

# The Rational Enquirer

May 2006

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# Start Early

# Stay Late

# Nurturing Healthy Adolescent Transitions



# The Rational Enquirer

A publication of the  
**Oregon Teen  
Pregnancy  
Task Force**

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# The Times They Are A-Changin' Or Are They?

by Aylett Wright

*Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise; they no longer rise when elders enter the room; they contradict their parents, chatter before company; gobble up their food and tyrannize their teachers.*

—Socrates, Fifth Century BCE

The transition from youth to adulthood has always been a topic for conversation and an issue for concern. We may think that the problems confronting us today are a product of our times. Socrates reminds us that many of these same challenges were confounding adults and young people hundreds of generations ago.

Which is not to say that nothing has changed since Socrates unleashed his inner fogey. We know much more now about what makes teens (and adults) tick. As our understanding has grown, we've learned that the process of adolescence is a long one. It begins before visible signs of change appear, and continues long past the time we think young people are fully developed. Some research suggests that this brain development continues well into our 20s.

This knowledge should remind us of the need to begin our programs early and continue to provide support and mentoring well into early adulthood. We need to find out what youth are thinking, listen to their ideas, respect the wisdom and energy they bring. We can achieve this by inviting them to sit at the planning table and on our boards. By including them in all aspects of designing programs and planning services. By consulting with them on what works, what makes sense, and what they value and believe in.

We need, certainly, to heed those issues they are not talking about, as well as those they are. The young are risk takers by nature. By helping them learn to take healthy risks, we help them develop the ability to make decisions and judgment calls. They gain the ability to deal with disappointment and to trust themselves to be fully functioning people in a complex world.

It is our responsibility as adults to nurture young people, to guide and model behaviors that help them value themselves and each other. They deserve our deepest respect and our highest commitment.



This year, *The Rational Enquirer* and the Seaside Adolescent Sexuality Conference share the same theme:

**Start Early, Stay Late: Nurturing Healthy Adolescent Transitions.**

The years from about 6 through 24 can be especially tricky ones, and in these pages and in Seaside, we'll be exploring the factors that help protect and support youth during this challenging time. When all is said and done, we hope to achieve a common language and understanding that will nurture youth in all stages of development.

To those young people who helped to create this issue of *The Rational Enquirer*, those who are reading it, and those who will be attending the conference, we look forward to working with you to create communities, programs, and services that will help you grow and thrive.



# ***Unleashed*** ***A Story of Young*** ***Activism***

***Decide that you're fierce and  
a fighter for your beliefs,  
and you will be.***

*by Virginia Martin*

For my eleventh birthday party, my mom and her friends took a group of giggly girls roller-skating. My friends and I were thrilled by the cute bunny merchandise the rink was selling and bought plenty of playboy stickers, key chains, and fake tattoos. Mother was horrified. She confiscated our wonderful purchases, and she and her ardent feminist friends demanded to speak to the manager. She embarrassed me no end that day, but now the skating rink no longer carries the cute bunnies I was once so fond of. My mother instilled in me a valuable lesson: you have the power to change the world around you.

My introduction to activism was at a crisis shelter for women surviving domestic violence, which my grandmother managed. For three summers during my teen years, I did everything from answering the crisis line, to weeding the garden, to playing with the children in residence. I learned that not all people in crisis are eternally grateful for your presence and that I was no different from the women at the shelter. Sexual assault and domestic violence affect people of every race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. This was a terrifying realization. I would have rather continued to assume that I was better or smarter or immune to abuse altogether. I began to see how abusive relationships started and continued. I started volunteering with women, hoping to “fix” them. Instead, they showed me that they weren’t broken and that people can be amazingly resilient under unthinkable conditions.

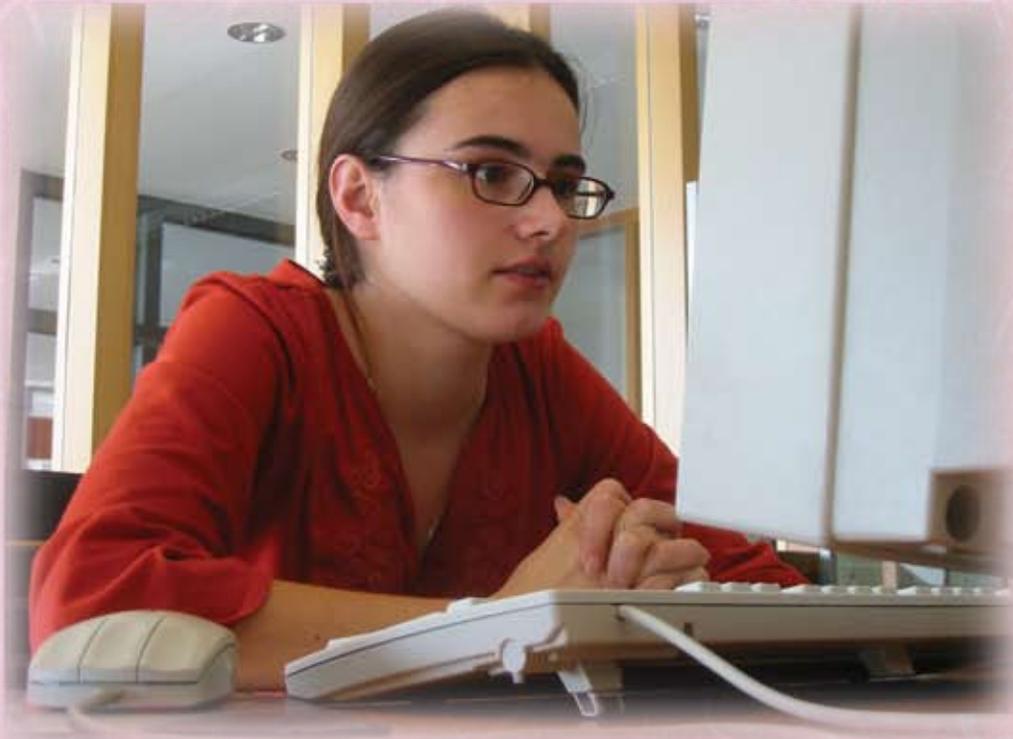
As a junior in high school, I spent every Tuesday night at the Chicken Soup Brigade, a nonprofit agency offering resources to people living with HIV and AIDS. My task was very simple – I sorted the

massive food donations into separate bags for delivery to clients. Being surrounded by people who were either gay or gay-friendly was like a breath of air after being held under water for two years. Facing my strong attraction to women had felt like some sort of bad fungus I had to hide, until I was exposed to a whole other way of looking at myself.

