

# The Rational Enquirer 2011

\*SEX \*IDENTITY \*LOVE \*LIFE

## In This Issue

- \*Sound relationships \*Talking to your parents about sex
- \*Getting tested for HIV \*Contraceptive myths and realities

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Welcome to the 16<sup>th</sup> edition of **The Rational Enquirer** — your source for information on sex, identity, love and life. We hope the articles in this edition spark conversations, make you think and provide you with useful resources. Many people contributed to the 2011 Rational Enquirer. We are confident their stories will give you a better understanding of the many issues of sexuality.

## Contributing authors

**Chris Whitfield** ~ studied at Portland Community College and is currently in Thailand with MPlus+, producing short films to bring to life issues that sexual minorities face. He believes that art, photography and literature are great tools to use when tackling important issues such as sexual health.

**Jessica Duke** ~ works for the Oregon Public Health Division. Most of her free time is spent volunteering at her son's school or trying out new recipes. She enjoys having conversations with other parents about healthy sexuality.

**Kaitlyn Franklin** ~ attends Gresham High School and is a Teen Council peer educator at planed Parenthood Columbia Willamette. In her free time she likes to watch movies with her friends, play soccer and volleyball, write vignettes and listen to all kinds of music.

**Kristin Valdes** ~ has a bright future ahead of her. Overcoming domestic violence as a child and young adult has helped her develop the skills for a healthy lifestyle and stay away from negative influences. Kristin is currently studying psychology and is interested in becoming a music artist.

**Lesli Leone Uebel** ~ is a certified health education specialist (CHES) with more than 20 years of public health experience, two of which included working with Ecuador's Ministry of Public Health and the Peace Corps. She currently lives in Corvallis with her husband, two teenagers and a border collie mix.

**Liz Reich** ~ is a second-year AmeriCorps member serving as a reproductive health educator with Deschutes County Health Services in Bend. Originally from Chicago, she studied print journalism at Illinois State University before deciding to move her life westward in search of greener and warmer pastures.

**Maisha Foster-O'Neal** ~ will soon have a Bachelor of Arts degree in gender studies from Lewis & Clark College. She interns at the Sexual & Gender Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC) in Portland. Maisha likes to read "Harry Potter" out loud with all the voices, conduct "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" marathons and collect dinosaur toys.

**Naila Funes** ~ is a sophomore at Benson Polytechnic High School in Portland. She feels it is important for everyone to be able to express themselves without fear of being criticized and put down. In her free time, Naila likes draw, design, read manga and write poetry.

**Ronnie Parsley** ~ is a senior at La Pine High School. She student teaches at a middle school and hopes to be a full-fledged teacher there after she finishes college. She volunteers in her community to reduce teen substance abuse. In her free time she likes to hang with friends.

**Zoli Bokor** ~ is a senior at Knappa High School. He works at his dad's business and volunteers on the Teen Advisory Board for My Future My Choice. Zoli enjoys a variety of sports. His future plans include studying health and physical well-being. Zoli would also like to travel and experience the world.

If sex were just about orgasms, you could just enjoy it without ever having to talk about it. But there are so many things that come along with sex: pain, messy emotions, awkwardness, confusing feelings, not to mention unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). It's like a 1,000-piece model airplane that comes in a box with no instructions... so you're going to have to get some help once in awhile.

But sex and sexuality can be really difficult to talk about, so here are a few pointers that might help get you started. Use them only if they make sense to you and to your situation.

**Who do you talk to?** Ideally, the first person you try talking to should be someone you trust and feel comfortable with. It doesn't necessarily have to be your sexual partner or a parent. Think of all the people you know: aunts, uncles, cousins, stepparents, godparents, doctors, pharmacists, teachers, guidance counselors, religious leaders, personal friends, family friends. But be careful about confiding in friends who belong to your social circle; they may accidentally (or not so accidentally) let your news slip, even if they promise not to.

If you can't bring yourself to talk to anyone you know, a youth hotline or support group can give you someone who will listen and help, and you won't have to worry about them blabbing to everyone you know. A lot of times, it feels safest to talk to a complete stranger.

After you've talked with someone you trust, that person may be able to help

you break the subject with more challenging people, such as your parents.

**Where do you talk?** Choose a private place where you can rant, rave or shed tears without feeling self-conscious. Depending on your personality and what you want to talk about, a private room at home, a park bench or a quiet restaurant may fit the bill. Avoid having these discussions by phone or by e-mail — cyberhugs just don't cut it when you need the real thing.

**What do you say?** You may want to start by telling the person if you're feeling awkward, scared or ashamed. It prepares your listener for the information to come. Then tell your story as simply and plainly as possible. Don't dwell on too many details or get side-tracked. Just be honest and get to the point. In order to help you, this person needs to know the whole story.

**Source:** [www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca), administered by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada. Copyright permission granted.

who do you talk to

where do you talk

what do you say

# Music — food for thought

Some say you are what you eat. Maybe you are what you listen to. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, American youth listen to music from 1.5 to 2.5 hours per day. Society considers listening to popular music a part of growing up. Music can provide entertainment and distraction from problems and serve as a way to relieve tension and boredom. Some studies have reported that adolescents use popular music to deal with loneliness and to take control of their emotional status or mood.

So music definitely has its benefits. But some lyrics are over the top. The Sound Relationships Nutrition Label, developed by youth in Boston, is a tool to help you critically look at media. The tool helps you break music down

to better understand the healthy or unhealthy relationship messages it may contain, such as power, control, equality and gender roles.

Peer leader Shaquilla Terry, age 15 of Boston, said, "It's important to actually listen to and think about the lyrics of a song and not just the beat."

The Sound Relationships Nutrition Label helps you make an informed choice about the music you put in your mind. Here are a few examples of songs, scored by the number of times healthy or unhealthy relationship themes appear in each of them.

*Thanks to the Boston Public Health Commission and Zoli Bokor for contributing to this article.*

## HEALTHY SONGS FOR RELATIONSHIPS

### MINE BY TAYLOR SWIFT

- Fun/enjoyable-8
- Support-7
- Respect-7
- Equality-7
- Trust-8
- Total: 37

### IF IT'S LOVE BY TRAIN

- Fun/enjoyable-7
- Support-7
- Respect-7
- Equality-7
- Trust-7
- Total: 35

## UNHEALTHY SONGS FOR RELATIONSHIPS

### HOT TOTTIE BY USHER

- Drama-4
- Possession/obsession-7
- Disrespect-6
- Relationship = sex-9
- Manipulation-9
- Total: 33

### LOVE THE WAY YOU LIE BY EMINEM

- Drama-9
- Possession/obsession-8
- Disrespect-9
- Relationship=sex-1
- Manipulation-10
- Total: 37

# Sound relationships



## SCORE YOUR FAVORITE SONGS WITH THIS TOOL

Music, like food, can feed our brains and give us energy. But, it can also be filled with ingredients that can affect us negatively. Some music may even have an influence on our health and the health of our relationships. The Sound Relationships instrument will help you evaluate the “nutritional” value of the music you might listen to. We want you to put on your headphones, turn up the volume and become a song lyrics nutritionist. Just follow these easy steps.

**STEP ONE: Find a song.** Select a song. Find the lyrics of the song from the CD insert, or search for them online. Print out the lyrics, and read them to get a feel for the main themes in the song.

**STEP TWO: Determine if the song has a relationship theme.** Songs with a relationship theme describe an emotional or physical connection between two or more people

and should support, celebrate or glorify the healthy or unhealthy characteristics of a relationship.

**STEP THREE: Score the song lyrics.** Carefully examine the song’s title and all lyrics in the chorus and verses of the song. Now look at the Song Lyrics Scoring “Nutritional Effect” label on the far right. Check the “PRESENT” box for each relationship ingredient that you find in the song. The definitions for each relationship ingredient are at the bottom of the label. Finally, for each ingredient that is present in the song, assign it a score from 1 to 10 in the “INTENSITY” box based on how much of that relationship ingredient you feel is in the song. A score of 1 would indicate that there is a very low level of that relationship ingredient in the song while a score of 10 would indicate a very high level of that relationship ingredient. When assigning an intensity score, consider how those particular lyrics affect the overall message of the song.

**STEP FOUR: Total your numbers.** Add up the scores from the intensity column in both the unhealthy and healthy sections. These totals indicate the unhealthy and healthy relationship “nutritional” value of the song’s lyrics.

