



The  
**Rational  
Enquirer**

Sex

Life

Love

2012

Identity

FREE!!!

DO I WANT A RELATIONSHIP  
COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY  
NOT EVERYONE'S A PLAYER  
WHY WAITING MAKES SENSE

**WELCOME TO THE 17TH EDITION OF THE RATIONAL ENQUIRER. WE HOPE THIS YOUTH-FOCUSED SEXUAL HEALTH MAGAZINE PROVIDES YOU WITH INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND FOOD FOR THOUGHT. THE RATIONAL ENQUIRER ARTICLES CAN BE USED TO SPARK CONVERSATIONS ABOUT **SEX, IDENTITY, LOVE AND LIFE**. IN FACT, SOME OF THE ARTICLES HAVE TIPS AND HINTS ON HOW TO HAVE MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS WITH PARTNERS, PARENTS AND FRIENDS. THERE ALSO ARE ARTICLES ABOUT KEEPING YOURSELF SAFE AND HEALTHY AS YOU EXPLORE RELATIONSHIPS. DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT THE RESOURCES PAGE AT THE END OF THE MAGAZINE. THERE ARE MANY ORGANIZATIONS THAT CAN ASSIST YOU. THE RATIONAL ENQUIRER IS AN ANNUAL PUBLICATION. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE FOR THE 2013 EDITION, PLEASE SEND A NOTE TO [JESSICA.DUKE@STATE.OR.US](mailto:JESSICA.DUKE@STATE.OR.US) TO GET THE "HOW TO" INFORMATION.**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DO I WANT A RELATIONSHIP? .....	4	U R BREAKING UP!? .....	29
COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY .....	8	THE T IN LGBTQ .....	30
NOT SURE IF YOU WANT TO HAVE SEX?.....	12	NOT EVERYONE'S A PLAYER .....	34
CONDOMS ARE THE BOMB .....	14	MY HEART .....	38
SAFE SEX ON THE GO .....	15	TEENAGE PREGNANCY .....	40
HIV AND OREGON YOUTH.....	16	WHAT IS A LARC? .....	42
SAFER SEX MSM.....	18	THAT AWKWARD MOMENT.....	46
SAFER SEX WSW .....	20	WHY WAITING MAKES SENSE.....	48
GETTING OVER THEM .....	24	BIRTH CONTROL EFFECTIVENESS .....	50
IT'S OVER - WHEN A RELATIONSHIP IS ENDING .....	26	RESOURCE PAGE .....	51

# DO I WANT A RELATIONSHIP?

Deciding whether to have a boyfriend  
or girlfriend might be a big decision.  
There's no hurry.

Remember that it is OK to be single.



**If you choose to be single, it might give you more time to do stuff that you want to do, like:**

- Hang out with friends;
- Focus on school work;
- Enjoy extracurricular activities, like sports or clubs.

Being single can mean you get to find out more about yourself. Not everybody wants to be in a relationship. **You might:**

- Not feel ready;
- Have made a choice not to be in a relationship;
- Enjoy your freedom;
- Not have met someone you want to have a relationship with.

Only you can decide if you want a relationship. It's all right to take time to decide if a relationship is right for you. In making this decision, you might want to consider what you want from a relationship. Different people want different things.

## **SOME OF THE QUALITIES OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS ARE:**

- Romance;
- Intimacy;
- Friendship;
- Excitement;
- Honesty;
- Affection;
- Respect;
- Love;
- Communication;
- Happiness;
- Trust;
- Commitment.

## **AM I READY FOR A RELATIONSHIP?**

It's not unusual to want to be in a relationship, as this is a normal part of developing as a young person. You might be attracted to guys, girls, both, or you might still be working it out. There is no pressure or hurry to find someone you like right away. It's OK to take your time. Taking it slow might be hard if you are attracted to someone and you are not sure whether they feel the same way. It takes courage to show someone you are interested in him or her.

## **I'M ATTRACTED. NOW WHAT?**

It's important to spend time getting to know the person you're attracted to. Your first impression might not always be accurate. You can discover more about each other by spending more time together. If you already know the person, it might be a good idea to think about how a romantic relationship might affect the friendship.

## **HOW CAN I START A CONVERSATION?**

For even the most confident people, starting a conversation with someone you are attracted to can be scary. If there is attraction involved, fears about being rejected or embarrassed might race through your mind, causing you to become tongue-tied, shy or nervous.

A great way to open up a conversation and get to know a person better is by asking them open-ended questions that require more than a "yes or no" answer. You might want to start with general questions that are non-threatening or impersonal. You can also talk about things you like. What sort of music do you like? What do you do on the weekends?

If you feel comfortable and you think the other person is comfortable, you might want to move onto more personal things, like opinions. Try asking the person questions that start with "What do you think about..."

Along with asking questions and talking about yourself, it might also be helpful to let the person know you are listening to him or her.

**Here are some tips on how to let others know you're listening:**

- Ask questions to get a better understanding of what the person has been talking about;
- Say what you think, feel or sense about what he or she has said;
- Repeat in your own words what he or she has been saying.

Body language—or the way you hold and move your body while you’re interacting with someone can also send out signals to let someone know you are attracted to him or her. Body language is usually unintentional.

**Some examples of body language are:**

- Eye contact;
- Facial expression;
- Gestures;
- Speed and tone of speech.

**If you’re attracted to someone,** it can be helpful to note his or her body language and yours. Making eye contact and moving closer to the person, but not overcrowding them, are two forms of body language that might mean that someone is interested.

## WHAT IF MY INTEREST ISN'T RETURNED?

**It can be hard when you realize that a person you’re interested in doesn’t feel the same way.** You might feel rejected, embarrassed or sad. Try to remember the good qualities about yourself, the interests that you enjoy, and the positive things in your life. Talking to someone you can trust can also be helpful. Try talking to a friend or family member. If you’re finding that your feelings are getting in the way of doing everyday stuff, it may be helpful to talk to someone like a counselor.

## GIVING OUT PERSONAL DETAILS

**If you’re starting to meet people online,** or are hanging out with new people in person, be aware of giving out personal details, like where you live or your phone number. If you do decide to meet someone you don’t

know, try to do it in a place where other people are around. It might also be a good idea to have a friend nearby for support. Some people are not always honest and might give you false information or try to hurt you.

## DO WHAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU TO HAVE A HAPPY, HEALTHY AND FUN RELATIONSHIP!

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<http://us.reachout.com/facts/factsheet/do-i-want-a-relationship>



**"ONLY YOU CAN DECIDE IF YOU**

**WANT A RELATIONSHIP.**

**IT'S ALL RIGHT TO TAKE TIME TO DECIDE**

**IF A RELATIONSHIP IS RIGHT FOR YOU."**



# COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY



## TIP #1: USE 'I' STATEMENTS

An “I” statement is a way of communicating about a problem to another person without blaming that person for the problem. When we point the finger at ourselves rather than the other person, and avoid blaming them, we usually get a more positive response. For example, use phrases like: “I feel disappointed that you canceled at the last minute” rather than “You’ve let me down again.”

“You” statements on the other hand put people on the defensive and often lead to a hostile response.

## TIP #2: CLEARLY EXPRESS HOW YOU FEEL, WHAT YOU THINK AND WHAT YOU WANT

Assuming that others know what you want can create all sorts of problems. When you hint rather than make a clear statement, people don’t always get the message. Similarly, when you ramble on rather than state your thoughts clearly, people may not get the message. If there is something that you need to say, it is helpful to tell it as it is. Don’t hint.

## TIP #3: DO IT NOW

If there is an issue you need to raise or a situation that needs to be resolved, try to deal with it as soon as possible. The longer you avoid it, the more difficult it can be to resolve the situation. Tensions will rise.

An exception to this rule is if you feel very angry, and you can’t trust yourself to stay calm when you talk about the situation. In this case, it’s often a good idea to have a cooling off period before you raise the issue. Taking time out to cool down can prevent conflict and reduce the likelihood that you will say things that you could later regret. Sometimes you might need a day or two to cool down before you say what’s on your mind. This is also a good caution if the person you are having a problem with is feeling angry and needs some time to cool down.

## TIP #4: ASK FOR CLARIFICATION

Just as people can’t always read your mind, sometimes it is difficult to interpret what someone else is thinking or feeling. If you are confused about the message that you are receiving from someone, the best thing to do is to ask him or her for clarification. This can help prevent misunderstandings.

For example, if a friend seems withdrawn and you suspect that they are angry with you, try saying: “You seem quiet. Have I done something to upset you?” or “Is everything ok?” Checking it out with them can help bring issues to the surface. Then you can talk about it. On the other hand, if there is actually nothing wrong, talking about it will ease your concerns.

## TIP #5: ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR DISCOMFORT IN RAISING AN ISSUE

If you feel uncomfortable raising a particular issue, it can be helpful to let the other person know this. For example, try saying: “I feel really awkward about bringing this up but ...” or “I need to talk to you about something and I’m feeling nervous about it. I don’t want to hurt your feelings, but if I don’t say anything, I think I’ll continue to feel upset.”

By honestly referring to your discomfort, you “lower the temperature” on the situation and reduce the likelihood that the other person will become hostile or defensive.