The courage I found there inspired me to help begin a gay/straight alliance at my high school. A favorite teacher who was openly gay was willing to sponsor us, until the principal threatened his job if he continued his support. Some states have no laws protecting gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning/queer (GLBTQ) people from being fired because of sexual orientation. Not wanting to get my favorite teacher fired, I found a more conservative (and heterosexual) social studies teacher as sponsor. Most of my support came from straight students who believed that everyone should feel safe and supported at school. Many students came out to me, some on the verge of suicide, and I realized how important it is to tell your story.

Whenever I feel my stomach drop because of a stand I’m about to take, I think of the diva Bette Midler, who said, “I woke up one morning, flossed my teeth, and decided, Damn! I’m fierce! Unleash your ferocity upon an unsuspecting world!” I am happy, too, that I am able to draw from the strength, lessons, and beliefs of my mother – to be able to march right up to the manager or principal and make right what is wrong. Thanks, Mom.

*Virginia Martin is an AmeriCorps Reducing Adolescent Pregnancy Partnership member stationed at Planned Parenthood in Bend.*



## Telling Stories: Action Research as a Tool for Community Change

by Sarah Schulman,

The word “research” often evokes images of scientists in lab coats, musty-smelling books, and ivory towers looming in the distance. Yet, another form of research exists today that is much less academic, much more connected to our daily lives.

When we ask questions about the world around us and seek answers that will directly improve the ways we interact with that world, we engage in action research. Both a means and an end, it is the process of observing, making sense of, critiquing, and ultimately enhancing our neighborhoods, communities, and institutions. It is a collective exercise designed to expose, and ultimately change, the status quo.

That, of course, involves challenging old stereotypes and power hierarchies. Researchers and subjects are one. Consider, for instance, youth labeled “at-risk” by their schools. Trained as action researchers, they might ask the question, “Why are we called ‘at-risk?’” Through a series of interviews with teachers, school officials, students, and parents, and a process of journal writing and reflection, the action researchers might learn that the label reflects biases

*“Action research is valuable as both a source of information and a problem-solving tool.”*

about students who come from poor, uneducated backgrounds. Using spoken word, photography, film, and dance, they might narrate a powerful story of poverty, structural inequality, disillusionment, and the power of positive role models. Such a story might spark a community debate and a decision to revise or remove the “at-risk” label.

Action research is a method many communities have adopted to capture the voices of the unasked and the unheard, finding it valuable as both a source of information and a problem-solving tool. It gives validity to all perspectives and enables a more complex reality to be told. Only by understanding and embracing the complexity of social problems will we actually muster the creativity and energy to effectively solve them.

*Sarah Schulman is executive director of Youth Infusion (see sidebar), which she founded as a 15-year-old high school student in 2000. Sarah, a Rhodes scholar, is currently attending Oxford University, where she is completing her Ph.D.*

# Building Bridges Across the Generational Divide

Youth are a strategic market: they are learning, experimenting, and adopting behaviors that will shape the rest of their lives. Parents, businesses, and governments know this. They target youth with heartfelt appeals, glossy ads, and legal rights and rules.

Yet such efforts often fall flat. Young people continue to adopt unhealthy attitudes and behaviors. In fact, the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey revealed that 37% of sexually active students had not used a condom at last sexual intercourse; 21.9% of high school students had smoked cigarettes during the 30 days preceding the survey; and 44.9% had consumed alcohol. Engaging young people in the design of the appeals, ads, and rules can blur the generational divide and create a shared reality of health and well-being.

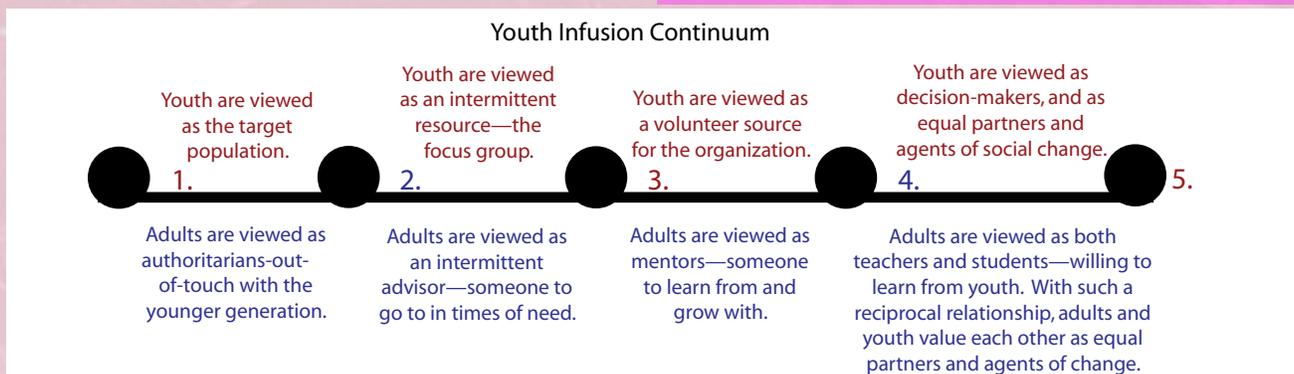
While youth-adult participation is neither new nor rare, figuring out how to cultivate and institutionalize it remains an unsettled issue. Youth Infusion works to creatively tackle this “how” question by helping governmental agencies and nonprofits more effectively reach out to and work with their youth constituencies. The goal is to overturn the perception that youth and adults are separated by an irreconcilable divide, and in the process, to introduce a new spectrum of solutions to community challenges. Achieving success here means taking risks and challenging the status quo. It means evolving and growing – progress that can be measured along a continuum of perceptual and cultural change.



Crafting a culture where youth and adults partner as health advocates and co-decision-makers requires recognizing the complementary strengths and unique perspectives that both generations bring to the table.

Youth Infusion provides technical assistance and capacity-building to organizations that target youth, but are not yet involving them in decision-making processes. As an organization expressly setup for and managed by young people, Youth Infusion constantly reinvents itself to respond to the changing youth landscape.

Since its founding in 2000, Youth Infusion has written youth advocacy curricula for schools and local health organizations; offered training to health professionals; helped to reinvigorate local youth-adult advisory boards; brought the concept of youth action research to state health agencies; and developed a series of organizational engagement readiness tools. [www.youthinfusion.com](http://www.youthinfusion.com)



# Help Build Oregon's New Adolescent Health Plan

So where do we go from here? A state-level task force called the Teen Pregnancy Prevention, Sexual Health Partnership (TPP/SHP) is working to answer just that question by creating a new state plan addressing adolescent sexual health.

The plan is scheduled for completion in Fall 2007. Now, TPP/SHP's job is to gather and review data to inform the objectives, strategies, and practices that will make up the plan. And that's where you come in. You have the information we need.

Starting on page 11 is a survey form. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey and submit your opinions to the task force. We'll put that information to good use.

