ✦ ✦

You are abstinence! You value looking for a higher method of connection and community. You are set in your ideology, and search for connection through interactions. As an Aquarius, you feel like one's thoughts and feelings are more valuable than their actions.



✦ ✦ ✦ **PISCES** ✦ ✦ ✦

You are cycling! You are esoteric and in the moment, and you want to ensure you are able to choose a decision that resonates with you. You love to map out systems and focus on the bigger picture. Cycling connects with your ability to focus on how your own self functions. As the last sign, you respect the importance of your own cycle.

~ Mylea
Youth author

The importance of STD testing

While sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) affect individuals of all ages, STDs take a heavy toll on young people. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that youth ages 15–24 make up just over one-quarter of the sexually active population but account for half of the 20 million new sexually transmitted infections that occur in the United States each year.

Talk to your health care provider about STD prevention, testing and treatment.

This article provides medical information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Here are six common questions about STDs:

1

What are sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

STDs are diseases passed from one person to another through sexual contact. These include chlamydia, gonorrhea, genital herpes, HPV, syphilis and HIV. Many of these STDs do not show symptoms for a long time. Women's bodies are biologically more prone to STDs than men's.

2

How are STDs spread? According to the CDC, STDs are spread by having vaginal, anal or oral sex with someone who has an STD. Anyone who is sexually active can get an STD.

3

What can I do to protect myself? You and your partner should get tested for STDs before having sex. Make sure you and your partner use a dental dam for oral sex or a condom every time no matter the type of sex (oral, anal or vaginal). Before you have sex, talk with your partner about how you will prevent STDs and/or pregnancy.

You should also talk to your partner ahead of time about what you will and will not do sexually. Avoid mixing alcohol and drugs with sex. If you use alcohol and drugs, you are more likely to take risks such as not using a condom. Young adults should be sexually responsible, which means making informed decisions and safer sex choices through communication, protection and health testing

4

If I get an STD, how will I know? Many STDs don't cause any noticeable symptoms. The only way to know for sure if you have an STD is to get tested. You can also get an STD from having sex with someone who has no symptoms.

5

Where can I get tested? There are places that offer friendly, confidential and free STD tests. This means no one has to find out you've been tested. You can use <https://gettested.cdc.gov/> to find the closest center to you.

6

Can STDs be treated? Your doctor can prescribe medicine to cure some STDs, such as chlamydia and gonorrhea. Other STDs, such as herpes, can't be cured, but you can take medicine to help with the symptoms. It is possible to get an STD again after you've been treated if you have sex with someone else who has an STD.

Where can I get more information?

- » Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
www.cdc.gov
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)
- » GirlsHealth.gov
- » Health.gov/myhealthfinder
- » American Sexual Health Association:
www.ashasexualhealth.org

– **Danielle**

Oregon high school student

Confident contraception — making **YOUR OWN CHOICES**

I am sitting next to my friend as she cries. She thinks she's pregnant. Her parents can't know; they don't even know she has a boyfriend. She just had sex yesterday. She can't be pregnant yet, right? She doesn't know where to go for help.

I pull out my Planned Parenthood brochure I got in my freshman year health class and show her the hours for the clinic near us. Luckily, her boyfriend has a car and can take her there for an appointment.

Hours later she reports back to me. "They stuck an alien in my vagina and gave me plan B," she says. "They gave me birth control pills too." I start laughing, "An alien? You mean a pelvic exam?" She looks at me with wide eyes. "Is that what it's called?!"

As a teenager, everyone always said, "You'll understand when you're older," or, "You don't even know what love is." To that I say nonsense. Your experience of life is no less intense, real or meaningful because you are young. When adults can validate these feelings and take them seriously, teens are more likely to feel like they are being treated with respect.

So you're in love and you're thinking about having sex, or maybe you're single and going to a party this weekend. Either way, sex can happen unexpectedly — so make your choices intentionally. Think about what you want now.

If you want to have sex that would put you at risk for pregnancy, but you do not want a baby, now is the time to choose your contraception. One of the easiest

and cheapest options is condoms.

Condoms are great because they protect you or your partner from pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases such as the HPV virus (which causes cervical cancer as well as other types of throat cancers in all people). Did you know the HPV virus is so common that almost all sexually active people come into contact with it in their lifetimes? (1) People who have a penis are commonly carriers of the virus because they show few or no symptoms.

People who say condoms hurt or are unpleasant may not be buying the right kind. Condoms come in all kinds of fun colors, shapes, scents, sizes, textures and materials. Some companies have even started making custom condoms, which come in 60 different sizes, 10 lengths and nine circumferences. (2) The standard

condom size is approximately one inch too long for 83% of men. If a condom is too big, it can roll up at the base of the penis, causing tightness. (2) It may take some time until you find the right ones for you and your partner, and that's normal.

Condoms + birth control = your backup plan

When you use condoms and a birth control method such as the pill, the implant or an IUD, you are protecting yourself and being as responsible as possible about pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. If the condom breaks, you will still be protected from pregnancy when using more than one method of contraception.