## TIP #6: BE AWARE OF YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

The way you speak — including the volume and tone of your voice, your physical gestures and your facial expressions — all have an important impact on how your message will be received. For example, if you fold your arms in front of your chest, have a stern expression on your face or speak in an accusing tone, the other person is likely to find your body language threatening, and they might feel defensive even before they have heard what you have to say.

**“ COMMUNICATING POSITIVE FEELINGS TOWARDS OTHERS LETS THEM KNOW WE VALUE THEM ... ”**



On the other hand, an open posture, a calm voice and relaxed body language can help the other person feel at ease. Your message will be delivered in a non-threatening way.

Remember the acronym **SOLER** when you're trying to project good body language.

- S - Squarely face the person.**
- O - Open posture - no crossed arms or fidgeting.**
- L - Lean towards the person enough to show interest.**
- E - Maintain eye contact without staring.**
- R - Relax.**

### TIP #7: COMMUNICATE POSITIVE FEELINGS

Developing good relationships means being able to express positive feelings, too. We often assume that people know that we like them or appreciate what they do for us, so we don't tell them. But people aren't mind-readers, and if we don't tell them how we feel — whether positive or negative — they don't always know. (And even if they do know, it's still nice to hear someone say nice things every now and then!) Communicating positive feelings towards others lets them know that we value them and helps strengthen relationships.

Warm feelings can be expressed as a whole message. For example: "The other day when I was upset about things at school, you sat down and asked me if I was ok. It was really good to talk to you. I appreciate your concern. I just wanted to say thanks and tell you that you're a good friend."

Alternatively, you can communicate warm feelings by making simple statements, like: "Thanks for being there for me the other day," or "You've been a good friend. I really appreciate it."

### YOUR BILL OF RIGHTS

**You have the right to:**

- Express your opinion;
- Say 'no';
- Make mistakes;
- Change your mind;
- Disagree with others;
- Ask for what you want;
- Be treated with respect;
- Not take responsibility for other people's problems.

**Adapted from:** Taking Charge! A Guide for Teenagers: Practical Ways to Overcome Stress, Hassles and Upsetting Emotions. By: Dr. Sarah Edelman and Louise Rémond, Foundation for Life Sciences (2005).

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NOT SURE IF YOU  
WANT TO HAVE  
SEX  
?



## INFORMATION TO HELP YOU DECIDE

**The decision to have sex or not is yours, and yours alone.**

If you just had sex for the first time, or are considering having sex for the first time, there are important questions you should ask yourself. If you're thinking about having sex with a new partner, these questions are still helpful for you. Sex is a big emotional event, and a big physical event. Asking some basic questions of yourself can help you decide if you're ready.

### YOUR VALUES

**What are your moral feelings about sex?** What are your parents' feelings? Does religion influence your feelings?

Do you feel you can or want to have a close relationship with someone without having sex?

Do you feel you need to be in love with your partner before having sex?

Do your values conflict with your decision to have sex? If so, you may not be ready.

### YOUR PARTNER

**Do both of you feel the same way,** or is one of you pressuring the other?

Can you talk with your partner honestly about your feelings towards sex?

How will it change your relationship with your partner? How do you each *expect* it will change your relationship? Have you discussed this?

If you feel pressured, or haven't talked with your partner about your feelings about sex, you're not ready.

### MAKING SURE YOU'RE PREPARED

**Have you and your partner talked about** preventing pregnancy, and prepared for this, like buying condoms?

Have you and your partner talked about preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs)? Have you prepared? Have you both been tested for STIs and talked with each other about the tests and the results?

If your partner doesn't want to talk about pregnancy or STI prevention, he or she isn't ready to have sex. Only when you care enough about each other's feelings and physical health to protect each other, and you've made a plan to do that, is when you're ready to have sex.

### NEVER BE EMBARRASSED TO:

Say 'no.'

Talk to your partner about your feelings and about protection.

Buy condoms or ask your health care provider about birth control.

**Make a plan.** Don't leave yourself unprotected for pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections.

**Source:** TeenSource.org, a project of the California Family Health Council.

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**“SEX IS A BIG EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL EVENT. ASKING SOME BASIC QUESTIONS CAN HELP YOU DECIDE IF YOU'RE READY.”**



## CONDOMS ARE THE BOMB

**THEY ARE CHEAP; YOU CAN GET THEM ALMOST ANYWHERE AND THEY COME IN ALL DIFFERENT SHAPES, SIZES AND COLORS.**

**GLOW IN THE DARK, FLAVORED, LATEX ... THERE ARE TONS OF CHOICES OF CONDOMS OUT THERE FOR YOU AND YOUR PARTNER. THE WIDE RANGE AND DIVERSITY OF CONDOMS IS GREAT, BUT THE BEST THING ABOUT ANY CONDOM IS USING IT CONSISTENTLY!!**

**SOME OTHER “FUN FACTS” ARE: WHEN CONDOMS ARE USED ALL THE TIME, THEY PREVENT BOTH PREGNANCY AND STIS.**

**IF USED CORRECTLY, CONDOMS PREVENT PREGNANCY 97 PERCENT OF THE TIME.**

**THEY ARE EXTREMELY CONVENIENT! THEY’RE CHEAP – LESS THAN \$1 EACH, OR FREE FROM CLINICS, YOU DON’T NEED A PRESCRIPTION TO BUY THEM, AND CAN BE FOUND IN SUPERMARKETS, CONVENIENCE STORES AND DRUGSTORES, AND EVEN SOME VENDING MACHINES.**

**CONDOMS ARE CHEAP, SAFE, WITHOUT SIDE EFFECTS AND WORK – BUT ONLY IF YOU USE A NEW ONE EACH AND EVERY TIME YOU HAVE SEX. CONDOMS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE WHEN USED PROPERLY. BE SURE YOU KNOW HOW TO USE THEM!**

**SOURCE: TEENSOURCE.ORG, A PROJECT OF THE CALIFORNIA FAMILY HEALTH COUNCIL.**

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## SAFE SEX ON THE GO

IF YOU ARE OUT AND ABOUT AND NEED TO KNOW WHERE TO PURCHASE CONDOMS, THESE APPS WILL HELP YOU FIND SOME.

1. **iCONDOM** (FREE AT iTUNES) – MTV STAYING ALIVE AND iCONDOM HAVE COMPILED A LIST OF PLACES AROUND THE UNITED STATES THAT ALLOW USERS TO FIND FREE AND LOW-COST CONDOMS!

2. **HOW2USE CONDOM** (FREE AT iTUNES AND 99 CENTS FOR ANDROID) – THIS APP USES PICTURES TO DEMONSTRATE HOW TO ACCURATELY USE A CONDOM.

# HIV AND OREGON YOUTH



## HOW COMMON IS HIV IN OREGON?

From 1981 to the end of 2009, there were 8,467 reported cases of Oregon residents diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. By the end of 2009, 41 percent of those people had died, leaving 5,001 people living with HIV/AIDS in Oregon.

## ARE THERE PARTICULAR POPULATIONS THAT HIV AFFECTS IN OREGON?

As of 2009, 59 percent of HIV+ cases resided in Multnomah County. There also is evidence that minorities are disproportionately affected by HIV. Of new diagnoses, African Americans had rates that were 3.5 times higher than whites, while Latinos had rates that were 1.2 times higher than whites.

Men who have sex with men (MSM) accounted for 69 percent of new infections among males in Oregon. For women, the vast majority (75 percent) of them contracted HIV through heterosexual contact.

## HOW DOES HIV AFFECT YOUNG PEOPLE?

In 2009, 39 percent of all new HIV infection cases in the United States were among people 15-29 years of age.

Young MSM, especially those of minority races and ethnicities, are at higher risk for HIV infections. In 2009, young MSM accounted for 69 percent of new HIV infections among persons aged 13-29. If you want tips on how to be safe in same-sex relationships, see the articles on “Safer Sex” on pages 18-21.

## WHAT ARE SOME IDENTIFIED RISK FACTORS FOR HIV INFECTION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE?

Early age of sexual initiation;

Unprotected sex;

Sex with older partners;

Male-to-male sex;

Sexual abuse;

Other sexually transmitted diseases;

Substance use;

Lack of awareness about HIV and ways to prevent infection.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MYSELF FROM HIV INFECTION?

Practice abstinence from sex.

Use condoms if you are sexually active.

Know your HIV status. Testing is available at many sites in Oregon.

Educate yourself on how you can prevent HIV!

Do you want more information about HIV prevention, testing or treatment?

Call the Oregon AIDS Hotline at [1-800-777-2437](tel:1-800-777-2437).

**Note:** All data are from the “Epidemiological Profile of HIV/AIDS in Oregon, 2009.”

**Author:** LaShanda Eller

LaShanda is a research analyst with the Oregon Health Authority.

**“ IN 2009, 39 PERCENT OF ALL NEW HIV INFECTION CASES IN THE UNITED STATES WERE AMONG PEOPLE 15-29 YEARS OF AGE.”**



## WHAT IS 'SAFE SEX' FOR TEEN GUYS WHO HAVE SEX WITH GUYS?

Sometimes when I go to parties, I see and know other teens engaging in risky sexual behavior, like hooking up with someone they just met at the end of the night, or not using protection when having sex. I think a big reason for this is being young, active, and going out can make you feel like you're invincible.