More info will be collected at six county-wide forums held throughout the state. Youth Action Research will also be conducted by teens in Deschutes, Multnomah, and Jackson counties. Those findings will help enhance how schools, communities, and institutions do business.

The planning process will be highlighted at meeting and conference presentations. If you'd like a TPP/SHP member to provide more information for your community, please contact Judy Fightmaster at [judy.k.fightmaster@state.or.us](mailto:judy.k.fightmaster@state.or.us).

TPP/SHP is made up of members from: Oregon Department of Education; Commission for Children and Families; DHS-Children, Adults and Families, DHS-Public Health; Planned Parenthood of the Columbia Willamette; Planned Parenthood Health Services of Southwestern Oregon; Jackson County Health Department; Multnomah County Health Department; Benton County Health Department; and the DHS-AmeriCorps RAPP Program.

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# Fostering Hope: Preventing Teen Pregnancy Among Youth in Foster Care

Foster care youth are at significant risk for teen pregnancy. While the precise rates of teen pregnancy and birth for youth in foster care are not known, a number of studies clearly demonstrate that youth in foster care have higher rates than other teens. For example, one recent study of youth transitioning out of foster care found that nearly half the girls had been pregnant by age 19.

Even so, practitioners report that much of the focus in the foster care system to date has been on helping parenting teens and their children, while much less effort has been focused on helping foster care youth avoid getting pregnant in the first place. In an effort to help foster care youth avoid too-early pregnancy and parenthood, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and UCAN (Uhlich Children's Advantage Network) have collaborated on a new report, *Fostering Hope: Preventing Teen Pregnancy Among Youth in Foster Care*.

The 28-page report provides (1) quantitative research on the high rates of teen pregnancy among foster care youth, (2) important new qualitative research presenting findings from Chicago-area focus groups in which foster care youth (some who are already teen parents) and foster parents were asked about their perspective on teen pregnancy, and (3) results of an online survey of Chicago-area child welfare service providers. The report concludes with a list of 11 recommendations for both the teen pregnancy and child welfare fields to consider.

Among other themes, the report notes that many young people in foster care are clearly struggling to find meaningful relationships. When these relationships do not exist in their birth or foster families, they take it upon themselves to create them – and having a baby is one of the surest ways to do this.

The full report is available to purchase or download from the National Campaign's website, [www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org). For more information about UCAN, please visit, [www.ucanchicago.org](http://www.ucanchicago.org).



# When They Become Adults...

by Anne Peterson

What's working well, and what remains challenging, for adults who were children in foster care? The Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study examined the lives of 659 adults who were former foster children in Oregon and Washington to find out. Some key findings:

- Over 20% were found to be doing well, but the majority faced significant challenges in the areas of mental health, education, employment and finances.
- Most reported positive experiences with their foster parents and reported feeling loved while in care.
- Encouraging youth to establish lifelong connections may have the greatest implication for the overall well-being of foster care youth.
- High school completion via diploma or GED was nearly the same as in the general population, yet foster care alumni showed much lower completion rates for higher educational degrees.
- The foster care alumni reported mental health problems at more than twice that of the general population, although recovery rates are similar.
- Employment rates were lower for the foster care alumni, who were also three times more likely to have household income below the federal poverty level.
- The foster care alumni were more than twice as likely as the general population to not have health care.
- More than 20% of respondents had been homeless after leaving foster care.

## Helping Girls Go Onward and Upward

Girls Inc. of Northwest Oregon has developed a model program to serve young women aged 8 to 21 who are in, or transitioning from, residential programs and foster care in Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas Counties. GO Onward seeks to:

- Increase social competencies including self-care, advocacy, and problem-solving skills
- Increase the spirit and self-esteem of girls and young women to help make healthier life choices
- Provide educational and career development opportunities.

The program provides a supportive peer environment facilitated by licensed practitioners experienced in best practices for working with girls. It's designed to work in conjunction with other programs to ensure that treatment plans are coordinated and integrated.

Girls Inc. of Northwest Oregon exists to inspire girls to recognize their potential, honor their resiliency, and believe in themselves by providing after-school empowerment programs, assertiveness education, and community advocacy for girl-affirming policies and practices. Its programs serve at-risk girls who face intergenerational poverty, juvenile crime, substance abuse, and school failure. For more information, visit [www.girlsincnworegon.org](http://www.girlsincnworegon.org).

The Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study was conducted by a collaboration among the University of Washington; Harvard Medical School; the University of Michigan; Casey Family Programs, the national foundation devoted to improving – and ultimately preventing the need for – foster care; The Oregon Department of Human Services; and The State of Washington Department of Social and Health Services. Visit [www.casey.org](http://www.casey.org) for more information.

# *It's Never Okay: Two Fronts Against Dating Abuse*

## *If You're an Adult...*

Studies show that as many as one-third of high school and college-age youth experience violence in their dating relationships. The risk increases when a woman is pregnant. Over 70% of pregnant and parenting teens are beaten by their boyfriends or husbands.

In fact, most rapes are perpetrated against women aged 14 to 17 – a critical time when their vision of themselves as sexual beings is new and fragile. Much of the sexual assault is repeated rape and sexual abuse within the context of an ongoing relationship.

The dynamics that surround teen dating violence are often very different from those of adult intimate violence or child abuse. Those dynamics include:

### *Exaggerated youth and gender roles*

- There's more pressure to not be "different" – increased fear of being seen as lesbian or gay and coercion to conform to a certain standard of "attractive" behavior.
- More pressure to act "adult" leads to near-caricatures of how a man and woman should behave.
- Definitions of "normal" masculinity and femininity often fit the dominant and submissive patterns in abusive relationships.
- Young women are brought up and expected to exist in a greater state of dependency within their families and society.

### *Youthful images of romantic relationships*

Inexperience with romantic relationships often results in difficulty managing the feelings involved in any relationship but especially abusive ones.

### *Seeking substitute families*

Young people are often experiencing separation from their families of origin. This can cause them to seek new "family" situations by developing strong connections to friends and romantic relationships.

### *Adult views of youth and young relationships*

Adults often severely restrict young people's control over their own lives, reinforcing the idea they lack the ability to make change. Oftentimes, too, adults minimize youth violence, or minimize youth's emotional abuse as not having long-lasting effects.

### *Systems unprepared for dating violence*

Many of our systems do not respond adequately to violence involving youth.

- Police do not view dating as dangerous; their response can be slow and invalidating.
- Schools, while prohibiting violence at school, may blame both parties equally for "causing a scene" or "misbehaving" and not look deeper for ongoing abuse.
- Schools are not set up to protect and nurture survivors of abuse even if they're aware of it.
- Counselors and teachers are not adequately prepared to deal with relationship violence.
- Many domestic violence laws do not include protection of minors.
- Many domestic violence shelters cannot accept women under 18.
- Counseling and support groups are not geared toward the needs of teen survivors.
- No clear message is presented that verbal and physical assaults are unacceptable.