**STEP FIVE: Balance your “lyrical” diet.** Use this tool whenever you want to find out the relationship ingredients of a song. Just like with the food we eat, it is important to have a balanced “song” diet that includes lots of healthy relationship ingredients. Knowing the ingredients will help you make an informed decision about which songs will promote good relationship health.

*Prepared by the Boston Public Health Commission, 2009*

SONG LYRICS - NUTRITIONAL EFFECT

ARTIST: \_\_\_\_\_

SONG TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

SERVING SIZE: \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT PER SERVING: \_\_\_\_\_

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP INGREDIENTS

MINUTES: \_\_\_\_\_

PRESENT (✓): \_\_\_\_\_

SECONDS: \_\_\_\_\_

INTENSITY (✓): \_\_\_\_\_

Fun/enjoyable  
Support  
Respect  
Equality  
Trust

Total healthy

UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP INGREDIENTS

Drama  
Possession / obsession  
Disrespect  
Relationship = sex  
Manipulation  
Total unhealthy

### DEFINITIONS OF THEMES:

**FUN/ENJOYABLE:** a belief that relationships are enjoyable and fun.

**SUPPORT:** a belief that a relationship includes building up the other person’s confidence and strengths. This could include encouraging another person to make healthy decisions, even when the other person may not totally agree.

**RESPECT:** a belief that another person has value and is appreciated and recognized for his or her ideas, thoughts and decisions. This could include the use of positive or supportive words to describe the other person.

**EQUALITY:** a belief that both parties share in decision making and are free to choose what is right for them. One person does not have power over the other either in decision making or sex.

**TRUST:** a belief that the other person in the relationship has your best interest at heart. This could include being faithful and honest.

**DRAMA:** a belief that making up/breaking up, yelling, bitter arguing, destroying property or a general sense that unhealthy conflict in the relationship is part of a normal relationship. This could also include stalking, objectification and controlling behavior.

**DISRESPECT:** a belief that it is acceptable to disregard another person’s feelings, ideas, opinions and wishes. This could include name calling, putdowns, minimizing language and cheating.

**RELATIONSHIP-SEX:** a belief that the main component or focus of the relationship is sex.

**MANIPULATION:** a belief that it is acceptable to lie or use another person’s emotions or vulnerabilities to get what is desired. This could include guilt trips, lying and using alcohol to get sex.



# HIV testing is a brave choice

By: CHATpdx collaborative

## Getting tested for HIV is a brave choice

Young people account for 34 percent of new HIV transmissions in the United States, which means they are contracting HIV more than any other population. They are also some of the most fervid activists for HIV prevention in our country. This means the need for youth-run spaces to access HIV testing and sexual health resources has increased as well. In order to create these spaces, it's important to acknowledge some of the barriers young people experience when it comes to getting tested.

As Chris, a 19-year-old former member of Cascade AIDS Project's Teen2Teen peer education program, says, "I was afraid both times I tested at Pivot's CHAT(Room)\* youth testing night. This fear came out of a lot of

places — a combination of stigma that exists in all of us, and the very real, very important

process of preparing for news that could be bad and painful." Chris had to face that fear. Afterward, he was glad he did. At CHAT(Room) Chris accessed free, rapid HIV testing with a tester who has experience with and loves working with youth.

"CHAT(Room) has staff and testers that communicate like friends: non-judgmental and informal," Chris says. "The conversation goes where you need it to go, and never feels like doctor's-office prying. In the 20 minutes while I waited for my test to process, I was led

through a conversation with my tester that allowed me to put away stigmas that were helping nobody, and acknowledge healthy practices that I had and could continue to use to help myself."

The test offered is an oral swab test. There's no blood. It only takes 20 minutes to process. If you do come back positive, there are many supportive staff and resources to help with the next steps.

Chris has been a peer educator for Cascade AIDS Project for three years, and made the brave choice to get tested despite the fear. Now he's an advocate for testing for all his peers. "Getting tested is one of the resources we have to advocate for our own health," he says.

In order to try to help his peers put aside some of the fear of getting tested for HIV, Chris and another peer educator, Angela, created two videos about what it means to get tested for HIV, and what it could look like if the test result is positive. These short films — "Now What?" and "Can I Ask

You a Question?" — lead the audience through the process of what an HIV test is like. They answer the tough questions of what life could be like as an HIV-positive young person. Questions such as "Do I have to tell my parents?" and "Can I still party?" are answered in these videos, which can be used in classrooms or clinics to help youth get real answers to their concerns. Chris and Angela spent a summer interviewing the staff at Cascade AIDS Project and the Multnomah County HIV Clinic and pieced together information they know their friends need to hear.

Oregon has one of the most progressive and comprehensive sexual health education laws in our country. More young people have good information about HIV than ever before, but it's the personal effects that we need to focus on — the fear, the stigma and the lack of opportunities for youth to reach out and advocate for their own health, like Chris does.

CHAT(Room) is open to all youth, ages 24 and under. It has a core of youth who



access and advocate for the space and for testing among their peers. For more information about CHAT(Room) and HIV testing for young people, feel free to contact the youth HIV education coordinator at 503-278-3872. To check out Chris and Angela's videos, or learn more about CHATpdx, visit [www.facebook.com/CHATpdx](http://www.facebook.com/CHATpdx) or go to [www.vimeo.com/CHATpdx](http://www.vimeo.com/CHATpdx).

*CHAT(Room) is a free HIV testing and youth drop-in space at Pivot in Portland. It is a program of CHATpdx, which is collaboration between Outside In, Cascade AIDS Project, and A6. CHATpdx is funded by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Minority Health.*



## Condom and contraceptive factoids

In his memoirs, Casanova, the famous French lover in the 1700s, wrote about using halved lemons as cervical caps during his sexual escapades.

— Source: 4000 Years for Choice at <http://4000yearsforchoice.com/4000/> (accessed March 2011)

Charles Goodyear (of tire-making fame) patented vulcanization of rubber in 1844, which led to the production of “condoms.” Unlike modern condoms — made to be used once and thrown away — early condoms were washed, anointed with petroleum jelly, and put away in special wooden boxes for later reuse.

— Source: “Birth control timeline” at [www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=52188](http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=52188) (accessed April 2010)

The birth control pill was the first medicine ever designed to be taken regularly by people who were not sick.

— Source: Time Magazine, “The Pill at 50,” [www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1983712,00..html#ixzz1By9EUg00](http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1983712,00..html#ixzz1By9EUg00) (accessed Feb. 11, 2011)

During ancient times, pomegranate seeds were associated with a “pause in infertility.” They were known as a common antifertility agent in Greek medicine and written about by physicians Hippocrates, Soranus, Dioscorides and Aetius, all of whom prescribed the herb to prevent conception.

— Source: 4000 Years for Choice at <http://4000yearsforchoice.com/4000/> (accessed March 2011)

# Talking to your parents about sex



forth about how to handle your sexual feelings. There are a lot of aspects to consider first. You have to weigh your morals and emotions carefully and then decide what you really want ... and remember, the decision is permanent — there's no way to “un-have” sex. And even though your parents may just want to scream “nooo!” it's only because they love you and have your best interests and your health in mind.

In the end, you're old enough to know that, good or bad, you're going to have to live with your decisions. What you choose to do is your call, but it's a good idea to really think it through, and talk to a few people about the way you feel before you decide on anything.

You may feel that your parents' values and attitudes are a bit stricter than your own. You may just chalk this up to “old age,” but they may also have some valuable reasons for feeling the way they do. Believe it or not, but questioning authority and the reasons for doing things is a sign that you're growing up. A simple “because I said so” is usually enough to convince young kids to do something a certain way, but you're older and you need to know why things are done.

But remember, just because you don't necessarily agree with everything your parents have to say, it doesn't automatically mean they're wrong. And you might be surprised just how open your parents are to talking about sex.

**W**e all have questions about sex. Some are based on curiosity, some are based on fear and some are based on pure anticipation! And though you may know some people your own age who think they have all the answers about sex, they probably don't. To be honest, many adults haven't got it all figured out either.

So, who can you go to for answers? Ever think about talking to your parents about sex? They may not have all the answers, but they're great resources on sex because they have definitely been there — you're living proof of that. And in the rare case that they don't have the answer to your question, there's a good chance they'll know where to find it.

You may be contemplating having sex for the first time, debating back and

Just tell your parents that you want to talk about sex, or try these lines to “back into” a conversation about sex:

“We're going to be talking about sex in school this year, but I don't really know that much about it.”