The reality is, it's extremely important for all teens, including gay and bisexual guys, to protect themselves from STIs and HIV/AIDS. Young men who have sex with men (MSM) are at high risk for STIs and HIV, and MSM accounted for over half of all new STIs in the U.S. from 2005-2008, with 85 percent of those cases affecting young men ages 13-24 years old.

## SAFE SEX FOR TEEN GUYS WHO HAVE SEX WITH GUYS

Even though guys aren't at risk for pregnancy, when they have sex with other guys they are still at risk for STIs and HIV/AIDS. Here are reasons why MSM should take steps to protect themselves:

MSM are at high risk for STIs, and the HIV rates in the U.S. have risen steadily among men who have sex with men since the 1990s.

Engaging in unprotected anal sex is especially risky when it comes to transmitting STIs and HIV. This is because it is easy to make small tears or cuts in and around the rectum where STIs and HIV can easily pass through.

Many MSM are not aware of their HIV status. In a nationwide study where 10 percent of young MSM tested positive for HIV, 69 percent of those who tested positive had been unaware of being infected.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF:

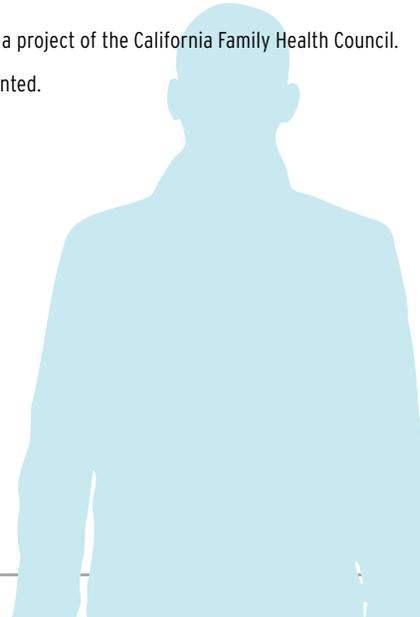
**Get tested, and know your partner's status.** Even if you are both in an exclusive relationship, you still should get tested to know your status. You know that saying, "it's not just about who you sleep with, it's about who they've slept with"? This is especially true for men who have engaged in unprotected anal sex.

**Use protection when having sex.** A dental dam can be used when having oral sex. A dental dam is a small piece of latex that is placed over the anus to protect from STIs. To read more about the dental dam, go to [www.teensource.org/ts/blog/2010/04/how-i-learned-about-importance-dental-dam.html](http://www.teensource.org/ts/blog/2010/04/how-i-learned-about-importance-dental-dam.html). Using a condom correctly every time you have anal sex is highly effective at reducing the risk of STI and HIV transmission.

**Get educated and find support.** Studies show that people who educate themselves on safe sexual practices and have peer support are more likely to protect their sexual health. Reading this article is a great first step.

Source: TeenSource.org, a project of the California Family Health Council.

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## WHAT IS 'SAFE SEX' FOR TEEN GIRLS WHO HAVE SEX WITH OTHER GIRLS?

Usually when I hear information about teen pregnancy and STI prevention, I see images of straight couples (like MTV's Teen Mom and 16 and Pregnant). I was thinking that it gives the illusion that lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT)-identified youth don't need to worry about the same issues.

The truth is, all sexually active women need to protect themselves from pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Here are some tips on how you and your partner can stay sexually healthy, and reduce the risk of getting pregnant.

## SAFE SEX FOR TEEN GIRLS WHO HAVE SEX WITH OTHER GIRLS

Sometimes lesbians or women who have sex with women (WSW) think they are safer because they are not having sex with men. However, WSW are still at risk for pregnancy, STIs, and HIV/AIDS. Here is why:

Studies show that lesbians or WSW will have sex with a man at least once in their life, and that lesbian-identified women are more likely to have unprotected sex with a man than heterosexual women. Just one experience of unprotected sex with a guy puts you at risk.

Some STIs like herpes, gonorrhea, or genital warts (HPV) are passed through skin contact. This means they can be transmitted through vaginal, anal, and oral sex, which makes lesbians and bisexual women vulnerable too.

Lesbians or WSW can have partners who may have had sex with other men. Not all WSW identify as lesbians, and getting tested protects you from possible STI transmission.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF:

**Get tested, and know your partner's status.** Even if you are both in an exclusive relationship, you still should get tested to know your status. You know that saying, "it's not just about who you sleep with, it's about who they've slept with"? This is especially true for people who have had sex with men.

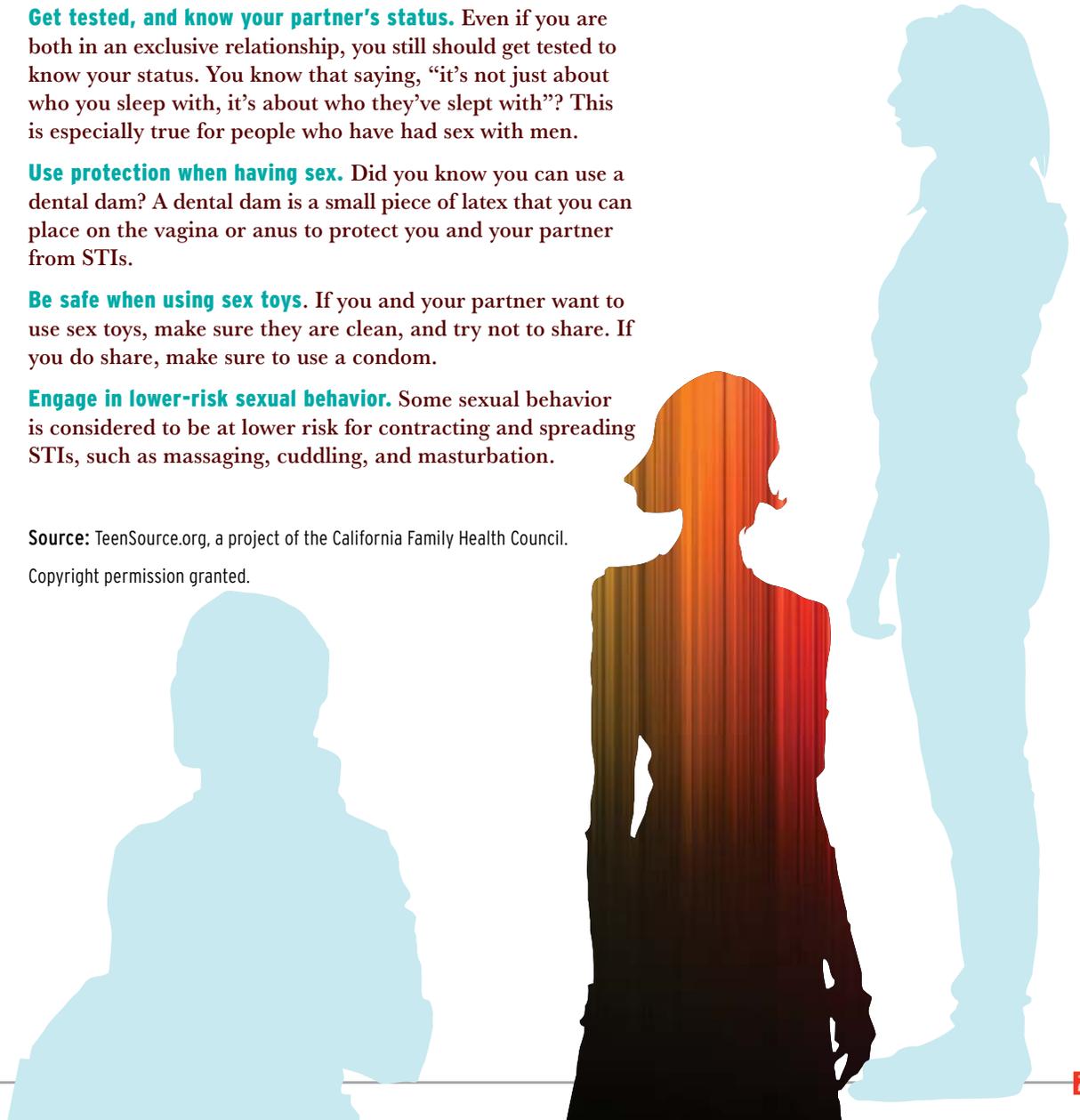
**Use protection when having sex.** Did you know you can use a dental dam? A dental dam is a small piece of latex that you can place on the vagina or anus to protect you and your partner from STIs.

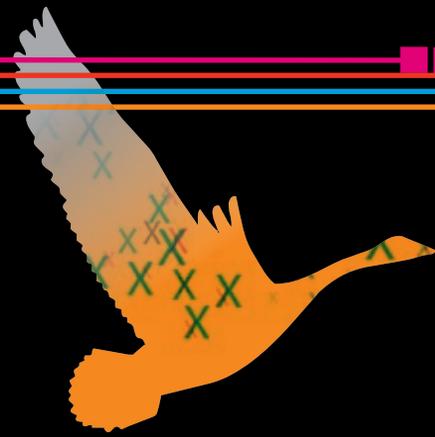
**Be safe when using sex toys.** If you and your partner want to use sex toys, make sure they are clean, and try not to share. If you do share, make sure to use a condom.