### *How to be supportive*

Teens struggling with independence may be reluctant to seek help. When you find out a young woman has been abused, tell her she did the right thing by coming forward. Reinforce the point that there are alternatives, and she does not have to put up with the abuse.

Discuss what rights she believes she has but is not able to exercise within this relationship: the right to choose her own friends, to be free from fear, etc. Let her know that she has the right to do what she needs to do for herself.

Talk about the nature of nonabusive relationships. Show her that what she may perceive as normal and necessary may not have to be that way. Assure her it's not her fault; there are no valid excuses for battering.

Talk about visions of the future and other, safer ways she can meet her needs for closeness.

Although it's true that the laws are incomplete and resources more scarce for youth, some laws and resources do address their needs. It's important to educate yourself on them. Call your local crisis line for more information.



## *If You're a Teen...*

*When I first met him I thought he was great, but then things began to change. He would go with me everywhere and cause a fight if I talked to other guys. Once he threw a glass at me at a party and it broke on the wall behind my head. Another time, he threw me up against a locker, and I slapped at him to try to get away. It took me two years to get out, and he still drives by my house every week. He still scares me.*

Teen dating violence is when one person in a romantic relationship uses emotional, physical, or sexual abuse to gain power and keep control over the other person. Nearly one-third of all teenagers will have been in an abusive relationship by their twenties. You need to be able to identify an abusive relationship so you can take steps to help yourself or your friends be safe.

### *Am I in an abusive relationship?*

- Are you ever afraid of the person you're going out with?
- Does this person say no one else would ever go out with you?
- Does he or she embarrass you in public? Call you names or put you down?
- Does this person tell you where you can and can't go, what to wear, or who you can hang out with?
- Do you feel pushed or pressured into sexual activities?
- Is he or she really nice sometimes and really mean other times (almost like having two personalities)?

- Does this person ever threaten to kill him- or herself or hurt anyone else if you leave?
- Does this person ever shove, grab, hit, pinch, hold you down, or kick you?
- Does this person ever say it's your fault if he or she hurts you or yells at you?
- Does this person make frequent promises to change? Or say you're "making it too big a deal"?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you are in an abusive relationship. Here are some things you can do:

### *If you are in an abusive relationship:*

- Tell people. If the first ones are not helpful, find others. Think of supportive adults you can tell.
- Call a crisis line. They're confidential and they serve all ages, male and female (see box).
- Join a support group (see box).
- Take a self-defense course.

### *If your friend is in an abusive relationship:*

- Be patient. Leaving an abusive relationship takes time.
- Don't spread gossip; it could put your friend in danger.
- Assure your friend the abuse is not her or his fault.
- Be nonjudgmental. Be a good listener.
- Don't ignore it or pretend it isn't happening.
- Support your friend in making her or his own choices.
- Make safety plans about going between classes or to and from school.
- See if you can tell a supportive adult.
- Call a crisis line to get more information.

*Some resources for help and information: Bradley-Angle House: (503) 281-2442 Portland Women's Crisis Line: (503) 235-5333*

*Compiled by the Non-Residential Services Program at Bradley-Angle House, based on information from Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger, Barrie Levy, Ed., 1991, Seal Press, Seattle WA.*

# Demystifying Youth Distress

by Darryl! L.C. Moch

Consider Hamlet: A young man troubled by visions suggesting that his family was destroyed not by accident, but through calculated greed. Hamlet wanted truth and justice. But, unable to express or even understand his trauma, he turned instead to violent and vengeful force.

Today's youth, like Hamlet, face a myriad of conflicts, struggles, joys, and opportunities. Under normal and supportive circumstances, they're able to overcome obstacles and achieve balance. Other times, a crisis of both person and spirit is created.

Hamlet's behavior so mystified everyone at court, he was considered mad. Today, we know better. When faced with challenges that seem insurmountable, we know it's natural to seek an escape. Without understanding and acceptance, youth can turn their angst either inward or outward. Then, the ways they express their emotions, thoughts, and fears may even mirror mental illness.

We know, too, that if we can somehow "demystify" the distress of our youth, we can better help them through the ebbs and changes of life into maturity. A good starting point is to foster an atmosphere of respect for each other's experiences and perceptions.

This much is clear: Instead of applying ready-made labels like "mental illness," it's important to look at underlying causes, such as abuse, trauma, or grief. The key is to seek first to understand, then to diagnose.

## At the onset there can be:

- Acute stressors, overwhelming circumstances, extreme distress
- Confusion regarding a situation due to either a lack of awareness of alternatives, limited response possibilities, withheld pleasure or relief
- Maladjustment, reintegration of false information believed to be true, new response mechanisms, poor coping strategies

## What to look for:

- Sudden changes in attitude and behavior
- Changes in energy levels, eating habits, sleep patterns
- Changes in interest in usual activities
- Drug use (self-medicating)
- Unusual responses to usual stressors
- Scapegoating, blaming, avoidance
- Withdrawal, hyper-vigilance, cruelty
- Domestic terrorism, violence, abuse/neglect
- Sexual acting out

## Positive things you can do:

- Give unconditional positive regard
- Provide honest feedback
- Consider cultural differences (ethnicity/language; differences in style and culture)
- Support empowerment
- Provide resources, support groups
- Give clear definitions, boundaries, limits, expectations
- Look beyond the obvious
- Talk in real-life terms. Model good problem-solving behavior
- Encourage medication with therapy and support/education

In the end, what you do will make a lasting impression on how a young person will develop patterns to address similar issues in the future. Understand that what you give out is what you will get back, but in youth, this can magnify and take on a whole new meaning. Remember that mental health is more than a collection of thoughts and feelings; it includes the essence of our interaction with the world around us. Finally, look beyond easy solutions to find ways to change crisis into courage.

## Where to get more information

- [psychology.net.org](http://psychology.net.org)
- [Focusas.com](http://Focusas.com)
- [kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org)
- [emotionsanonymous.org](http://emotionsanonymous.org)
- [mentalhealth.about.com](http://mentalhealth.about.com)
- [wellness.mentalhealth-info.us](http://wellness.mentalhealth-info.us)

*Darryl! L.C. Moch serves as executive director of Brother 2 Brother based in Portland. A psychotherapist, performing artist, and ordained minister, he has worked with at-risk youth; autistic, mentally and physically challenged children and families, and has served as a child protective services specialist.*

# adolescent health survey

Below are 28 questions. Your opinions will inform the Oregon State plan on adolescent sexual health and teen pregnancy prevention. Your responses will be absolutely anonymous, so we hope you will be honest. Please circle the best response to each statement or question. It should only take you about 4 minutes to answer these questions. If you have completed this questionnaire before, please do not complete it again.