“We talked about sex in class today. I learned a lot of really interesting things.”

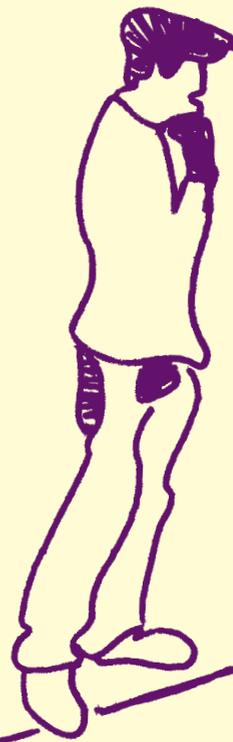
“I heard some kids talking about sex today. They said that ... (mention something you want to know about sex)... Is that true?”

**See where the above questions take you.** Your parents may be totally into talking about sex with you. But make sure you catch them at a good time, like when they're relaxing on the couch, not when they're just about to leave for work.

*Source: [www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca), administered by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada. Copyright permission granted.*

# Coming out

By: Anonymous



There are two ways you can come out: age and sexuality. Both seem so different from each other but can have the same effect. When you become of age, everything changes. Your rules are less strict. You seem more mature. You feel more like an adult. It seems so real. But then, as you get older, the more life seems to get harder. It can be harder to deal with. You feel lost and forgotten. You move away and have no idea what you are going to do with your life.

# OUT

But coming out of the closet is even harder to deal with. You don't know how people are going to react — whether they are there to support you or drop you from their lives. I know this because I have had to tell all of those close to me except my parents. I have lost friends and boyfriends. They couldn't handle who I was or who they thought I was. Coming out to them was such a hard thing to handle that I still haven't told my family.

I'm writing this article for those who have felt this way. There will always be someone there for you. My best friends have never left me and I am sure you will find your true friends who will help you with this. It gets easier and there are so many people out there that will understand.

Don't give up and don't change who you are.

There are people who wouldn't want you any other way.

*If you want more information or help, see the resources on page 47 of this publication.*

# Healthy relationships

By: Katie Franklin  
Teen Council Peer Educator, PPCW

A healthy relationship is one in which both people feel a healthy sense of “self.” Each person feels warm and loved when with each other. Two emotionally healthy people try to be there for each other to meet each other’s needs and be what the other person wants them to be, while staying true to who each one is. To be in a healthy relationship is to find a place where each person can ask openly for help from the other without fear of criticism. A healthy relationship means that both people feel respected and loved even when problems arise. To show your partner respect is a huge aspect of a healthy relationship. You should exhibit behaviors within the other’s comfort zone.

Self-focus is the key to having a healthy relationship. Don’t let your life revolve around the other person. Don’t forget and neglect the other people who are important to you. Keep your mindset on your hope, dreams and future plans. This will keep your harmony balanced. Asking for too much could overload and slowly push away the other person.

## The hardest part of being in a relationship is that you don’t have control over what the other person chooses to do.

Relationships can sometimes lead to stress, depression, loss of self-esteem or confidence, and/or even physical illness. It is important for you to think about things that can protect you in a relationship. If you have a healthy relationship that is supportive and loving, you are more likely to feel happy and satisfied with life and with your relationship. Keep your eyes open for signs that you could be in an unhealthy relationship.



I was in an unhealthy relationship about a year ago. He knew my boundaries and knew that I didn’t want to go any farther than making out. He still bugged me about having sex with him. I would say

no to him. He would scream and yell at me and call me a bitch and tell me that I was a whore and not worth his time. He said that was the only way I could prove to him that I loved him. I dealt with him yelling and putting me down and making fun of me for any and everything I did. After months of pain and agony, I talked to my mom about it. She explained that I didn’t have to put up with that. I broke up with him. I thought I loved him, but I wasn’t going to sacrifice myself for someone who was treating me bad, didn’t respect me, and didn’t want to have an emotional relationship first.

After I broke up with him, he tried to get me back but I knew he wouldn’t change. Instead, he went around spreading rumors to my friends and to the whole school, saying we had sex and I could be pregnant. All he wanted to do was ruin my life. But I realized he wasn’t worth it. I didn’t want to be hurt or pressured by an unhealthy relationship. He didn’t stop. My mom talked to him and his mom — we tried everything. Finally we went to the school board and threatened to call the police. It took months for him to stop talking to and about me.

I was upset at the time, but I have grown. It took me many months to learn who I was again. Now, a year afterward, I

am with an amazing boy. He shows me what a real healthy relationship feels like. He shows and tells me I am loved. We knew each other’s boundaries and limits before we started to date.

It will hurt when or if you decide to eliminate the unhealthy relationship. But you will grow and, someday, meet someone who will treat you the way you should be treated. If you are in an unhealthy relationship, ask someone for help. An aunt, mom, dad, anyone you are comfortable with will help you; all you have to do is ask.

When you think of a relationship you are in, do you feel like you belong and are loved? Does it increase your confidence and self-esteem? Does the other provide understanding, trust and care? Does the person help discuss your options? Do you feel safe and respected? Have you discussed your boundaries? A healthy relationship consists of respect, trust, honesty, safety, equality, consistency, value, security, loyalty, empathy and genuineness.

Think about your relationships. Are they healthy? If not, think about your options. What can you do to make them healthier? Get help from people you have healthy relationships with and trust. Listen to the ones around you; they can see more than you can sometimes. Do you have the strength, courage and willpower to free yourself from an unhealthy relationship like I did?

**If you want more information or help, see the resources page on 47 of this publication.**



# Contraception myths and realities

**SINCE EACH WOMAN'S MENSTRUAL CYCLE IS DIFFERENT, IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT WHICH DAYS ARE "SAFE" FOR AVOIDING PREGNANCY.**

If you're like most people, you got your first bits of information about pregnancy and birth control not from doctors, but from your friends or other people your own age. You probably picked up some useful information in this way — but there's a lot of bad information floating around out there too. And these rumors don't die easily. Some of them have been around for generations! So here's the real deal on some of the most common rumors, exaggerations and full-blown lies when it comes to contraception.

**Myth #1: A girl can't get pregnant if she doesn't have an orgasm.**

Pregnancy occurs when a man's sperm fertilizes a woman's egg. This can happen whether or not she has an orgasm.

**Myth #2: A guy can't get a girl pregnant if he doesn't have an orgasm.**

It's unlikely that a man will get a woman pregnant if he doesn't have an orgasm — or if he pulls out

before he reaches orgasm — but it's certainly not impossible. Men often release a small amount of semen (cum) before they ejaculate. Sometimes this is called "pre-cum." This semen still contains sperm and can certainly get a woman pregnant.

**Myth #3: A girl can't get pregnant when she has sex for the first time.**

A woman who is ovulating can get pregnant on her very first time having sex, regardless of her age or her sexual history.

**Myth #4: A girl can't get pregnant if she douches after sex.**

Douching does very little to prevent conception. After sexual intercourse, the sperm enter the cervix where they are out of reach of any douching solution.

**Myth #5: Pregnancy can't occur if people do it standing up or with the woman on top.**

Positions make very little difference when it comes to getting pregnant. When a man deposits

sperm into a woman's vagina, natural processes guide the sperm toward the woman's cervix and uterus. Whether she's on top, lying down or standing on her head really won't make much difference.

**Myth #6: Pregnancy can't occur if a couple has sex only on the girl's "safe" days.**

Since each girl's menstrual cycle is different, it's almost impossible to predict which days are "safe." Sperm can survive for several days in a girl's body, so a couple could have sex well before the woman ovulates and still run the risk of pregnancy.

**Myth #7: The birth control pill is effective as soon as you start taking it.**

Depending on the day you start taking the pill, it might take up to one complete menstrual cycle before you can count on it to prevent pregnancy. You should definitely rely on another method of birth control during this period.

**Myth #8: The pill can only be taken for a limited time.**

In most healthy women, the pill can be taken safely from puberty to menopause, and its effectiveness won't lessen as the women get older.

**Myth #9: The pill makes you fat.**

Studies have found that today's low-dose oral contraceptives won't cause significant weight changes in most women.

**Myth #10: The pill causes cancer.**

On the whole, the pill actually lowers cancer risk. The pill

causes a slight increase in breast cancer in women under 35, but the risk is still tiny. More importantly, the pill actually cuts the risk of both ovarian and uterine cancers by more than 50 per cent, a benefit that persists even after you stop taking it.