Everything that happens in the bedroom is your and your partner's choice. If you don't want to use condoms or dental

dams, and you are having sex that would put you at risk for a pregnancy or STDs, you can still plan ahead for that with your partner. You can get tested for STDs together and use another form of birth control (pill, implant, IUD).

Your partner should respect and listen to your concerns and needs. If they're not ready to talk about contraception, consider if they are really ready to have sex.

I waited until college to have sex for the first time. I didn't wait because I didn't have a partner or didn't want to have sex. I just decided my high school relationship wasn't worth it. I decided it was the best choice for me. There are no prudes, and there are no sluts. We are all just imperfect humans with needs and wants and feelings that deserve to be listened to and validated.

~ **Samantha**

Oregon college student

Talk to your health care provider about STD prevention, testing and treatment, and which contraceptive would be best for you.

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control (CDC). HPV questions and answers. 2016 Nov 28 [cited 2017 Oct 13]. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/parents/questions-answers.html>.
2. Belluck P. A condom-maker's discovery: size matters. 2017 Oct 12 [cited 2017 Oct 13.] Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/12/health/condoms-penis-size.html>.

For help now, contact a national or regional resource

All-Options – if you are pregnant and unsure how to feel or what to do next, or you want to talk about a past or current experience with abortion, adoption, parenting, infertility, pregnancy or pregnancy loss. Call All-Options Talkline at 888-493-0092 from anywhere in the United States or go to <https://www.all-options.org/>.

Bedsider – to find a health care provider for care and the best birth control method for you, explore birth control options, and learn about sexual health and wellness, abortion and relationships. Go to www.bedsider.org.

Doernbecher Children's Hospital Gender Services & Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) Transgender Health Program – for transgender and gender-nonconforming children, teens and adults. For information, call 503-494-7970 or visit www.ohsu.edu/doernbecher. For care offered in other parts of Oregon and in Southwest Washington, call 503-494-3273.

Insights Teen Parent Services – for services to support the needs of young parents. Call 503-239-6996 or go to www.insightstpp.org.

Lines for Life, Youth Line – a teen-to-teen crisis and help line. Teens available to help daily from 4 to 10 p.m. Pacific Time (off-hour calls answered by Lines for Life staff). The help line is free and confidential. Highly trained staff can talk to you about substance abuse, relationship problems, depression, mental health resources and other concerns. Call 877-968-8491 or text “teen2teen” to 839863 or chat at www.oregonyouthline.org.

National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF) – connecting you to organizations that can support your financial and logistical needs as you arrange for your abortion. Go to <https://abortionfunds.org/>.

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline – resources for teens, parents, friends and family. All communication is confidential and anonymous. Text “LOVEIS” to 22522 or call 866-331-9474 or go to www.loveisrespect.org.

Open Adoption & Family Services – pregnancy option counseling and open adoption services. Call 800-772-1115 anytime day or night. You can also text “open” to 971-266-0924 (M-F 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) or go to www.openadopt.org.

Planned Parenthood – health care services and information online about sex, relationships, your body and more. Chat online at www.plannedparenthood.org or text “PPNOW” to 774636 to get answers or chat with a health educator. To find a health care center, call 800-230-PLAN.

Self Enhancement, Inc (SEI) – Anti Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline for Black and African American students and their families. Call 503-972-3698 or email healingspace@selfenhancement.org.

Sexual & Gender Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC) – mental health and counseling services, school support and much more for LGBTQIA2S+ youth. Call 503-872-9664 or go to www.smyrc.org.

The Trevor Project – immediate confidential and free support for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals. Connect to a crisis counselor anytime from anywhere in the United States. Text “START” to 678-678, or call 866-488-7386, or go to www.thetrevorproject.org.

Connect to an Organization with youth programming

Adelante Mujeres has a youth development program for Latina youth and their families. www.adelantemujeres.org

Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) offers a Pacific Islander Youth Program. www.apano.org.

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) sponsors a youth membership program and community led chapter in Oregon. www.glsen.org.

Native American Youth and Family Health Center (NAYA) has multiple services for Native American youth and students. www.nayapdx.org.

Latino Network sponsors a youth empowerment and violence prevention program for Latino/x/e youth. www.latnet.org.

Familias en Acción offers HIV/STI sexual health education program for Latino/x/e youth, families and communities. www.familiasenaccion.org.

Self Enhancement, Inc (SEI) takes a holistic approach to Black and African American youth services. www.selfenhancement.org.

Credits

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Youth readers, we want to hear from you about what is important in your life. Share your knowledge and experiences by submitting your story, poem or art to The Rational Enquirer. Your entry may appear in the next edition. The themes of The Rational Enquirer are identity, life, love and sex. Consider submitting to the next publication of The Rational Enquirer. Email Adolescent.Program@dhsosha.state.or.us for more information or to make your submission.

THE RATIONAL ENQUIRER



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