1 What is your gender? female male

2 How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ years old

3 Are you married or do you have a serious girlfriend/boyfriend or partner? No Yes

4 How many children do you have, regardless of whether they are your birth/adopted child, foster child or step child?  
zero one two three four five or more

5 Do you have children attending public school in your community? Yes No

6 What is your ZIP Code? 97\_\_ \_\_ \_\_

7 How do you describe yourself? (Please check only one answer.)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Asian
- \_\_\_\_\_ African American or Black
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic or Latino
- \_\_\_\_\_ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- \_\_\_\_\_ Caucasian or White
- \_\_\_\_\_ American Indian or Alaska Native
- \_\_\_\_\_ Multi-racial

8 Age appropriate comprehensive sex education should be taught in my community's public schools.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree No opinion

9 Age appropriate comprehensive sex education is being taught in my community's public schools.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree No opinion

10 Contraception and condoms should be available to teens in my community.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree No opinion

11 Contraception and condoms are available to teens in my community.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree No opinion

12 My community's public schools should only teach about abstinence.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree    No opinion

13 My community's public schools are only teaching about abstinence.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree    No opinion

14 Specific programs and services for teen parents should be available throughout my community.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree    No opinion

15 Specific programs and services for teen parents are available throughout my community.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree    No opinion

16 In general, I am knowledgeable about sexually transmitted infections/diseases.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree    No opinion

17 Would you support or oppose a state mandate to teach abstinence-only sex education, if it meant not covering other methods of preventing pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections/diseases, and HIV?

I would support it                      I would oppose it                      I am undecided

18 Is the sex education in your community's public schools sensitive to your cultural values and beliefs?

Very Culturally Sensitive    Somewhat Culturally Sensitive    A Little Culturally Sensitive    Not at all Culturally Sensitive

19 How satisfied are you with the sex education in your community's public schools?

Very Satisfied    Satisfied    Neither satisfied or dissatisfied    Dissatisfied    Very Dissatisfied

20 How often are you involved in community activities, such as after-school programs or volunteer work?

Never or rarely    Monthly    Twice a month    Weekly    More than once a week

21 During the past 30 days, how much time have you felt calm and peaceful?

All of the time    Most of the time    A good bit of the time    Some of the time    A little of the time    None of the time

22 In general, would you say your physical health is

Excellent    Very good    Good    Fair    Poor

23 How satisfied are you with your life as a whole?

Very satisfied    Satisfied    Slightly satisfied    Slightly dissatisfied    Dissatisfied    Very dissatisfied

24 Which of the following best describes you? (Please check only one answer.)

- I am a youth who is in school.
- I am a youth who is employed
- I am a youth who is in school and employed
- I am a youth who is not in school and I am not employed
- I am an adult employed in adolescent health care
- I am an adult employed in youth services
- I am an adult employed in education
- Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**These last four questions are for persons 18 years old and younger.**

25 Is there at least one trusted adult you can talk to about sex and other important matters?

- Yes, this person is an adult female
- Yes, this person is an adult male
- I have both a trusted adult female and a trusted adult male
- No, there is no trusted adult I can talk to

26 Whom do you consider to be the one most reliable and accurate source for getting information about sexuality? (Please check only one answer.)

- Parents
- Siblings
- Peers
- School health center
- Classroom teacher, school counselor or coach
- Religious leader or faith community
- Doctor, nurse or other health care provider
- The internet, movies, videos or CDs, or other entertainment outlets
- None of the above

27 In general, how successful are you in school, or were you if you are no longer in school?

<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all successful	<input type="checkbox"/> A little successful	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat successful	<input type="checkbox"/> Very successful	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely successful
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28 Which of the following best describes you?

- Heterosexual (straight)
- Gay or Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Not Sure

**To take this survey electronically go to:  
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=979621901338>**

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# Finding the Me Inside

by Emma Lileadahl-Allen

Long ago, in a fairy-tale land of brick, cement, and fog, I lived near a beautiful golden gate in a seemingly perfect society. A place where I was not African American, Native American, White, or Different. A place where no one was ostracized, no one alone. Instead, each person was unique, and that was acceptable. My perception of San Francisco life was not just a result of my preadolescent innocence. By seventh grade, I was brimming with confidence and optimism.

In the middle of my eighth-grade year, my mother drove my brother and me away from the only home we had ever known. I felt my personality – actually my soul – blow out the window as the high desert air rushed across my face. During the first weeks in my new school, I found myself (or I should say, lost myself) with a desperate need to fit in. I clung to my new acquaintances, searching for the person I should be. I could act happy, and even be happy, but the discrepancy between who I was in California and who I was in Bend, Oregon, was crystal clear to me.

One day, as I sat on the high school site council, determined to “get involved,” as my counselor had suggested, in every activity possible, the school’s state “report card” was up for review. There were performance categories for Caucasian and Hispanic students, but none for African Americans or Native Americans. A weight fell upon my heart. I saw that my standardized test scores didn’t even count, were not even apparent on the test printout for the council. There weren’t enough biracial people to be statistically significant in my district. Again, I felt I didn’t exist. Clearly, I was known, being a member of five clubs and on executive boards in three, but still, the hurt I felt was deep and enduring.

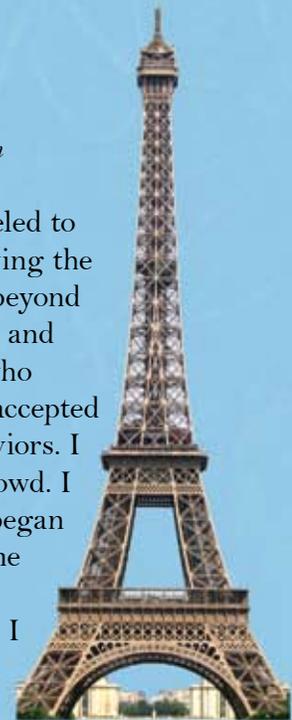
The summer after tenth grade, I traveled to Australia. For the first time since leaving the Bay Area, I was reminded of a world beyond Bend, which I had begun to cope with and even like. In Australia, I met people who viewed the world more openly; I was accepted without expectations for certain behaviors. I didn’t glaringly stand out from the crowd. I felt the liberty to be who I wanted. I began to rediscover my identity. When I came home, I was stronger, not completely the me I could be, but not so invisible. I was transitioning.