**Myth #11: Contraceptive intrauterine devices (IUDs) cause infertility.**

An IUD can help spread a sexually transmitted infection (STI) into a woman's uterus and fallopian tubes if she already has an STI. This could damage her future fertility. As long as a woman doesn't get an STI, the IUD doesn't put her fertility at risk. For couples who don't have STIs and are in a long-term, monogamous relationship (in other words, they don't have sex with anyone but each other), the IUD is a very safe and effective form of contraception.

**Myth #12: Contraceptives protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).**

The only contraceptive that offers such protection is the condom. Even other barrier methods, such as the diaphragm, do nothing to keep bacteria out of the vagina. The pill and IUD offer no STI protection at all.

*Source: [sexualityandu.ca](http://sexualityandu.ca), administered by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada. Copyright permission granted.*

REMEMBER TO BREATHE

REMEMBER TO BREATHE

REMEMBER TO BREATHE



# Everyone has a right to consent

Consent is about everyone involved in a sexual or possibly sexual interaction. Not just women, not just young people, not just whoever didn't initiate sex to begin with, not just the person whose body part someone else's body part may be going into. Everyone. For sex to be fully consensual, everyone needs to seek consent, everyone needs to be affirming it, and everyone needs to accept and respect each other's answers, nixing sex or stepping back, pronto, if and when someone expresses a desire to stop.

Consent can always be withdrawn. Consent to any kind of sex is not a binding contract nor does consent obligate anyone to follow through. It is also one-time-only: Because someone consented to sex Tuesday does not mean they were giving consent for sex on Thursday.

Nothing makes consent automatic or unnecessary. Being someone's spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend doesn't give anyone consent by default.

Someone loving you or saying they love you doesn't mean they have your sexual consent or you have theirs. No one kind of sex means consent to another, or that anyone is "owed" any sex. For instance, someone who engages in oral sex is not asking for or consenting to intercourse; someone who says yes to kissing is not saying yes to any other kind of touching. Because someone has had any kind of sex in the past does not mean they will have sex or consent to sex again with that same person or anyone else, nor that they are obligated in any way to do so.

In some situations, full, informed and free consent cannot truly be given or shared. These situations include being drunk or wasted; being asleep; being unable to really understand what one is saying yes to, including possible risks and outcomes; being under severe duress, such as when seriously upset, ill, grieving or scared; or being unable to understand another person's words or other means of communication.

Consider things like these to be a red light to even asking about sex: Sex should usually be off the table entirely in these situations. Nonconsent means stop: If someone is not consenting to something or says no with words and/or actions, the other person must stop trying to do that thing and must not try to convince that person to do that thing in any way. If they do not stop, or exert emotional or other pressure and that person gives up and gives in, they are sexually assaulting that person. Sex is not sex if everyone is not consenting. If anyone is not consenting or not asking for consent, then what is happening is or may be rape, sexual abuse or assault.

## A lack of no does not mean yes.

Information for this article is from [www.Scarleteen.com](http://www.Scarleteen.com). To read more about consent, go to [www.scarleteen.com/article/boyfriend/drivers\\_ed\\_for\\_the\\_sexual\\_superhighway\\_navigating\\_consent](http://www.scarleteen.com/article/boyfriend/drivers_ed_for_the_sexual_superhighway_navigating_consent).



Source: <http://tinyurl.com/sextalkcomic>





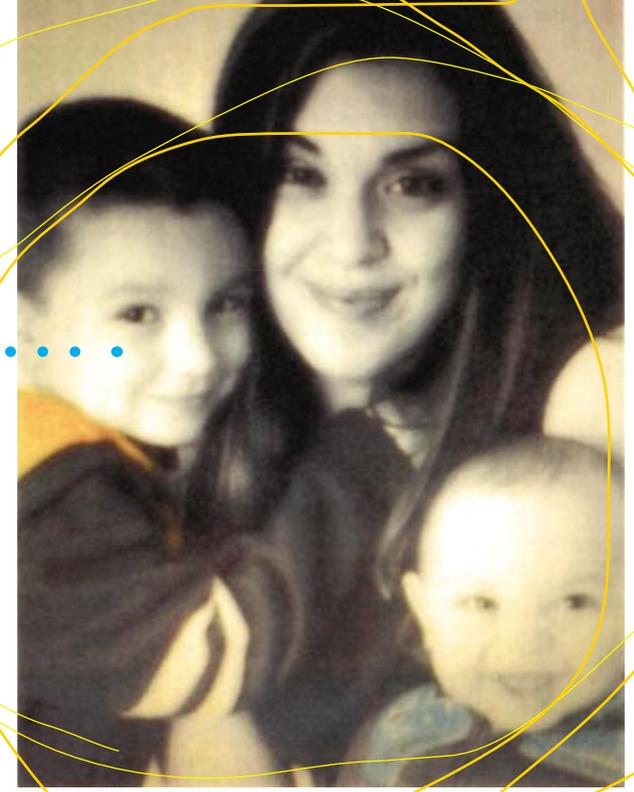
# Being a teen parent

By: Kristin Valdes

I'm a single mother with two beautiful angels that make me more of a woman every day. I live for a purpose which is so much more beautiful than living without one. The day I gazed into both of your eyes, for the first time, I knew that I was yours and you were mine. These little eyes that hold so much innocence have a way of opening my heart to a hard, loving and pure existence. My boys, my world, I'm so happy you're my shining thrill. Being a single mother at 17 was difficult but you're the reason I'm the woman I am today. That will always stay with me. You showed me the potential within me. You gave me motivation, peace, love and tranquility.

I hold your hearts in the palm of my hand, so firmly. The beat of your heart gives me a warm feeling of joy. Yes, both of you are my #1's, you're my boys. There are good times and there are bad times, but what brings me to this glorious light is the fact that you are mine. I'll always fight for your well-being. You are my children, my light, my meaning for existence. My goal is to work hard for our lives so both of you have so many more opportunities than I did, so you can become the men I plan to raise you to be. I'm proud to be your mother and no one can take that from me.

I SURELY AM.



# Tragic parenthood

By: Naila Sierra Funes

*Editor's note — Benson High School student Naila Sierra Funes wrote the two poems on pages 27-30. The first, "Tragic Parenthood," shows that being a parent while still a teenager is hard work and can bring about unwanted feelings. Parents are ultimately responsible for someone else's life — no easy task when you are trying to figure out your own.*

*Naila's second poem, "Heartfelt Parenthood," shows the other side of parenting as a teenager — the daily doses of absolute love.*

*For help dealing with the realities of teen parenting, see the resources listed on page 47.*

The hardships and responsibilities  
Is a massive weight

On my heart,  
Exhausted

And broken down  
I have become,

My entire world has turned  
Upside down because of

You,  
The freedoms I once experienced

Are now gone  
Forever,

Because of you

He's gone,  
He's left me alone in this

Cruel world,  
I wish to love you,

But how I loathe you!

When I look at  
Your face,

There is nothing  
But harsh judgment,  
The cruelty in those  
Eyes of yours  
Is unbearable to watch,  
Those words that he whispered

Into my ear  
So soothingly,  
Play in my head  
Over and over again

"You're my world...  
That will never change,  
When I think of  
The pain that

You have caused me,  
All I want to do is  
Shake you.

When I look at you  
All I see  
Is a tiny helpless soul

Who longs to be loved,  
But that soul  
Can never really claim  
My love...

Tears roll down my cheeks  
As I think of what  
Could have been.