**Engage in lower-risk sexual behavior.** Some sexual behavior is considered to be at lower risk for contracting and spreading STIs, such as massaging, cuddling, and masturbation.

Source: TeenSource.org, a project of the California Family Health Council.

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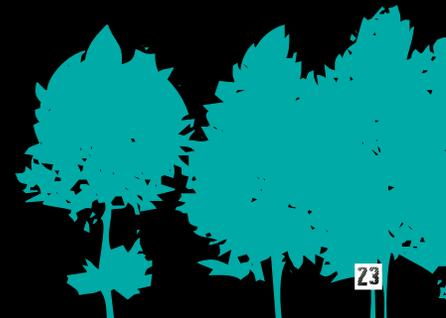




■ SEX

■ LIFE

■ IDENTITY



# GETTING OVER THEM

Getting over someone who breaks up with you after going out for a while is hard. Sometimes, trying to move on is really difficult.



**I personally have had five boyfriends in my past.** I'm a senior in high school and have been dating the same person for six months. We are still together and very happy from my point of view. I got to this stage of my life, being happy with my current boyfriend, on a somewhat rough road. I have had other boyfriends. There has never been any violence, no boyfriend ever hurt me physically, but there has been emotional pain.

The first boyfriend I loved was my second boyfriend. We are still friends. We talk off and on but I don't have feelings for him anymore. It took me about a year to get over him. It was very hard and required time, allowing pain to become growth. He broke up with me through a letter delivered to me by my older brother. We called it a "Dear Jane letter." It was two days after school let out for the summer. I read it four or five times before it really hit my emotions. When the words kicked in I was wrenching with tears and my emotions had turned numb to everything except for the pain. I felt like I was crying endlessly.

Shortly after getting the letter, my mom helped me give him a special present I had made for him. She spoke for me because I was so upset. After we left, he called apologizing for the way he broke up with me.

When he called I was in the kitchen and had to grab the refrigerator for support. My heart still shattered, my body was contorted with tears and sadness again. He kept asking if I was OK and I kept saying yes even though he could hear my crying. I was trying so hard not to let the pain show. It was the first time I had ever been hurt so badly. We never went further than a hug or kiss or cuddling. I think going any further would have made it a lot harder.

What made it so hard was that I felt a connection with him. I felt like he knew me more than anyone. He seemed to know my every thought, feeling, and emotion. He seemed to know and understand me in a different aspect than my mom who is my best friend could. My mom knows everything about me but not my every single thought and emotion and feelings all the time. It was a connection of the relationship in the boyfriend-girlfriend aspect.

So, into the next school year I went out with two different guys (not at the same time). I thought I liked them. But in all reality my emotions were still numb and I still had major walls up to protect myself from more pain. They were of course metaphorical walls like the personal bubble. I can only imagine how the guys I went out with felt because I broke up with both of them. People consider those relationships as rebounds because I was still numb.

Those relationships helped me grow very quickly and open up. In June, a few days before school ended I realized that I really like this guy, who I had known since ninth grade. I liked him so much because of his personality — who he was. After a few days of me trying to drop hints, he put his hand into mine during class. In my opinion, I will not ask anyone out because it is a man's place. Today as I write this we are still together and I love him so much. We are very committed to each other. The relationship is the best I have ever been in and is very different from my first love.

I could not have gotten to this happiness without pain and growth from my previous relationships. I thought life would be a happily ever-after story but it's not.

I got over my first love by allowing tears to flow and allowing the pain but not allowing it to take over my life. Yes, I cried a lot at night and at random times. Yes I dreamt of him coming back to me and us being together again. He and I would talk and that kept the feelings going for a while but it also allowed me to get over him and work things out with myself.

I got over him through thinking, support from my family, especially my mom, and friends. I tried to move on when I thought I was ready and thought I may be able to love another. Even though I was not ready right after the breakup, taking time allowed for more growth. In the beginning I thought I could never love again. I know now that it is possible to love again.

My emotional barriers have mostly disappeared. I'm still working on them. They opened up more when I opened myself up to the possibilities and my boyfriend. Walls will be built after your heart is broken but over time can disappear. You have to allow them to disappear.

If your heart is broken, find something to change your mindset of the sadness. What helped me was my family and the puppy my mom got me. You don't need a new puppy, but do something that helps you gain a different focus. Make yourself happy by changing the way you feel and think.

**Without pain and growth from that pain, one may never be truly happy.**

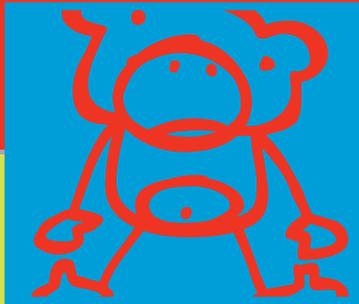
**Author:** Kaila Autrey

Kaila attends high school in Central Oregon. She loves reading and listening to classical music.

Kaila is considering a career in massage therapy or acupuncture.

**IT'S OVER - WHEN A  
RELATIONSHIP  
IS ENDING**

**Over time, your interests might change. You can grow apart from or have less in common with the person you're dating, and it might be time for you to think about ending the relationship.**



**If you decide to end a relationship**, it can be difficult for both people, and respecting one another will make things easier. Once you decide to end the relationship, it's a good idea to be honest, kind and definite.

You might want to tell the other person what you've been feeling and thinking, and what you want for yourself. It's not helpful to blame the other person or try to pick out faults. Sometimes relationships end simply because people are different, and getting to know someone during a relationship can reveal differences that you didn't see before. Differences are natural, but they might prevent you from keeping your relationship happy, healthy and strong.

## GETTING THROUGH A BREAKUP

**Breaking up can be hard**, but sometimes it might be the best thing for two people to make the decision that they can't grow anymore in a relationship.

People might react to a breakup differently. It's not uncommon to feel sadness, anger, disbelief, guilt or relief. Managing these feelings can be hard. For more information about managing your anger, check out the Managing Anger Fact Sheet at [us.reachout.com/facts/factsheet/managing-anger](https://us.reachout.com/facts/factsheet/managing-anger).

It might take some time to accept that your relationship has ended and to move on from the relationship. Sometimes the end of a relationship can give you time to learn more about yourself, spend time with your friends and do things that you enjoy doing. Having someone you can talk to about your feelings might be helpful. This can be a friend, family member or counselor or other mental health professional.

## YOU MAY ALSO FIND IT HELPFUL TO:

**Stay busy.** Staying active and doing things you enjoy might help keep your mind off the breakup. You might want to hang out with friends, read a book, go for a run or walk or listen to music.

**Try something new.** Sometimes it's helpful to make a fresh start by trying something different. There might be a class you've always wanted to take — like drama, art or yoga — or you might want to start playing a sport.

**Look after yourself.** This might be a difficult time, and it's important that you look after yourself. Eating a healthy diet and staying physically active can be helpful. It might also help to treat yourself to something special. Do something that you enjoy.

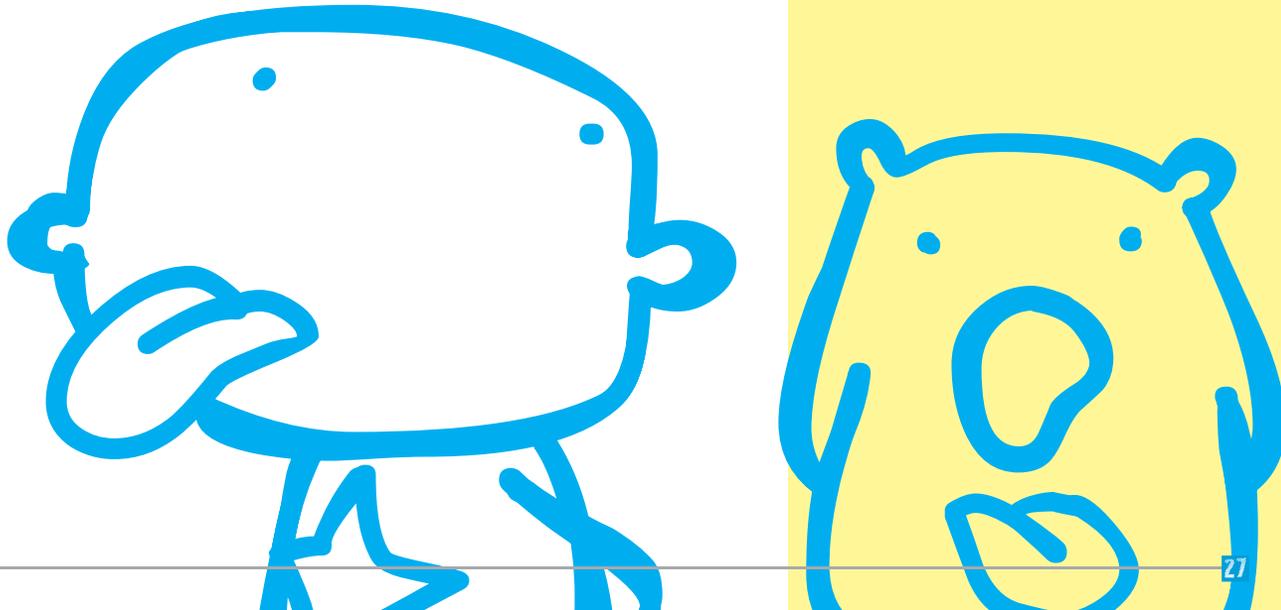
**Remind yourself that you are OK.** Think about your achievements, your friends, things you enjoy and the good people in your life, and the positive things they have said about you. This can help you stay upbeat.