Two summers later, in Paris, I experienced a tapestry of people, all unique and special in their own ways, living together. It didn’t matter who you were, how you dressed, or what car you drove. Parisians seemed to look beyond the superficial labels of race and class. I regained hope. I wanted to be the spiritual embodiment of Paris, and knew I had to the power to do so.

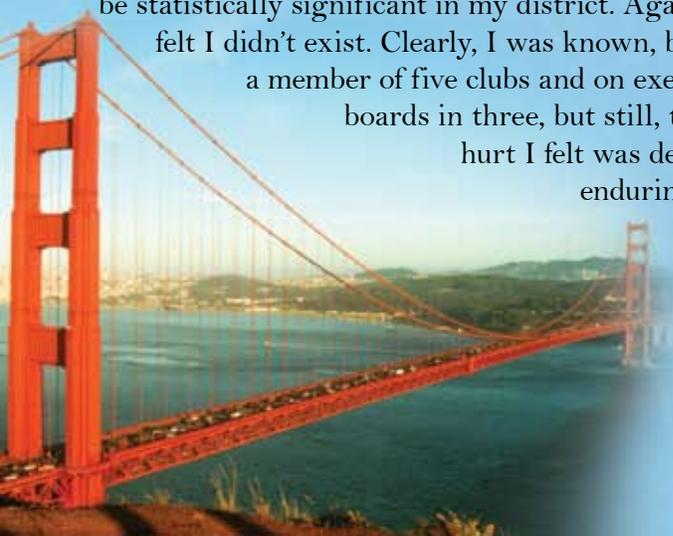
It is every child’s fear to be different, and beyond that, we fear that we don’t have the power to be okay with being different. What frightens us even more is the knowledge that we have the power to be exactly who we wish to be and don’t exercise this power.

I spent years trying to prevent myself from being me. Odd, I know. It seemed I could never represent my minority or majority well. But, over the years, I started to realize that high school per se wasn’t the defining medium of who I am. I have put down my script, taken off my mask, and am no longer afraid of the person I am inside. I have the power to be who I want to be. I can live as Paris lives, celebrating my diversity and wholeness. As I drive toward my new college campus, the high desert wind brushing against my face, I know all of me will stay in the car.

*Emma Lileadahl-Allen is a graduate of Summit High School in Bend, Oregon*



*“I experienced a tapestry of people, all unique and special in their own ways, living together.”*



# Living on the Outside

Interview by Virginia Martin

*The stories of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning/queer (GLBTQ) youth often go unheard, particularly in suburban and rural communities. As cultural outliers, their lives often are not acknowledged, validated, or reflected in popular media. Whether this is the result of perceived lack of interest, hesitance to invite controversy, or blatant homophobia, the outcome for the youth – a widespread sense of isolation and a reduction in overall positive self-concept – is relatively constant.*

*The following interview with three youth who have lived or are currently living in rural areas in Oregon attempts to offer some perspective on who these youth are, how they want to be understood, and the struggles they confront in their daily lives. While they have chosen to remain anonymous, all self-identify as female and reflect a diversity of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Their comments have been edited for clarity and brevity.*

## **How old were you when you self identified as something other than straight?**

D: I was 12.

M: 15.

J: Eighth grade. Because of my close relationships with my girlfriends, people started calling me bisexual in seventh grade before I knew what it meant.

## **Tell me about the first person you told you were GLBTQ. How did they react?**

D: I talked to my friends about it a lot...that I thought I might be. And here and there, they kind of disappeared and I was left with a few friends who didn't mind. But the first person I actually told when I knew was my mother (I was 14). She laughed in my face and told me "it's called a phase, you're not a lesbian."

M: The very first person I told was my first love. At first there was no response. I went home, unsure of everything. A couple days later, she told me she loved me too.

## ***A Matter of Definition***

*The word "queer" has historically been used as a derogatory term for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBTQ) people. In the face of this negative usage, some within the GLBT community have reclaimed the word as a positive self-describer. It is by no means considered a positive term by all GLBT people, and its use by heterosexuals is almost always considered to be inappropriate.*

J: I told my mother I thought I was bisexual. She laughed and said “well, duh.” She was and still is very supportive. Some of my friends were not as supportive; they felt like I had lied to them.

**When you come out to people, what is the best thing they can say or do?**

D: I think simply be respectful. Sometimes there isn't a whole lot to say. Being respectful to your face and when around other people is very important.

M: The thing that made me feel like the situation was going to be OK was just having people there, no words were really needed, just people staying.

J: For the most part I appreciate when people tell me how they honestly feel about the subject. Lots of times people just have misinformation about the GLBTQ community and I can clear it up.

**Tell me about a positive GLBTQ role model you identify with.**

D: I can't say I've had a positive GLBTQ role model in my life. My family has always used the words lesbian/fag/queer as ways to lash out at each other, and they still do.

M: My sister. She's been my rock for a long time. She's the kind of person I can go to with anything and she will never judge me.

J: Ani DiFranco rocks my world. Much of her music discusses how screwed-up gender roles are and the stigmas bisexual folks have to deal with.

**What is the biggest problem facing GLBTQ youth today?**

D: Discrimination. Being taunted, talked about, laughed at. These are huge issues!

J: Depression and isolation. Thirty percent of queer youth attempt suicide. They are up to five times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers.

**What is the best thing about being GLBTQ?**

D: I think it's an aspect of a person's uniqueness, and that's always special.

M: Just being. I used to feel so confined inside myself – like all I needed was to get out of that person and that's where I could be happy.

J: I have had the opportunity to question what is “normal” because my attractions are considered “deviant.” This has led me to other work around oppression, like fighting racism and classism. Recognizing that all of these oppressions connect – if rigid gender roles didn't exist, homophobia wouldn't be an issue.

**What is the worst thing about being GLBTQ?**

D: I think that the discrimination sucks! But everyone is discriminated upon in some way. I don't think there is a worst aspect of it.

M: Being placed in this social category that the rest of society in some way always sees as an outside being.

J: I can't get married. I'm thinking about having kids, but they could be taken away because of my sexual orientation. All I can hope is that 50 years from now, people will be ashamed of the way GLBTQ people were terrorized and discriminated against.