Before I thought having a child  
Would be a blessing,  
But I was wrong,

Day and night  
The pain that I feel stabs at  
My heart with relentless

Force that I can  
No longer bear,  
What I thought

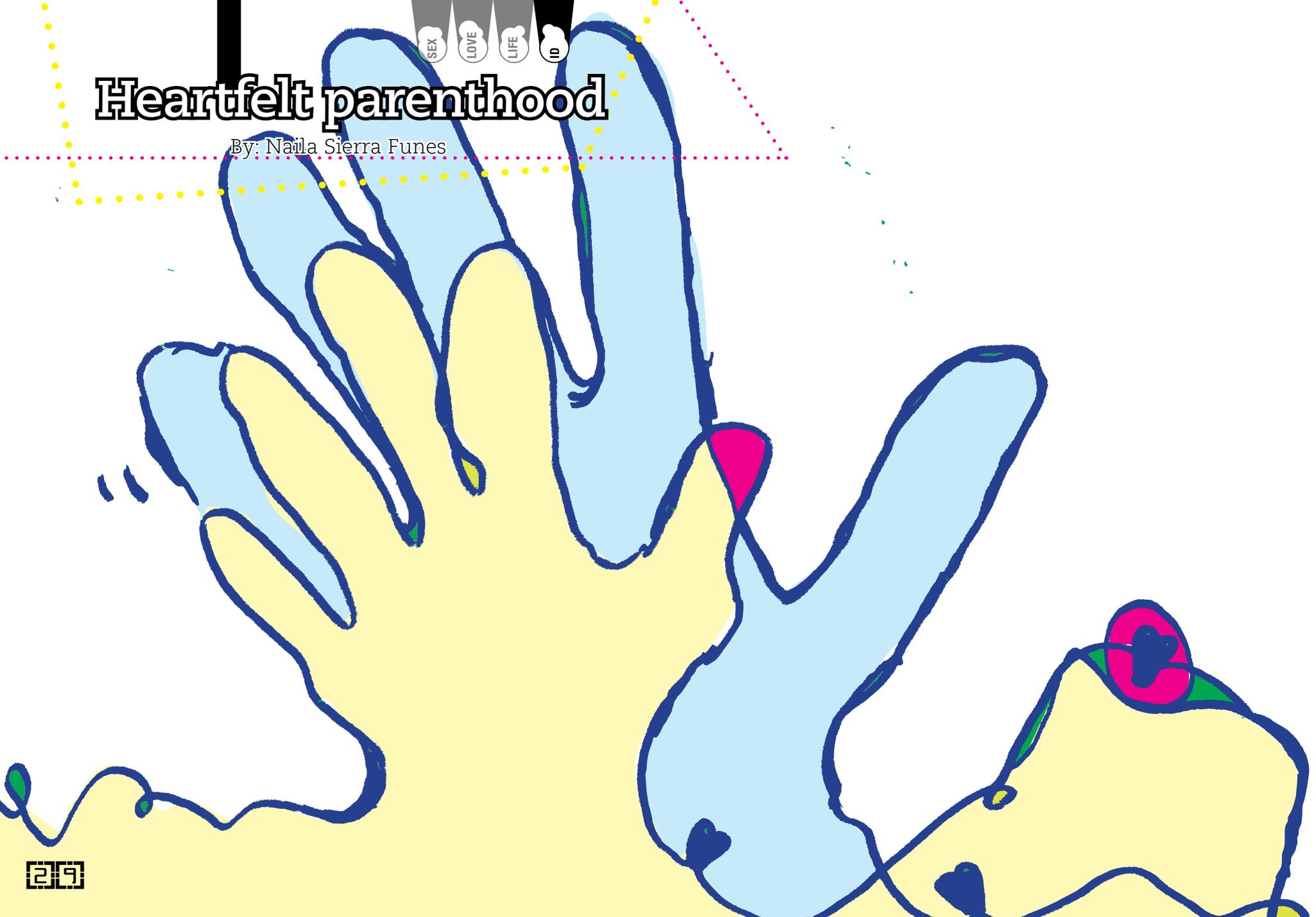
Would be a dream  
Ended up being about nothing  
But a

Nightmare...



# Heartfelt parenthood

By: Naila Sierra Funes

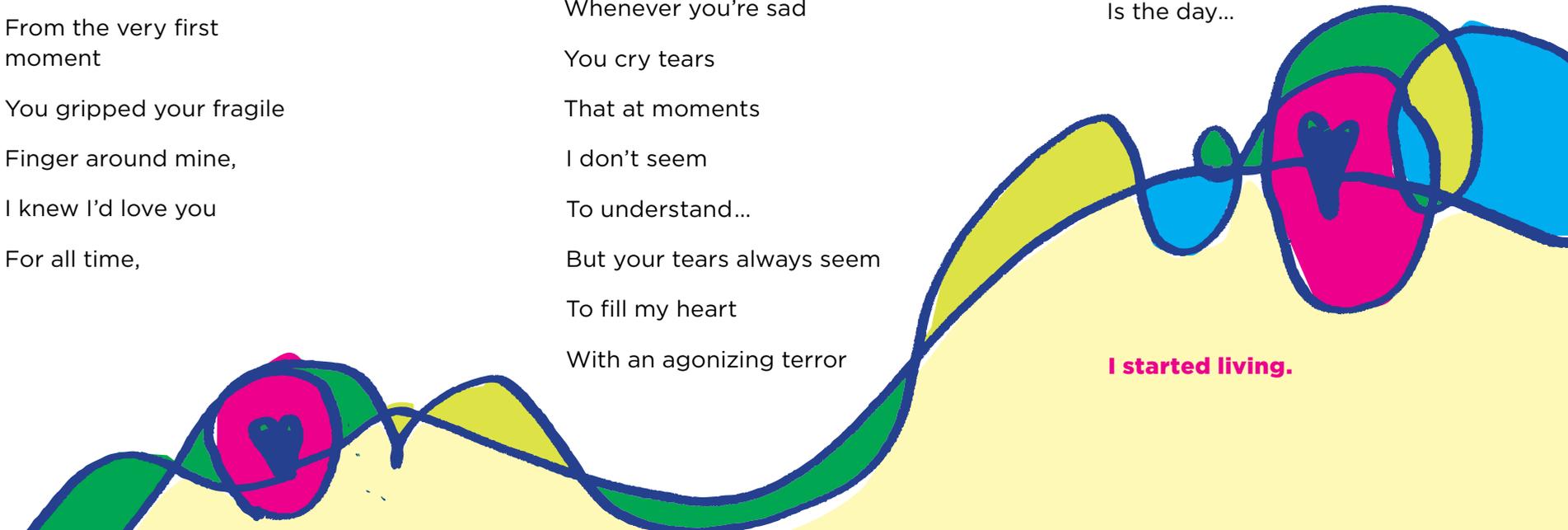


The hardships and responsibilities  
Are a massive weight  
On my heart,  
Exhausted  
And broken down  
I have become,  
Your tiny face  
Lifts my spirit,  
That smile melts  
The frustration  
And the aching pain away,  
From the very first  
moment  
You gripped your fragile  
Finger around mine,  
I knew I'd love you  
For all time,

Family, that's what we are  
Nothing can rip  
This special bond of ours  
Apart.  
There's nothing  
I wouldn't give  
To see you happy,  
You're my world...  
That will never change,  
Whenever you're sad  
You cry tears  
That at moments  
I don't seem  
To understand...  
But your tears always seem  
To fill my heart  
With an agonizing terror

That never seems  
To fade away,  
You're my pride and joy,  
Now and forever more,  
The day you came  
Into my life  
Is the day...

**I started living.**





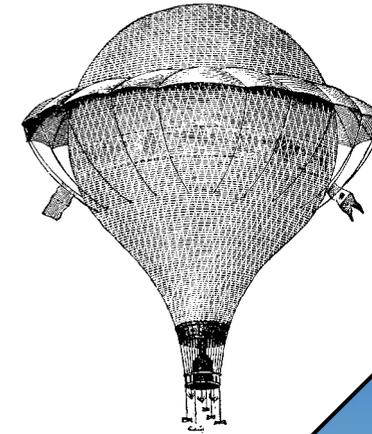
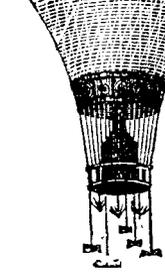
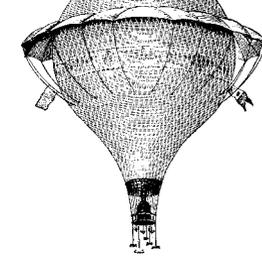
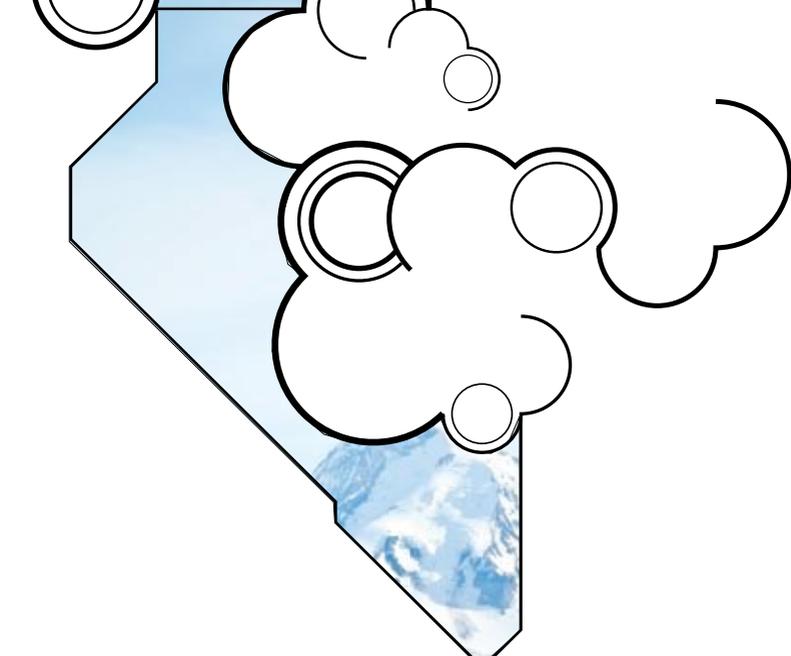
**DONT FORGET**