**Talk with someone you trust.** Getting some support when a relationship is ending might help you work through how you're feeling. You might find it helpful to talk to your friends, your parents, a teacher, school counselor, doctor or another person that you can trust.

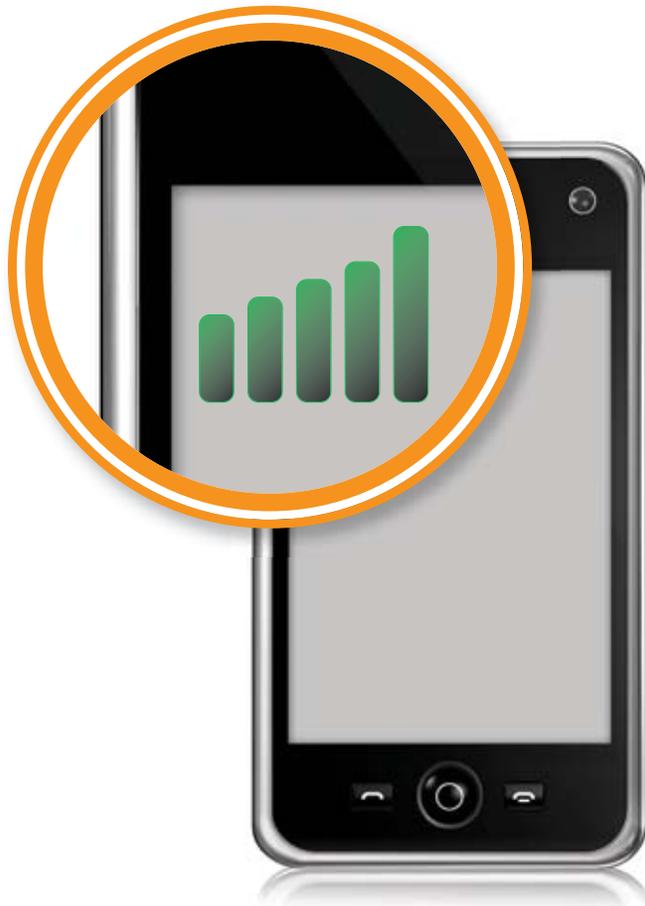
Source: ReachOut.com, administered by Inspire USA.

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**“ ONCE YOU DECIDE TO END THE RELATIONSHIP, IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO BE HONEST, KIND AND DEFINITE. ”**







## U R BREAKING UP!?

The way you communicate often determines how well your message is received. This is especially true when you are breaking-up. Use this tool to help you pick the best strategy for being heard. Like the reception bars on your phone, the more bars you have the stronger and clearer your message will be.



Five bars

**FACE-TO-FACE** With face-to-face contact you have the best possible reception. That doesn't mean that talking about breaking-up is going to be any easier, but you both will have a better chance of understanding each other's feelings with less miscommunication. You will be able to use body language and tone of voice to help get your message across without interference.



Four bars

**PHONE** Phones are amazing tools that help us stay in touch with the people we care about. Unfortunately, they are not the best tool for ending relationships. They let you have a live conversation where you can verbally communicate feelings and thoughts, and hear tone of voice, but the problem is that there can be interference — abrupt hang-ups, zero body language information, a lack of privacy and lost reception.



Three bars

**Email** Sending an email is an effective way of communicating a message; however it is not the ideal way to communicate during a break-up. It can be hard to tell if someone is joking, happy or angry from an email. The person you're trying to communicate with may not get your message. The reception is dependent on what the other person thinks is meant by each word or phrase or idea. Also, once something is in print, it is very hard to take it back or explain away the miscommunication.



Two bars

**TEXTING** With texting, the chances of your message being clearly received are very small, just like the length of a text message. Too little is said, leaving too much room for misunderstanding. Communicating by text may actually add to the pain and prolong the breaking-up process. If you break-up this way, you may be sending the message that this person is not worth your time, which can result in a stronger negative reaction.

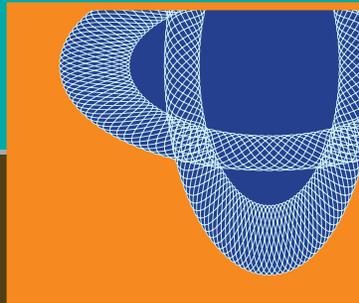


One bar

**SOCIAL NETWORKS** You're breaking-up, and you want the whole world to know! Posting something hurtful on Facebook, MySpace, AIM or Twitter may feel good for a moment, but no one will really hear your message clearly, especially the person who needs to understand. Even if your ex did something hurtful to cause the break-up, posting hurtful messages tells others more about you and how you treat others.

# THE T IN LGBTQ

The LGBTQ community is a large and diverse one. While there are many stereotypes associated with them, their true diversity is much more encompassing



With the community's increased visibility and cultural acceptance over the past ten years especially, through more people coming out and showing their pride, living and raising families with their partners, and in their increasingly prevalent portrayal on TV shows and movies, most people understand what it means to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual. However, fewer are familiar with the transgender community.

In order to clear up some confusion, I am listing here many of the terms associated with the transgender and queer community. The definitions were gathered from various sources, sometimes combined, reworded, or otherwise edited by myself. Please use this list to educate yourself and others.

**Sexual Orientation/Sexual Identity:** Describes whom we are physically and romantically attracted to and love. A person's gender identity does not predetermine a person's sexual orientation.

**Queer:** An umbrella term used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, and/or people who do not feel they easily fit typical male/female roles. The "Q" in LGBTQ stands for queer/questioning.

**Gender Role:** Public, social, and perceived expectations of gendered acts or expressions.

**Transgender:** A person whose gender identity does not correspond with their biological sex.

**Gender Identity:** A person's internal sense of being male, female, or something else in between or outside those terms.

**Gender Expression:** How a person chooses to communicate their gender identity to others through clothing, hair, styles, mannerisms, etc. This communication may be conscious or subconscious.

**Transgender Man:** A person who is assigned female at birth and identifies as male.

**Transgender Woman:** A person who is assigned male at birth and identifies as female.

**Gender Dysphoria:** The feeling that your body does not correspond to your true identity.

**Cisgender:** People whose gender identity corresponds with their biological sex.

**Genderqueer:** People who view their gender identity as one of many possible genders beyond strictly female or male. They feel they exist psychologically between genders or beyond the notion of only male and female.

**Gender Non-Conforming:** A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.

**Passing:** A term used by transgender people to mean that they are seen as the gender with which they self-identify.

**Transsexual:** A person who has undergone hormone treatment and surgery to attain the physical characteristics of the opposite sex to match their sense of gender identity.

**Sex Reassignment Surgery:** Surgical procedures that change one's body to make it conform to a person's gender identity. This may include "top surgery" (breast augmentation or removal) or "bottom surgery" (altering genitals).

**Intersex:** People who are born with external genitalia, chromosomes, or internal reproductive systems that are not traditionally associated with either a "standard" male or female. Intersex is the non-medical term for hermaphrodite.

**Cross-Dresser/Transvestite:** People who dress in clothing traditionally or stereotypically worn by the other sex, but who generally have no

intent to live full-time as the other gender. By some, these are viewed as derogatory terms.

**Drag Queen:** Men who dress as women for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events.

**Drag King:** Women who dress as men for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events.

No one yet knows precisely why some people feel they were born the wrong sex or feel they cannot be defined as simply male or female. We don't know why some people are attracted to the same sex and some to the opposite. But just because we don't know biologically what causes some people to feel differently than the majority doesn't mean that what they feel is wrong or not as valid. It is not a biological abnormality, it's just a biological difference.

Respect is essential, as is diversity. The thought that anyone different from yourself must be somehow "wrong" is essentially a display of insecurity, attempting to portray the image that you are not somehow wrong — because if you're not wrong, you must be right. This insecurity though, immensely limits the ability to learn from your surroundings. When encountering someone different from yourself, in whatever way, it's important to respect what they have to offer. It's also important to realize the things you have in common. Recognizing our commonalities can be as important as embracing our diversity. The more we know about someone, the more we are generally inclined to like them. And the more we like someone, the less likely we are to focus on our differences.