**Resources for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Youth and Their Allies**

Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center in Portland, Oregon: [www.smyrc.org](http://www.smyrc.org)

Advocates For Youth website made by and for GLBTQ youth: [www.youthresource.com](http://www.youthresource.com)

General sex-positive website for youth: [www.positive.com](http://www.positive.com)

PFLAG: Parents & Friends of Lesbians & Gays: [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)

GLBTQ Hotline: 1-888-843-4564



## Ten Tips for Parents\* of a Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or Transgender Child

by Lisa Maurer, MS, CFLE, ACSE

1. **Engage with your child.** Your gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (GLBT) child requires and deserves the same level of care, respect, information, and support as non-GLBT children. Ask questions, listen, empathize, share, and just be there for your child.
2. **Go back to school.** Get the facts about sexual orientation and gender identity. Learn new language and the correct terminology to communicate effectively about sexual orientation and gender identity. Challenge yourself to learn and to go beyond stereotyped images of GLBT people.
3. **Get to know the community.** What resources are available? Find out if there is a Gay/Straight Alliance at school, a community group for GLBT and questioning teens, a bookstore with a selection of books and magazines on GLBT issues, or a GLBT community center nearby.
4. **Explore the Internet.** There is a growing amount of excellent information on the World Wide Web that connects people with support and materials on these important topics. Three excellent Web sites are Youth Resource, Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays, and Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network. For a diverse selection of links to a variety of GLBT sites, including education, family, health and wellness, and multiple identities, visit Ithaca College's Center for LGBT Education, Outreach and Services and click on the "links" button.
5. **Find out where your local Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) meets.** Many parents say that their connections with other parents of GLBT kids made a world of difference in their progress toward understanding their young people. Finding another person you can trust to share your experience with is invaluable. Many people have gone through similar things and their support, lessons learned, and empathy can be very valuable.

6. **Don't make it ALL there is ...** just because your child has come out as GLBT does not mean the young person's whole world revolves around sexual orientation or gender identity. It will be a big part of who the youth is, especially during the process of figuring it all out, including what it means to be GLBT. Still, being GLBT isn't the sum of life for your child, and it is vital to encourage your child in other aspects of life, such as school, sports, hobbies, friends, and part-time jobs.

*Here's a quick lesson on two frequently misunderstood terms:*

*Sexual orientation—Describes to whom a person feels attraction: people of the opposite gender, the same gender, or both genders.*

*Gender identity—A person's inner sense of gender—male, female, some of each, neither. Transgender people have a gender identity that is different from the gender to which they were born or assigned at birth.*

*Some people ask, "Isn't transgender just like being gay?" No. Transgender describes a person's internal sense of gender identity. Sexual orientation describes a person's feelings of attraction toward other people. Transgender people have some issues in common with gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities, but gender identity is not the same as sexual orientation.*

7. **ASK your child before you "come out" to others on the child's behalf.** Friends and family members might have questions or want to know what's up, but it is most important to be respectful of what your child wants. Don't betray your child's trust!
8. **Praise your GLBT child for coming to you to discuss this issue.** Encourage the youth to continue to keep you "in the know." If your child turns to you to share personal information, you must be doing something right! You are askable. You're sending out consistent verbal and non-verbal cues that say, "Yes, I'll listen. Please talk to me!" Give yourself some credit—your GLBT child chose to come out to you. Congratulations!
9. **Find out what kind of support, services, and education are in place at your child's school.** Does the school and/or school district have a non-discrimination policy? Is there a GLBT/straight support group? Do you know any "out" people, or their friends and loved ones, to whom you can turn for information? (Before doing so, again refer to tip number 7, above. Ask your child if it's okay for you to "come out" about the child.)
10. **Educate yourself on local, state, and national laws and policies regarding GLBT people.** On the national level, GLBT people are still second-class citizens in regard to some national policies and their rights are not guaranteed by law. Consider educating yourself about this and finding out what you can do to work toward extending equal rights to GLBT people in the United States. Two Web sites that are good places to start are the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and Human Rights Campaign.

\* Please note: These tips can also be useful for other trusted adults in the GLBT young person's life, explaining how a caring adult can be there for GLBT youth.

*Lisa Maurer is coordinator of The Center for LGBT Education, Outreach and Services, Ithaca College*

*Reprinted from <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/parents/experts/maurer2.htm> with permission of Advocates for Youth, Washington, DC. "The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and not necessarily those of Advocates for Youth."*

# The End of Searching

by Denise Adkins

You've tried all your life to make it to the scene  
Picture book, movie screen-some crazy magazine-  
Life in perfection or so it's always seemed  
This is all your dreams  
Rising to the top just to prove your ethnicity  
Just to prove you can win the fight  
Be it here or in your mind  
You have found in time  
Wish you may-wish you might  
You've found what you've searched for all your life-  
Found it in the night.

This is your theatre and you pick the show  
Showing all the things you want the world to know  
Writing your story  
Proving all your destined glory  
This is you  
Some real but mostly fiction---but in your mind it all seems true.

Next step  
Segment two  
A lot of pictures and words are few  
You're finally feeling understood  
Finally found some luck from all that knocking on wood  
Finally  
Life  
Love  
Time  
Has brought you through.

The conclusion  
Odd that it has nothing to do with the ending  
Or beginning  
Or really what lies in between-  
It's about solution  
And happy middle ground  
And everything that stays sound-  
The real end  
The destiny  
Has very little to do with what lies between-  
It's you  
It's me  
It's the ability  
To find stability  
And some secure sense of consistency.  
It's you  
It's me  
It's the feeling  
Of finally being  
Free.

真

*Denise Adkins is a 21-year-old lesbian who grew up in a small town in Oregon and has been writing and growing in her talent since age 13. She currently lives in Bend.*

# THAT AIN'T MY SHOE

## *The Cinderella Myth Unveiled*

by Dave Adkins

In adolescence, we exist in a suspended space between identities, between dreams, between lives in constant change. It is this very idea of change that creates our discomfort – the looming sense that, since we are unsure of who we are and who we are becoming, we will be lost in this space between. In the end, we hurl ourselves into the feared unknown rather than become mired in a purgatory between childhood and the “real world” of adult life.

My own transition to adulthood was shaped in part by a common myth perpetuated by parents, teachers, and generally anyone who ever needed to compel cooperation from an obstinate teenager. The myth begins: “When you are an adult, you can...” continues with words implying infinite power and boundless freedom, and ends with “...but for now, you will...” The quintessential dangling carrot: Upon adulthood, the adolescent will be transformed in grand Cinderella style from rule-follower into rule-maker. The mythmaker knows, of course, that adults rarely have the luxury of doing whatever might strike their fancy.

As part of a family of six who moved into a 14'x70' single-wide mobile home as a means of improving our situation, I was at a disadvantage in the expectation department. Still, I was convinced that I could do better than a broken-down trailer in a one-horse town. The “When you are...” myth suggests that whatever adults are doing is whatever they want to do. My desperately impoverished parents, then, must

have been making a deranged decision to live this way. I was quick to surmise glaringly obvious and painfully oversimplified solutions. Once in the real world, I found that nothing is as simple as it seems and began looking for yet another transition to cure me. The next town, the next job, the next anything I could potentially change, would finally morph me into the something else I desperately sought.