**2**

**LOOK UP**

**AND**

**OPEN YOUR EYES**



*Love Life Side*

# Your rights to health care services

By: Jessica Duke

As a youth, there are lots of reasons why you might need health care. You might need a routine check-up, such as getting a physical exam so you can play sports. You might need an immunization. You might have a special concern about healthy sexuality. Whatever your reason, it is usually a good idea to ask your parents or another adult to help you get the health care you need. In some situations, you may not be able to or want to involve an adult in your health care decisions.

If you seek health care without a parent's consent, you might want to know if the care you receive will be kept confidential. Confidentiality is an agreement between the patient and provider to ensure personal information is only shared with those people the patient wants to have it. It is important for you to discuss what level of confidentiality you should expect when you seek health care services. Oregon law does not give minors a right to confidentiality or parents a right to disclosure. When a minor self-consents for health care services, providers are encouraged

to use their best clinical judgment in deciding whether to share information with the parent or guardian. However, most people, minors included, expect some level of confidentiality when receiving health care services. Providers and adolescent patients should discuss usual confidentiality practices, as well as the types of information that providers are required to report.

If you want your health care to be confidential (between you and the health care provider), remember:

- Ask whether your provider's office or clinic offers confidential care for minors.
- If you use your parent's insurance, information about the health care you receive will probably be sent to them.
- If you don't want to use your parent's insurance, try to find a clinic that offers free care or lets you make payments that you can afford.

- Let your provider's office or clinic know whether it's okay to call you at home, on your cell phone or at some other number.
- Make plans for how you will receive mail from your provider's office or clinic.

## IN OREGON —

Minors 15 years of age or older are able to consent to medical and dental services without parental consent. This includes hospital care, as well as medical, dental, *optometric* and surgical diagnostic care. This would include services such as:

- Treatment for illnesses or injuries (colds, sprained ankle);
- Sports or camp physicals;
- Dental visits (check-ups, cleanings, fillings);
- X-ray services;
- Emergency room visits;
- Vision care (except for first time contact lens visit); and immunizations.

Minors of any age are allowed to access birth control-related information and services

as well as treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) without parental consent.

A minor 14 years of age or older may access outpatient mental health, drug or alcohol treatment (excluding methadone) without parental consent. These services may include:

- Seeking help from a psychiatrist or psychologist;
- Seeking mental health therapy from a doctor or social worker; and
- Seeking help for drug or alcohol use.

In most cases, providers are expected to involve parents in the minors' mental health, drug or alcohol treatment.

*As with most legal matters, the answer to "What are a minor's rights to access health care?" is long and detailed. The Oregon Health Authority created a guide, "Minor Rights: Access and Consent to Health Care," that summarizes the many state laws concerning minors and health care. The guide is available at <http://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyPeopleFamilies/Youth/Documents/MinorConsent.pdf>.*



# Not your mama's guide

By: Liz Reich  
(with special thanks to Mary Flanigan)

# WHAT I WISH MINE HAD TAUGHT ME



I can't pinpoint an age when I actually understood what sex was, but I clearly remember all the fragments I had about it swirling about my young mind with no one to guide them into place. When people ask me now why I'm volunteering a year of my time to teach middle and high school students about sex, it's my own memory of those misguided facts that provokes my reasoning.

Growing up, my parents were quick to tell me about stranger danger, drugs and all that other risky stuff. But they never managed to have the same frank and honest conversations about sex. The result was that I gathered factoids from the most reliable sources of information I could find: my friends and the television.

So now that I teach about birth control, healthy relationships and the lovely world of STIs, I've had a lot of time to reflect on how little I really knew at that age and what I wish I had been taught. So here goes...

### PEER PRESSURE:

I learned about peer pressure until I was blue in the face from school, church and those obnoxious videos where some bad kid was always trying to make the good kid smoke a joint because "everyone was doing it." It was such a buzzword that I didn't take it seriously. My own friends would never do that!

I now realize that the pressure I experienced as a girl was much more subtle than the antiquated videos portrayed. More often than not, I put tons of pressure on myself to fit in and be liked and didn't realize that this internalized peer pressure or

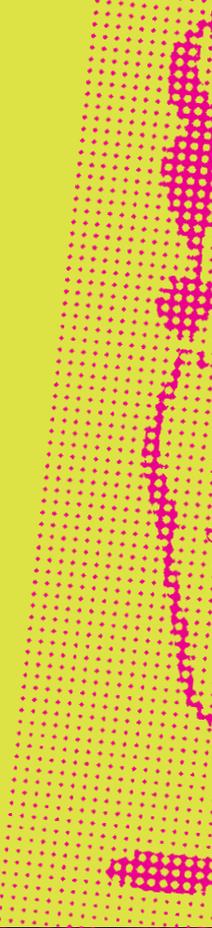


"keeping-up-with-the-Ashleys" mentality was even more detrimental than anything someone could have said to me. Peer pressure isn't just aggressive words but the uneasy feeling a potential decision's weight brings that can come from other sources besides just peers.

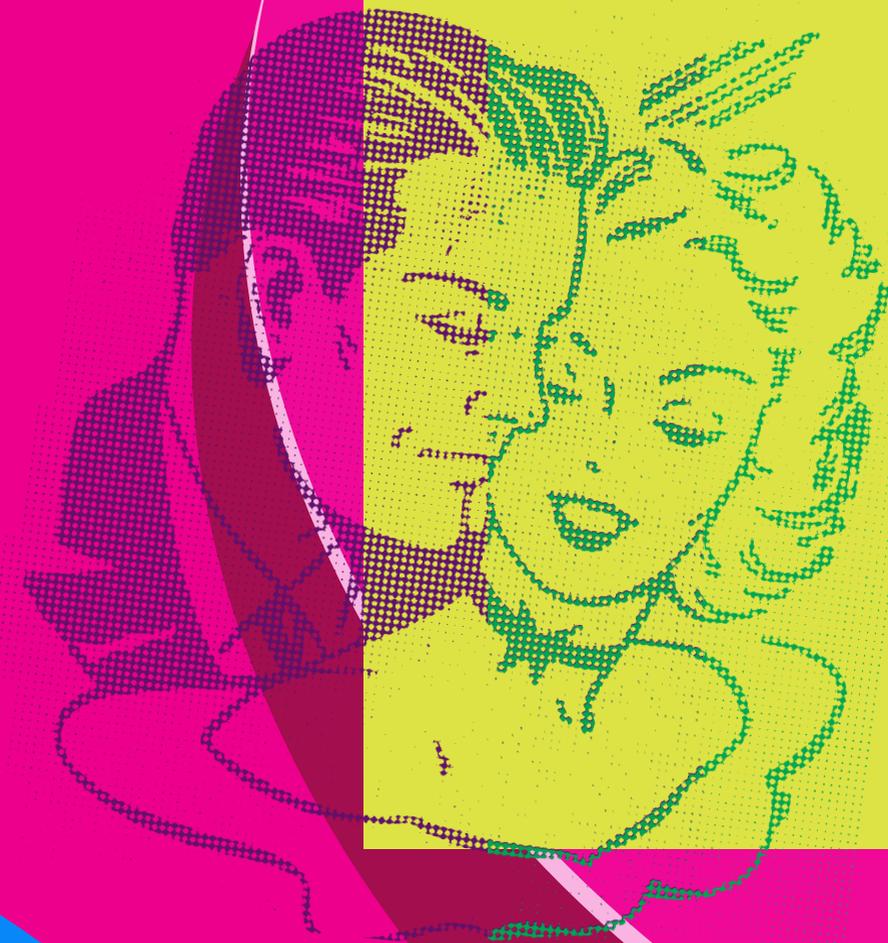
### THE MEDIA:

Movies are not real, not even close. By the time most people lose their virginity, they've likely seen dozens or hundreds of sex scenes in their favorite shows and movies. I hate to say it, but it leads to disappointment. Even if you grew up in my house where my parents fast-forwarded through any sort of sex/make-out scene, it

only served to add a layer of mystique to this forbidden activity. Sex is not necessarily glamorous, simple or initiated by one gaze from across a dimly-lit room. It's awkward, and that doesn't mean it isn't supposed to be. This awkwardness often brings two people closer together, depending on their level of intimacy and trust (think *Superbad*.) Everyone knows that teens go through changes and puberty and all that, but the teen brain is also still developing. The fact is that sex is just as complicated for adults, but they are better equipped to deal with the consequences. That's why they preach abstinence and postponing sexual involvement to teens.