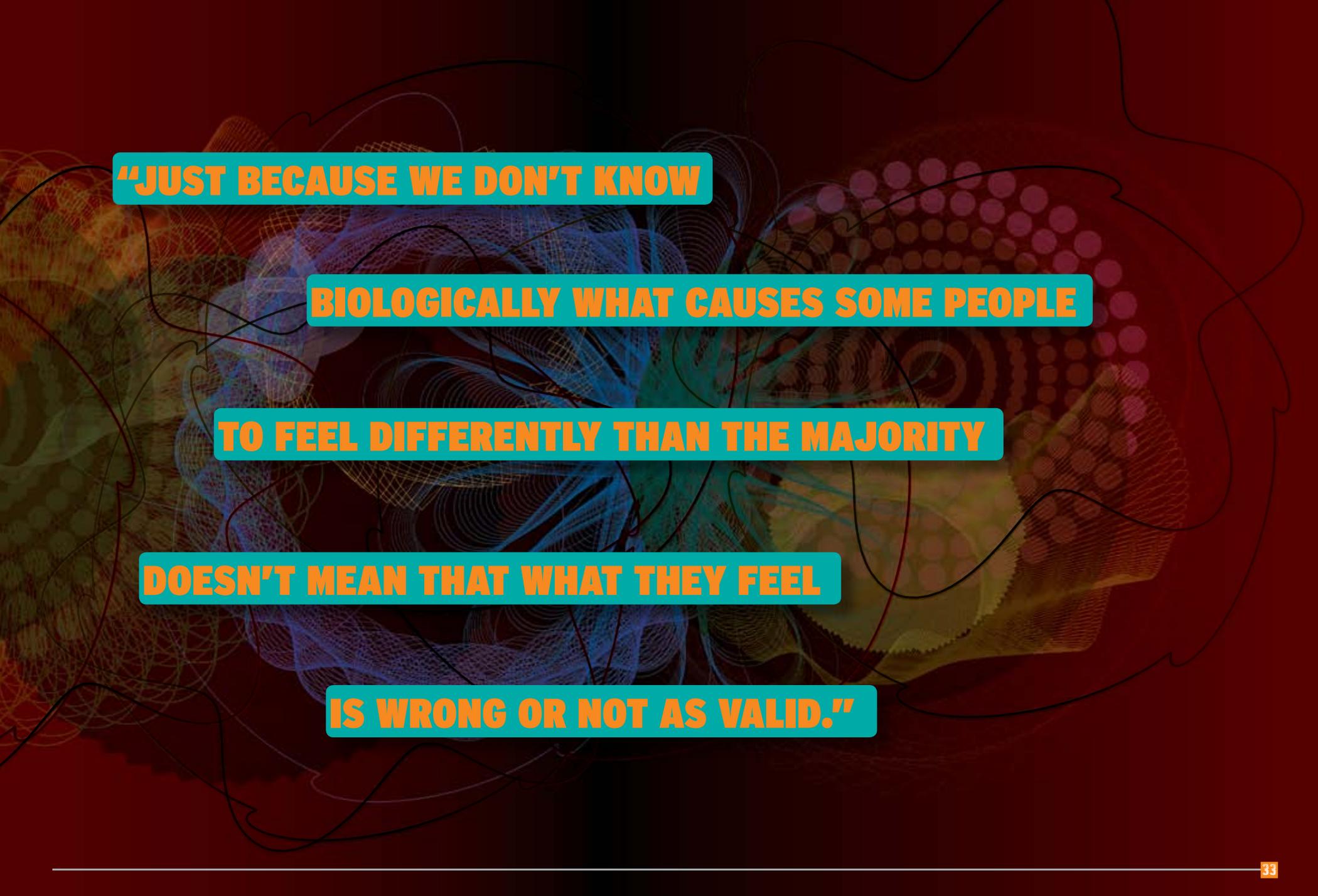
Today, we live in a world where more and more people, every day, are opening their hearts and minds to the transgender community, accepting transgender and transsexual people for who they are. We also know that we have a long and tiring way to go. The transgender community is probably the least understood and least culturally visible of the

LGBTQ community. What will change that is more people coming out as trans, more people educating themselves and others on this important topic, and more people willing to accept that different is just as good. We have to fight hate with love, ignorance with intelligence, and backward thinking with forward movement.

Author: Mahayana

Mahayana is a regular contributor to the Amplify website.

Source: [amplifyyourvoice.org](http://amplifyyourvoice.org), administered by Advocates for Youth.

The background features a dark red silhouette of a human head in profile, facing right. Inside the head, there are various colorful, abstract patterns: a blue and purple grid-like structure resembling a brain scan or neural network, a green and yellow circular pattern, and a purple and blue circular pattern. The overall aesthetic is scientific and artistic.

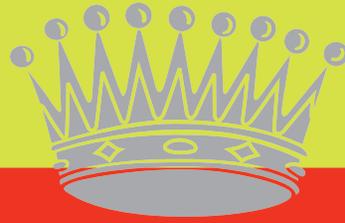
**"JUST BECAUSE WE DON'T KNOW**

**BIOLOGICALLY WHAT CAUSES SOME PEOPLE**

**TO FEEL DIFFERENTLY THAN THE MAJORITY**

**DOESN'T MEAN THAT WHAT THEY FEEL**

**IS WRONG OR NOT AS VALID."**



# NOT EVERYONE'S A PLAYER

Labels such as thug, gangster, and dangerous (just to name a few) have been used by the media to describe men of color for years.



## **I FEEL LIKE SOME YOUNG BLACK MEN MAY IDENTIFY WITH THE TERM “PLAYER” JUST BECAUSE IT’S ALREADY ASSUMED THAT THEY ARE OR THEY FEEL LIKE IT’S THE ONLY ROLE THAT THEY CAN ACHIEVE.**

As for my friends and I, we take sex very seriously. There are too many sexually transmitted infections to indulge in the notorious “player” lifestyle but even bigger than that, the implications of such labels also affect women within our culture. The portrayal of black men being surrounded by women, often shown in music videos or in ads, have given women the image of being “gold-diggers” as well as other negative labels. This stereotype has not only affected the black men in our communities but also the women.

There are many people who will perceive me as a player because of my skin tone, what I wear, or even because of the community I come from. It is also challenging to enter a relationship and be taken seriously because of this perceived reputation. Most people think that I’ve had or have many partners or that I am using females just for sex. Many can’t believe that I enjoy being in a monogamous relationship and that it’s something that is very important to me. Females are very cautious going into relationships with guys that dress or look like or have a style similar to mine just because of these stereotypes.

I understand that these assumptions come mainly from the media. I also understand that we have supported some of these stereotypes by purchasing the music or clothes that portray black men as players. I feel that one possible solution is not supporting media outlets that encourage these negative stereotypes. If we come together and hit advertisers where it hurts — their pockets — they will probably begin changing

some of their negative messages. Another way is by educating young people through media literacy so they can have a better understanding of how media messages can influence the decision they make.

As a young black man I face stereotypes almost every day on my way to school, work, or home. When it happens I try to ignore it but it also makes me angry that people would judge me without even knowing me. Being a peer educator has shown me the importance of educating others and as of now that is what I will continue to do. If I hear my friend talking about black men being players I stop and I try to figure out where that comment is coming from. It’s hard enough being black and dealing with police profiling, people thinking I will steal their purse as I approach them, and now being judged as a player. People need to understand that reinforcing these stereotypes can be damaging to not only an individual but also the community at large. Life isn’t just about living for the moment it’s also about living and creating a better future.

**Author:** Marcus

Marcus is 16 and from New York, NY. He is a member of The National Campaign’s Youth Leadership Team. His choice in fashion? Headphones, regardless of whether they’re attached to an iPod.

**Source:** StayTeen.org, administered by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Copyright permission granted.





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## MY HEART

**I'M THE FIRST TIME YOU FELL IN LOVE, THE FEELING OF BREATH BRUSH AGAINST MY FACE, MADE ME HAVE CHILLS FROM MY NECK DOWN TO MY WAIST. I COULDN'T BELIEVE SOMETHING SO BEAUTIFUL WAS HAPPENING TO ME, MY HEART RACED, I TOOK A DEEP BREATH IN AND WENT AT A SLOW PACE. KISSING YOUR LIPS HAD ME SO STRUNG UP OFF YOUR LOVE, YOU HAD ME, I WAS YOUR ANGEL FROM ABOVE. BUT I WAS HURT, MY WINGS WERE PULLED OFF, I WAS NO LONGER YOUR ANGEL, EVIL TOOK OVER YOU AND EVERYTHING BEAUTIFUL YOU USED TO DO. INSIDE ME KNEW THAT ONLY HURT WOULD COME AND LOVE COULD NEVER BE PURSUED; I FEEL SO NUMB.**

Author: Kristin Valdes

Kristin is a young mother of two active children.  
This is her second contribution to The Rational Enquirer.







# TEENAGE PREGNANCY BY A YOUNG MOM

There are a lot of young girls faced with the decision I was faced with. And there is no easy choice.



**It is a decision you have to think long and hard about,** and it's one you have to make for yourself, because it could affect the rest of your life. Teenage pregnancy.

When I was in high school I became pregnant. It wasn't something I set out to do. Suddenly I was faced with a decision that ultimately would change my life.

When I discovered my pregnancy **I was given a few choices.** One was to keep the baby and bring it up myself, another was to give birth and put the baby up for adoption or foster care, and the other was a termination and abort the baby.

There are plenty of factors you have to consider in a situation like that. Things like your health, both physical and emotional and your life style, for example how it will affect school or work, etc., and whether you can afford to change your life to accommodate a baby or not. Also, you need to think about the support you have from people around you, family and friends, etc.; your financial state, babies are expensive to provide for and can add strain to your personal budget so you may need to apply for social welfare or ask for help from someone, like the father. Your personal values may play a big role in deciding what to do.