Ten years later, I have learned one or two things. The first is that I know very little, and the more I learn, the more I understand exactly how little I do know. The second is that the only constant is change. Whatever happens – good, bad, indifferent – it will change. Knowing that might have saved me ten years of trying to cure my ills with liberal doses of the change remedy. (Okay, I may not have believed that part about how little I actually know.)

It's something today's adolescents should hear, instead of that old Cinderella standard. So here's some advice from one who's recently been there: Tell the truth. Tell that stubborn kid that doing things you hate is part of the deal; you do it for a while, then it goes away or changes into something not so bad. That's the real trade-off. Take the good, push through the bad, don't let it ruin your life. Everyone goes through it; everything changes.

*Dave Adkins earned a B.S. in liberal studies from Oregon State University and plans to become a park ranger and writer. A native of Prineville, Dave now lives in Bend.*



# A TEEN MOM REACHES HIGH

by Linda Baker

*At 15, Portland, Oregon, resident Caitlin Crane dropped out of school. She was homeless and a heroin addict at 16 and got pregnant when she was 17. But if Crane sounds like a living stereotype, think again. Last fall, the microbiology student and aspiring public health worker was awarded a Ford Family Foundation Scholarship, which will provide 90 percent of her tuition and living expenses at Portland State University, as well as two years of graduate study.*

*Now 21 and the mother of a three-year-old son, Crane has become an unofficial spokesperson on the topic of teen pregnancy. She speaks to young women about postponing childbirth until after college and leads a youth council at Portland Insights, one of the few nonprofit agencies in the United States that is devoted exclusively to the needs of teen parents.*

## **Describe your parenting style.**

We do art, take naps, we go to the park, we play games and puzzles. My main parenting strategy is to teach by doing. You act the way you want children to act. I'm an attachment parent.

## **What challenges do teen parents face?**

For a long time, I was really strong about saying: teen parenting is the same as an older mom parenting. But now I'm getting to the point where I'll say there are limitations for some young moms. I'm not an advocate of teen parenting. It's hard to pay bills, it's hard emotionally, and it's not like you've had a chance to your whole life.... One of the hardest things for me is being in school and giving Malakai the time he deserves.

## **Why do teen moms want to have babies?**

Young women...learn abstinence only, but when they do have sex, they don't know how to stop (a pregnancy) from happening. A lot of young people also have babies because they think it's going to solve problems.

## **How did having a baby change your life?**

I felt the need to go in a different direction. I was homeless for a couple of months, and the guy I was with had committed a crime. He had stabbed somebody. He was a really dangerous scary guy. Then when I had Malakai, I realized: How could I corrupt this child with his presence? When you become a parent, you automatically understand how your parents felt. It must have been heartbreaking for my mom to see me go through the stuff I went through, not knowing where I was for months.

## **Many people believe teen parents are a burden on the social service and welfare system.**

A 16-year-old can't get a job to pay for her kids. We shouldn't make young parents feel bad about accessing welfare they are entitled to as American citizens. It's also important for teen moms to have someone to talk to. When I walked out of my crazy life, I didn't have any friends. I got clothes through Insights, they helped me with TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), and I met a network of people there.



## What has your experience taught you about positive outcomes for teen moms?

I used to drive the Insights Teen Parent Program van, and I would ask parents about their favorite thing. All of them wanted to go to school. But to do that you need support and encouragement. That's what allows people to live their dreams. But that encouragement is so lacking, not just in the lives of teen moms, but in society.

*Linda Baker is journalist based in Portland, Oregon. This interview was edited and reprinted with permission from Connect for Kids, [www.connectforkids.org](http://www.connectforkids.org), a nonprofit website covering issues of importance to children and families.*

## INSIGHTS TEEN PARENT PROGRAM

Founded 25 years ago, Insights Teen Parent Program works with 1,500 young parents and their children every year. Here is a statistical snapshot of the teen mothers Insights serves:

- Nearly 80% were sexually abused or assaulted before becoming pregnant.
- One out of three are or have been in a relationship where they were the victims of domestic violence.
- 50% report being severely physically abused as a child.
- 50% live with someone who is abusing alcohol or drugs.
- 98% of the families served live below poverty level.

## INSIGHTS TEEN PARENT PROGRAM SERVICES

- Parenting education and support for young fathers and mothers
- Prenatal health and education and developmental screenings for children
- Violence prevention
- Networking and peer support
- School advocacy
- Housing and emergency assistance with food, diapers and personal supplies
- Mental health counseling: drug and alcohol risk assessment
- Development of life skills that lead to self-sufficiency
- Homeless teen parent support

## TEEN PREGNANCY DOWN BUT STILL HIGH

- The teen birth rate in the U.S. fell 33.3% from 1991 to 2004.
- U.S. teen birth rate remains highest in developed world – twice as high as Canada, five times as high as France.
- 34% of young women become pregnant at least once before they reach the age of 20 – about 820,000 a year.

Sources: Advocates for Youth; National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

# ***Help Build a Bold New Vision for Sexual Health in America***

*by Mary Gossart*

Be part of the excitement of building a statewide and national movement in support of positive, pragmatic, and effective approaches to adolescent sexual health. Make plans now to attend the national Rights, Respect, Responsibility conference, to be held this August in Eugene.

Cosponsored by Planned Parenthood Health Services of Southwestern Oregon (PPHSSO) and Advocates for Youth, the conference will convene educators, health professionals, policy makers, faith leaders, and young people from around Oregon and across the country. Two days of intensive sessions will focus on putting the vision into practical action.

**Rights:** Young people have the right to accurate information and access to health services.

**Respect:** Young people deserve respect as valued members of the community who have much to offer.

**Responsibility:** Young people can be trusted to make responsible decisions when they are provided information, taught skills and given support to do so.

You'll hear from European public health experts as they share the compelling strategies that have led Western Europe to have the lowest teen pregnancy, birth, and abortion rates in the industrialized world – while the U.S. continues to struggle with the highest rates, despite impressive declines over the last decade. You'll also hear about Oregon's breakthrough New 3Rs: Rights, Respect, Responsibility campaign, as well as success stories from across the state and around the country.

For more information, contact PPHSSO Rights, Respect, Responsibility Coordinator, Joanne Alba at (541) 344-1611 x 14 or [joanne.alba@pphssso.org](mailto:joanne.alba@pphssso.org), or Mary Gossart, PPHSSO VP Education & Training, at (541) 344-1611 x 13 or [mary@pphssso.org](mailto:mary@pphssso.org)

**Rights, Respect, Responsibility Conference  
August 10 – 11, 2006**

**Eugene Hilton**

**To register: Download the registration form at [www.pphssso.org](http://www.pphssso.org) or [www.new3Rs.info](http://www.new3Rs.info) after April 15.**



## **The Rational Enquirer**

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