# Not your mama's guide



## UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS:

They aren't just the ones that result in black eyes. If you or someone you know is in a relationship that uses sex, threats or jealousy in any way to try to control or threaten you, that's probably not a healthy relationship. We are told a lot about physical violence, but there's also emotional and psychological abuse that can be just as damaging to a person's self-esteem, reputation and ability to trust other partners in the future. Let's not forget that unhealthy relationships can occur in any relationship. Although guys often get the bad rap for being the abuser, both men and women can be abusive. That abuse can take many forms; it can be overly critical comments, guilt trips or extreme jealousy.

## BEING ASSERTIVE ABOUT BOUNDARIES:

Send clear messages. It isn't rude to express what you want. If you aren't interested in



someone, use clear and concise language. American culture designates that girls be raised to feel like they have to be super-sensitive to everyone's feelings. However, that doesn't mean that their feelings should get trampled on in return. In any circumstance — whether it's an unwanted hook-up or a certain flavor of ice cream — you have the right to say no. Saying no is enough. No explanation or apology is necessary. What we teach to some Oregon sixth graders, I became comfortable with at the age of 23. There really is some logic to "just say no" — as corny as it sounds.

## LOSING THE BIG V-CARD:

Most people in their lifetime choose to have sex. Despite what it might seem like, not everyone in your school or

life is having sex. It is a rite of passage of sorts and, for better or worse, you will always remember that experience. It's not some item to be crossed off an imaginary list like, "Oh I got that out of the way. Now I can have sex all the time with anyone!" With waiting and boundaries comes respect, and respect is always something worth having.

## FRIENDS:

Don't listen to your friends about sex. Friends are great for a lot of things, but giving out accurate information on sex isn't one of them. If I had listened to my friends I would have still thought that a girl can get pregnant from oral sex. (BTW, now I just know that while this isn't possible, lots of gnarly infections are.)

Remember, it's taken me and many others years to figure this stuff out. So if you already know most of this, you're three steps ahead of the game.



# STI myths and facts

**S**exually transmitted infections (STIs) are spread through sexual behavior such as vaginal, oral or anal sex. Sometimes STIs are spread through intimate skin-to-skin contact.

**MYTH #1:** You can get an STI from a toilet seat.

There is no evidence that you can get an STI from a toilet.

**MYTH #2:** You cannot get HIV or an STI from a tattoo or body piercing.

There is a risk for HIV, hepatitis B or C or other infections if the instruments used for piercing or tattooing are used more than once and are not sterilized or disinfected between clients. Ask the staff at the parlor about their equipment. They should follow state laws for sterilization.

**MYTH #3:** I will know if I have an STI because all STIs have symptoms.

Some STIs have symptoms such as unusual discharge from the vagina or penis; an unexplained rash; burning sensation while peeing; or bumps, sores or blisters in the genital area. However, it is important to know that many STIs may have no symptoms at all or signs that are so mild you may not notice. If you have any symptoms, seek health care as soon as possible. If you are sexually active, you should get tested for STIs.

**MYTH #4:** You cannot get an STI from oral sex.

During oral sex, you can give your partner your STI and you can get theirs.

**MYTH #5:** If my partner is a virgin, I will not get an STI.

It really depends on how you or your partner defines being a virgin. STIs can be transmitted through oral and anal sex, but many people believe that if they haven't had vaginal

intercourse they are still a virgin. Some STIs can be transmitted through intimate skin-to-skin contact even when there isn't any penetration.

## You can protect yourself from STIs!

You can do many things to reduce your chances of getting a sexually transmitted disease. The surest way to avoid getting an STI is abstinence (not having sex of any kind). Using condoms correctly every time you have sex can provide very good, though not 100 percent, protection against STIs.

*For more information on sexually transmitted infections and to find STI testing services where you live, go to [www.itsyoursexlife.com/gyt](http://www.itsyoursexlife.com/gyt).*

LOVE IS A GAME  
THAT TWO  
CAN PLAY AND  
BOTH WIN

$$1 + 1 = 2$$



# The decision

By: Ronnie Parsley

My mind goes blank,  
Confusion starts to fill.

What to do?

I want to say *yes*.

I want to say *n o*.

But I don't know.

**You** want me to say *yes*.

Why not you ask

I don't know.

I'm getting nervous.

Afraid of the consequences,

If I did say *yes* to **you**.

If I say *n o* I lose **you**.

If I say *yes* I lose others.

Lose one or a ton?

I know it's not worth it

Not in the long haul.

But Right now it seems like it.

The fun. The craving.

All of it satisfied.

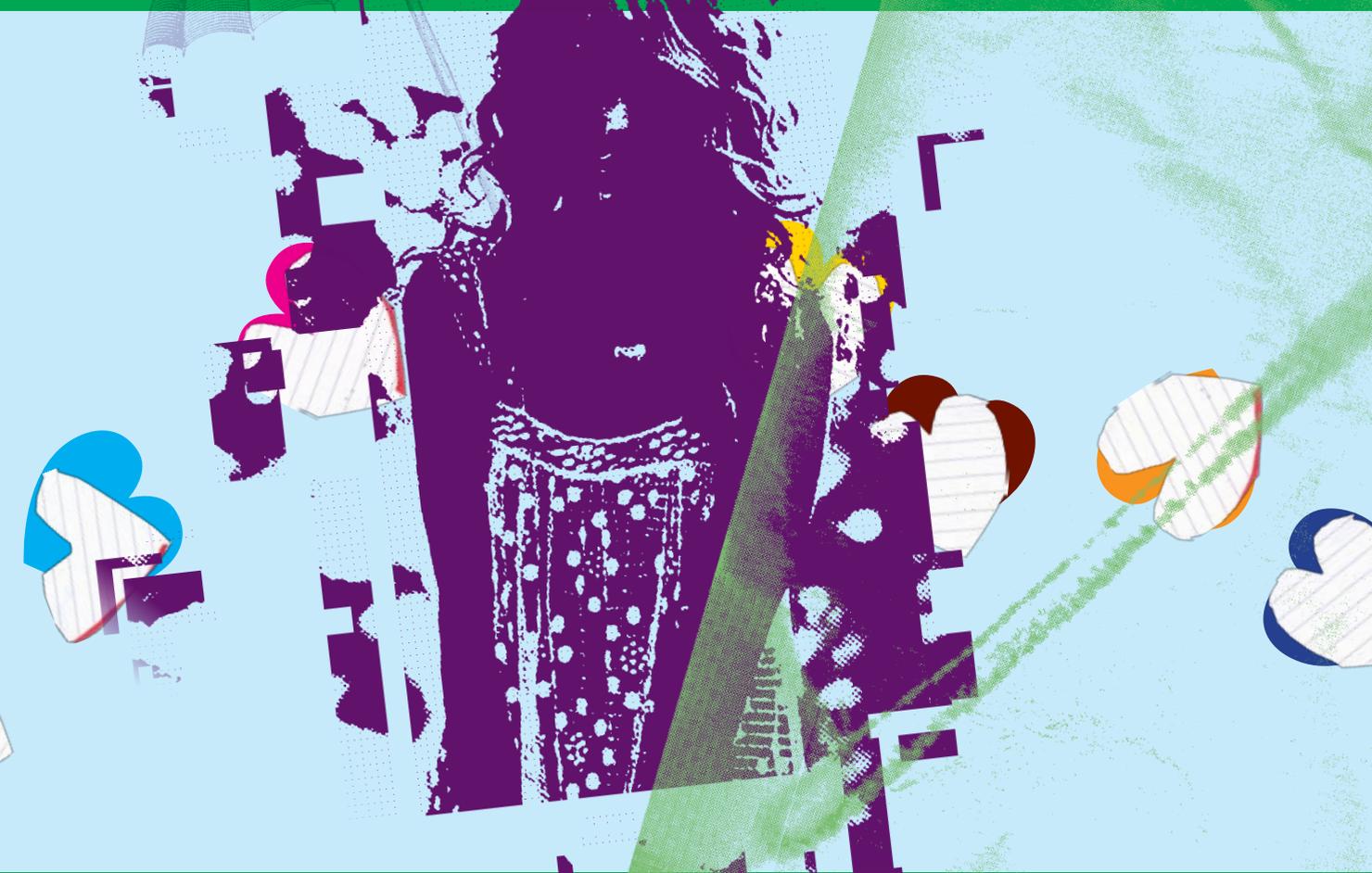
What should I do?