**I chose to keep my baby for several reasons.** First my personal values prevented abortion from being an option. Although I respect women who make this choice, it was not something I felt I could do, besides, when I discovered I was pregnant I was 5 months pregnant and too far gone to have an abortion. I had actually decided to give my baby up for adoption, but when I gave birth to him, I realized I wanted to bring him up myself.

Being a young mother was very difficult, I had to juggle school, working as well, and having a social life -which when you're that age is very important!

I ended up leaving the school I was at because **I was so discriminated against.** Looking back I know I should have been stronger and stood up for myself,



but I didn't. No one should ever be placed in a situation, where just because their life is a little different to what society says it should be, that they feel threatened in any way.

**I couldn't have come this far without having the support I did.** I was lucky because I found a school that was very accepting, I was allowed to do part-time school for the first few months of the baby's life and I had teachers tutor me to keep up with school work. I met some really wonderful people at school who never judged me and helped me out whenever I needed it. You have no idea how eager some girls are to baby-sit! It was a lifesaver to know that I could leave my

little boy with someone for a few hours while I went to a movie or went to school. I didn't live with my family at the time, but they were supportive, helping out where they could. The baby's father and I stayed together after the birth and he helped me look after and bring up the baby. He has stood by me through everything and I know I'm very lucky for that.

One thing that made my decision a whole lot easier was counseling. When I found out I was pregnant I decided I needed help to sort out my options and my feelings. So I sought out a professional counselor. Having that support made all the difference and I strongly recommend it to anyone in this situation!

**My life was very changed by my decision,** but it's not one that I look back on and regret. Although I lost some things, I gained a lot as well. I'm not telling anyone to go out and get pregnant, but I am saying that if you find yourself in that way remember, there are always options and only you can know which is right for you!

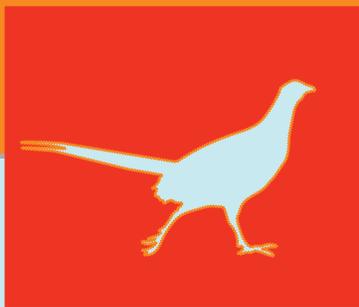
If you know a young person who is faced with this situation, remember that they are still the same people, and they need as much support as they can get. Don't judge someone simply because of a decision they have made, because no one ever deserves to be deserted, especially not in a time of need.

Source: ReachOut.com. Copyright permission granted.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: YOU DO HAVE CHOICES. IF YOU'RE PREGNANT AND WOULD LIKE HELP EXPLORING YOUR OPTIONS, CONTACT OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES TO RECEIVE FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL ALL-OPTIONS PREGNANCY COUNSELING IN OREGON OR WASHINGTON. CALL ANYTIME, DAY OR NIGHT: 1-800-772-1115 OR EMAIL: INFORMATION@OPENADOPT.ORG.**

# WHAT IS A LARC?

Lark, when spelled with a “k” can mean a small ground-dwelling songbird, typically with brown streaky plumage, a crest and elongated hind claws OR it can mean a carefree, spirited adventure.



## **BUT WHEN SPELLED WITH A “C,” LARC STANDS FOR LONG-ACTING REVERSIBLE CONTRACEPTION.**

### **LARCs are:**

**Long-lasting – as in for years;**

**Safe for youth;**

**Very effective for preventing pregnancy;**

**Convenient once in place – no pills to remember to take; and**

**Removable when you are ready to have a baby.**

**Two forms of LARCs are the implant and the IUD.**

### **THE IMPLANT**

The implant, also known as Implanon® or Nexplanon®, is a small rod that is inserted under the skin of your upper arm. It's so small, in fact, that most people can't see it once it's inserted. The implant releases the hormone progesterin that keeps your ovaries from releasing eggs and thickens your cervical mucus to block sperm from getting to the egg in the first place. Plus, it prevents pregnancy for three years.

#### **Benefits of the implant**

If you're a busy person who doesn't want to worry about remembering birth control, the implant just may be for you. Once it's in, it lasts for three years. There are no packages or prescriptions to pick up at the pharmacy, so there's nothing that could get lost or forgotten. No one can tell when you have the implant. There's no tell-tale packaging and nothing you need to do before you have sex to prevent pregnancy.

Once the implant is inserted, it's as easy to use as, well, doing nothing. That's right. The implant just sits there, under your skin, offering round-the-clock protection against pregnancy for three years.

Here's how the whole thing goes: You go to the health care provider, who gathers all your medical info and gives you a physical exam, then numbs a small area of your upper arm with a painkiller and inserts the implant under your skin. And you're done.

If you get the implant during the first five days of your period, you're set with pregnancy protection from that very moment. If you're outside those first five days, you'll need to use a back-up method for the following week.

When it's time to take the implant out, your doctor will numb your arm again, make a tiny cut in your skin, and remove the implant. If you're interested in continuing to use the implant, then another one can be put in at the same time.

All medications carry a risk of side effects. The most common implant side effects are irregular bleeding, spotting or heavy periods, especially for the first six to 12 months. Not having a monthly period is common. If you are concerned about irregular bleeding, talk with your doctor or nurse before deciding to chose the implant (Implanon or Nexplanon).

#### **The pregnancy question**

You should be able to get pregnant any time after the implant is removed. So don't take any chances. If you get it taken out, but you're not ready for a baby, protect yourself with another method right away.

### **IUD (INTRAUTERINE DEVICE)**

The IUD is a little, t-shaped piece of plastic that is put in your uterus to prevent sperm from fertilizing an egg. There are two types: Mirena® and ParaGard®. They offer years of protection—five or 10 years depending on the type you get. And if you want to get pregnant, you can have the device removed at any time.



### Mirena

The Mirena IUD is plastic and releases a small amount of the hormone progesterin to help your body keep sperm from reaching your cervix. It lasts up to five years and may give you lighter periods or you may stop having regular monthly periods.

### ParaGard

The ParaGard IUD is made of plastic and a small amount of natural, safe copper. It's 100 percent hormone-free and doesn't alter your periods. It can last 10 years.

### Benefits of the IUD: Get it and forget it

If you're a busy person who doesn't want to worry about remembering birth control, the IUD just may be for you. Once it's in, you're good to go for years.

### Hands free

No packages or prescriptions to pick up at the pharmacy, so there's nothing that could get lost or forgotten.

### Total privacy

No one can tell when you have an IUD. (Some partners say they can feel the string, but that can be adjusted.) There's no tell-tale packaging, and nothing you need to do just before you have sex.

### Safe and sound

Most experts agree, if you're a healthy woman, you're probably a good candidate for the IUD. That's true even if you're young, haven't ever been pregnant, or haven't had kids yet.

### The pregnancy question

You should be able to get pregnant very quickly after the IUD is removed — which is great if you want to have a baby. But if you're not ready to get pregnant as soon as you have an IUD taken out, be sure to protect yourself with another method.

The most common IUD side effects are spotting between periods (especially during the first few months after you get an IUD); increased period flow (ParaGard); decreased bleeding or no periods (Mirena); and cramps and backaches.

Long-lasting protection from unwanted pregnancy is a great thing. If you are sexually active but want to prevent pregnancy, be sure to ask your health care provider about LARCs.

The **Oregon Contraceptive Care Program (CCare)** offers complete, confidential reproductive health services and free birth control for teens, women and men who qualify. Even if you don't qualify for CCare, you may still receive free or low-cost contraceptive services through other programs. Visit the CCare website at [www.Ccare.oregon.gov](http://www.Ccare.oregon.gov) to see if you qualify and to find a clinic near you.

## PLEASE REMEMBER

LARCs are GREAT at preventing pregnancy. They are long-lasting, and have few side effects.

## BUT, LARCS OFFER NO PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs).

If you are sexually active, you should use a condom to prevent STIs every time you have sex.

**Editor's note:** Several staff of the Oregon Public Health Division Family Planning Program contributed to this article. Special thanks goes to Marsha Brantley, Reproductive Health Education Consultant.



**"LARCS ARE GREAT AT PREVENTING PREGNANCY**

**BUT OFFER NO PROTECTION AGAINST**

**SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs).**

**IF YOU ARE SEXUALLY ACTIVE,**

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**EVERY TIME YOU HAVE SEX."**





TALKING TO YOUR  
**PARENTS**  
ABOUT  
**SEX**

## TAKE THE AWKWARD OUT OF “THAT AWKWARD MOMENT ...”

We’ve all seen posts about “The awkward moment when ...” They’re all over Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr. Some of them are hilarious and some are more shocking. What about the awkward moments that really matter? For example: The moment when a son asks his dad where he can get a condom. The moment a daughter asks her mom what would happen if she got pregnant in high school. The moment a teen asks about what to do if they’re in a bad relationship. These are really important questions that your parents will undoubtedly have an answer for. Most teens say that parents are their biggest influences on what they think about sex, love, and relationships, so at some point you’re probably gonna have a problem that you need to talk to them about.

I’m more comfortable than most teenagers about talking with my parents, if anything ever comes up I would have no problem going to them for help. For those of you who aren’t as comfortable, these are my tips to help you take the awkward out of “The awkward moment when a teen asks about sex, love, and relationships.”