*Yes* or *n o* ?

**You** or others?

I think and think

But still I don't know.



“I used to think **preventing pregnancy** meant...”

“Spending money I didn’t have.”

“Putting my health at risk.”

“Being stuck with a method I hate.”

“...Now I know.”

These are some of the statements shared by students during several focus group discussions about birth control last year. What they all know now is that much of what they believed about birth control and pregnancy prevention was based on misconceptions — or simply put, bad information and urban myths. They learned that they can get the birth control method and services they want and need free through the Oregon Public Health ContraceptiveCare Program CCare for short.

CCare provides confidential, high quality services and birth control supplies free to teens, women and men who qualify. To qualify, you have to be a US citizen or Lawful Permanent Resident (for up to five years), live in Oregon, have a Social Security number and make \$1,671 per month or less (if you are single). So what exactly do you get free? You get a health assessment and physical exam (as needed); counseling about sexual health, birth control and more; information and referrals to other health and social services if you like; and your choice of a birth control method. CCare has lots of methods available, and the CCare health care providers can help you choose the birth control method that works best for you.

Check out the CCare website at [ccare.oregon.gov](http://ccare.oregon.gov) to learn more and to find a clinic near you. Be sure to watch the video that describes what to expect at a typical clinic visit and play some of the games. Also, find Oregon CCare on Facebook and become a fan to learn even more about birth control.

Now you know. Turn misconception into contraception with CCare today!

## Resources

Connect with these resources for assistance, information and referral.

**Oregon SafeNet** is the toll-free health and social service helpline for Oregon. Referrals for most health care needs, including reproductive health services, vaccine information and STD testing, are available at 1-800-723-3638. Go to [www.oregonsafenet.org](http://www.oregonsafenet.org) for resources and information.

**National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline** provides resources for teens, parents, friends and family. All communication is confidential and anonymous. Call 1-866-331-9474 or go to [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org).

**National Sexual Assault Hotline** provides victims of sexual assault with free, confidential services around the clock. Call 1-800-656-4673 or go to [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org).

**Oregon AIDS/STD Hotline** provides information and referral on sexually transmitted infections. Call 1-800-777-2437 or go to [www.oregonaidshotline.com](http://www.oregonaidshotline.com).

**Insights Teen Parenting Program** is one of the few nonprofit agencies in the United States devoted exclusively to the needs of young parents. Call 503-239-6996 or go to [www.insightstpp.org](http://www.insightstpp.org).

**Open Adoption & Family Services** offers pregnancy option counseling and open adoption services. Call 1-800-772-1115 or go to [www.openadopt.org](http://www.openadopt.org).

**SMYRC — Sexual & Gender Minority Youth Resource Center** creates safety and support for LGBTQQ youth in Oregon through youth empowerment, community building, education and direct services. Call 503-872-9664 or go to [www.smyrc.org](http://www.smyrc.org).

## A publication of the Oregon Teen Pregnancy Task Force

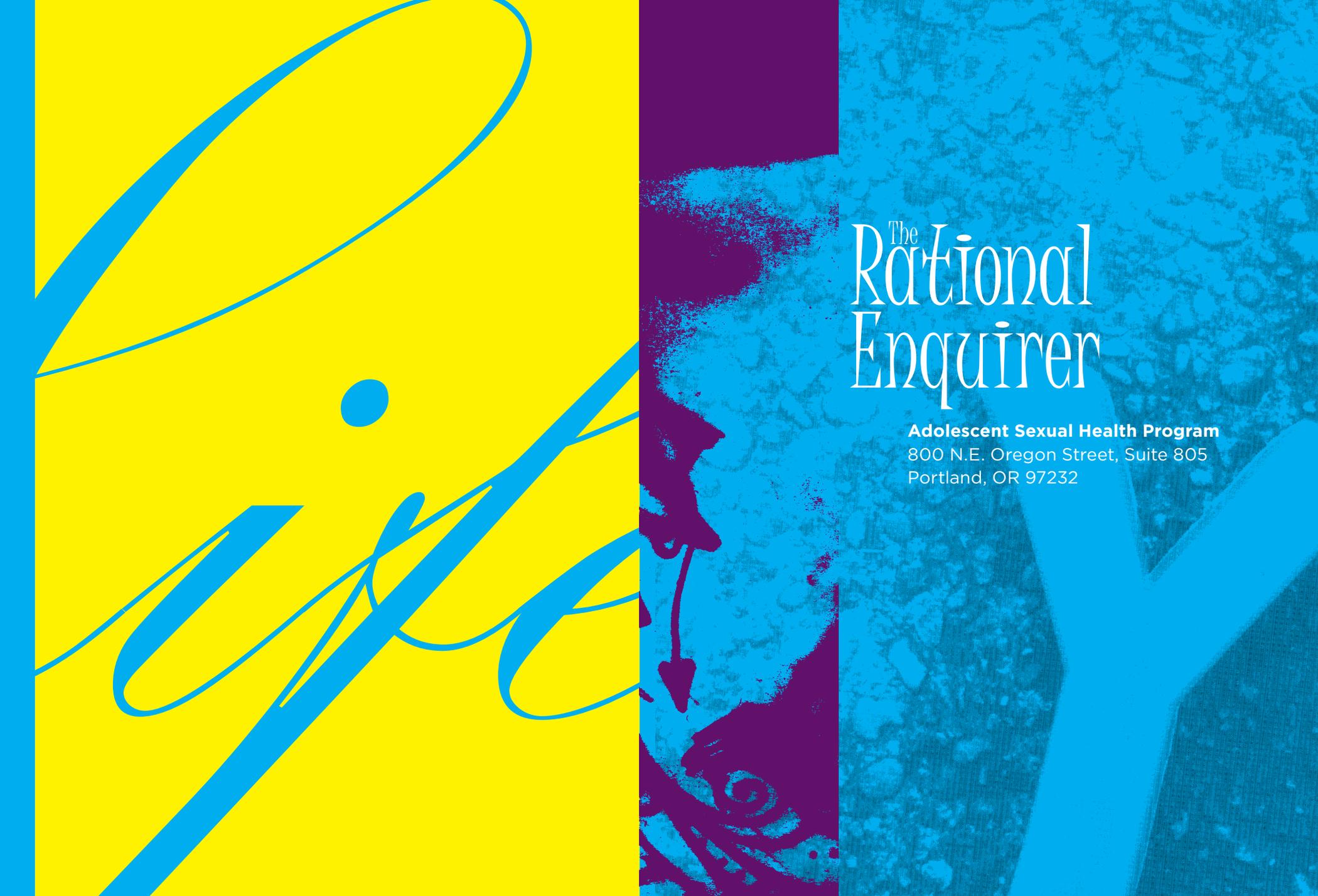
Oregon  
**Health**  
Authority

This publication is funded by the Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division.

Copy editors: Macy Guppy, Peg Cross \\ Designer: Gabe Markus \\ Contributing artist: Corinne Markus

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Oregon Health Authority.

The Rational Enquirer is always looking for more ways to connect. We are now on [facebook](#) and invite everyone reading to **become a fan** — connect with us and share your ideas.



# The Rational Enquirer

**Adolescent Sexual Health Program**

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