**Tip #1: Understand that they’ve been there before.** If you have a problem, they probably had the same one when they were young. Got a question? They probably asked the same thing. They’re more experienced, so remember: there’s no shame in rookies getting some tips from the pros.

**Tip #2: Remember that it’s not lame to ask your parents.** What would you say are your biggest influences on your thoughts about sex and relationships? The media? Your friends? In fact, most teens say that their parents are the biggest influence on their views on sex and relationships, so don’t worry about it not being cool because chances are, your friends have asked their parents about something too.

**Tip #3: Keep in mind that it’s worth it.** If this little talk saves you from getting someone pregnant or getting pregnant, then those few moments of awkwardness will all be worth your while.

**Tip #4: Don’t make a big deal of it, because it’s not.** It really isn’t a big deal to ask — you’re not supposed to be an expert at these things. Just pull your mom or dad aside, as opposed to having this conversation at the dinner table in front of the rest of the family. Don’t freak out. Talk to them like you would as if you were asking for help on homework or anything else. It isn’t a big deal, so don’t treat it like one.

**Tip #5: Just do it.** I’m not trying to sound like a Nike ad here, but come on, what’s the worst that could happen? It may be a little embarrassing, but you’ll have to ask about this stuff eventually, so why not now? After all, there’s no time like the present. If you have a question, then go ask your parents!

**Well, did I help? I hope I did, at least a little.** So now, if you’ve got a problem, then put these tips to use and go ask your parents.

**Author:** Emerson

Emerson is 14 and from Las Cruces, New Mexico. He is a member of The National Campaign’s Youth Leadership Team.

**Source:** StayTeen.org, administered by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Copyright permission granted.

**“ GOT A QUESTION? YOUR PARENTS PROBABLY ASKED THE SAME THING. THEY’RE MORE EXPERIENCED, REMEMBER: THERE’S NO SHAME IN ROOKIES GETTING SOME TIPS FROM THE PROS. ”**

# WHY WAITING MAKES SENSE

You may be getting so many **messages** telling you to have sex, from songs on the radio to talk at school. You may also feel **curious** about sex or have a **strong** attraction to someone.



**But having sex is a major decision, and you should think it through carefully.**

You certainly don't want to deal with getting pregnant or developing a painful disease. Also, having sex before you're ready can wind up seriously hurting your relationship and your feelings. Few people regret waiting to have sex, but many regret starting early. Read on to see why abstinence — not having sex — makes a lot of good sense. And remember that even if you've already had sex, you can still choose to stop.

## UNPLANNED PREGNANCY

Each year there are around 750,000 teen pregnancies in the U.S., and most of those are unplanned. Getting pregnant or getting someone pregnant before you're ready can be a huge shock. The emotional and financial stress of raising a baby can be a lot even for an older couple. Imagine what your life would be like if you had to get up with a baby in the night and take care of it every day!

Abstinence is the safest way to prevent the challenges that come with teen pregnancy. **Check out some of these challenges:**

Teen moms and teen dads are less likely to go to college;

Teen moms are more likely to be — and stay — single parents;

Babies born to teen moms face greater health risks;

Teen moms and teen dads are at high risk of poverty, which can make caring for a baby very hard.

If you do get pregnant, remember that you need to take care of yourself. Be sure to see a doctor. Get help from a trusted adult, like your parents, grandparents, or school counselor.

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

**Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are a huge problem among young people.**

Consider these reasons that abstinence makes sense in staying safe from STIs:

One in four teen girls has an STI;

Condoms decrease the risk of some STIs, but they are not 100 percent effective;

Having an STI increases your chances of getting HIV, too, and there is no cure for HIV.

## WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE "REAL" SEX?

**Different people may have different definitions of abstinence.** Some think it means not having sexual intercourse, but others think it means avoiding other sexual acts, too. Whatever your definition, remember that intimate sexual contact can lead to pregnancy and STIs. If semen gets in your vagina, there's a chance you could get an STI or get pregnant. You can get some STIs from oral sex. It's easier to get some STIs from anal sex than from vaginal sex.

Abstinence from intimate sexual contact is the only way to avoid these problems. If you are having sexual contact, though, it makes sense to use a condom.

## WAYS TO STICK TO ABSTINENCE

**It's not always easy to abstain from sex.** It can help to make a plan ahead of time and get support from people you trust. Get clear about why you've made the choice to be abstinent, and talk to the person you're involved with about it. Don't be afraid to take a stand about your decision. *If the two of you can't agree, then maybe you need to find someone whose beliefs are closer to your own.*

**Your own body may tell you to give up on abstinence.** Remember that your body is not in charge! Think about the possible physical, emotional, and financial costs of having sex before you're really ready.

## CONSIDER THESE TIPS FOR STAYING ABSTINENT:

Some people find it helpful to get involved in activities that give them something to focus on other than sex, like volunteering in the community or joining a sports team.

When you hang out with your date, it can help to hang out in a group.

Always take a phone, in case you want to get yourself out of an uncomfortable situation.

Practice saying "no" ahead of time, so you don't have to come up with replies on the spot.

Avoid drugs and alcohol, since they can make you more likely to do something you otherwise never would.

**Source:** GirlsHealth.gov, administered by the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

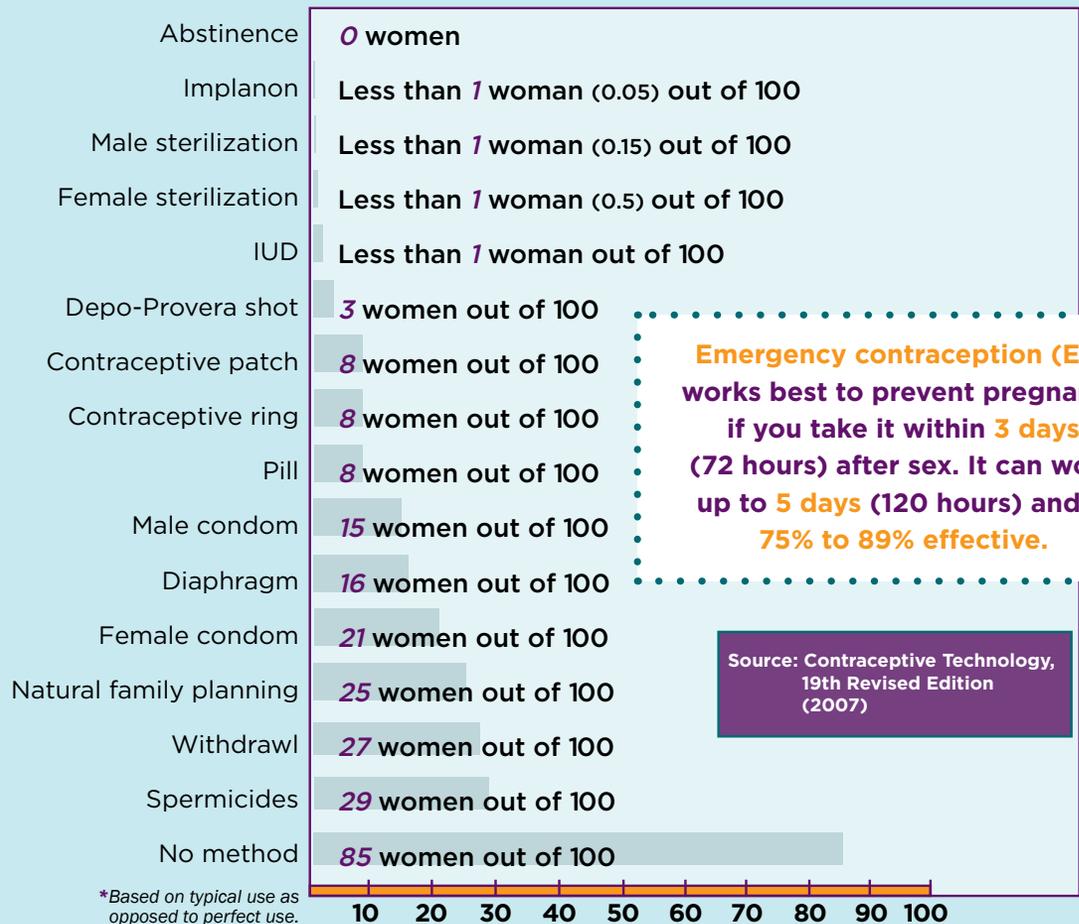
# HOW WELL YOUR BIRTH CONTROL METHOD WORKS FOR YOU DEPENDS ON HOW WELL YOU USE IT.

The numbers show how many women out of **100** get pregnant the first year they use birth control methods.\*

## CHOOSE A METHOD THAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU!

Not everyone's birth control needs are the same. Family planning clinics will help you find a method that works for you and your lifestyle.

Call **1-800-SAFENET (1-800-723-3638)** or go online to **211info.org** for a clinic near you.



## RESOURCE PAGE

Connect with these resources for assistance, information and referral.

**Oregon SafeNet/211info** is the toll-free, health and social service helpline for Oregon. Referrals for most health care needs, including reproductive health services, vaccine information and STI testing are available. Call 1-800-723-3638 or go to [211info.org](http://211info.org).

**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/STI 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 that is 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 and Gender Minority Youth Resource Center** creates safety and support for LGBTQ 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).

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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

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