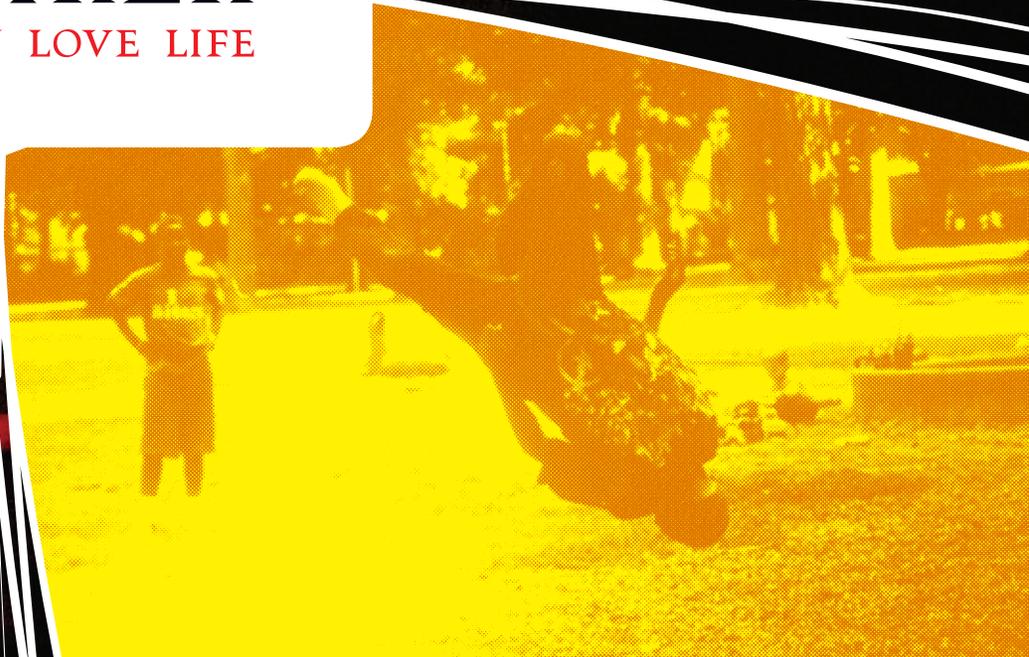
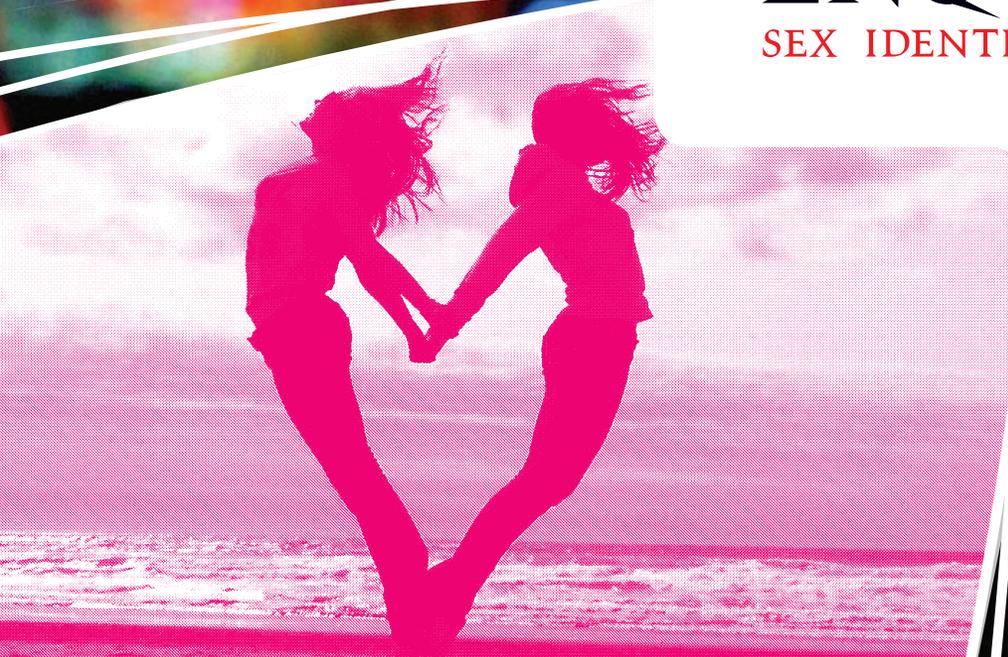
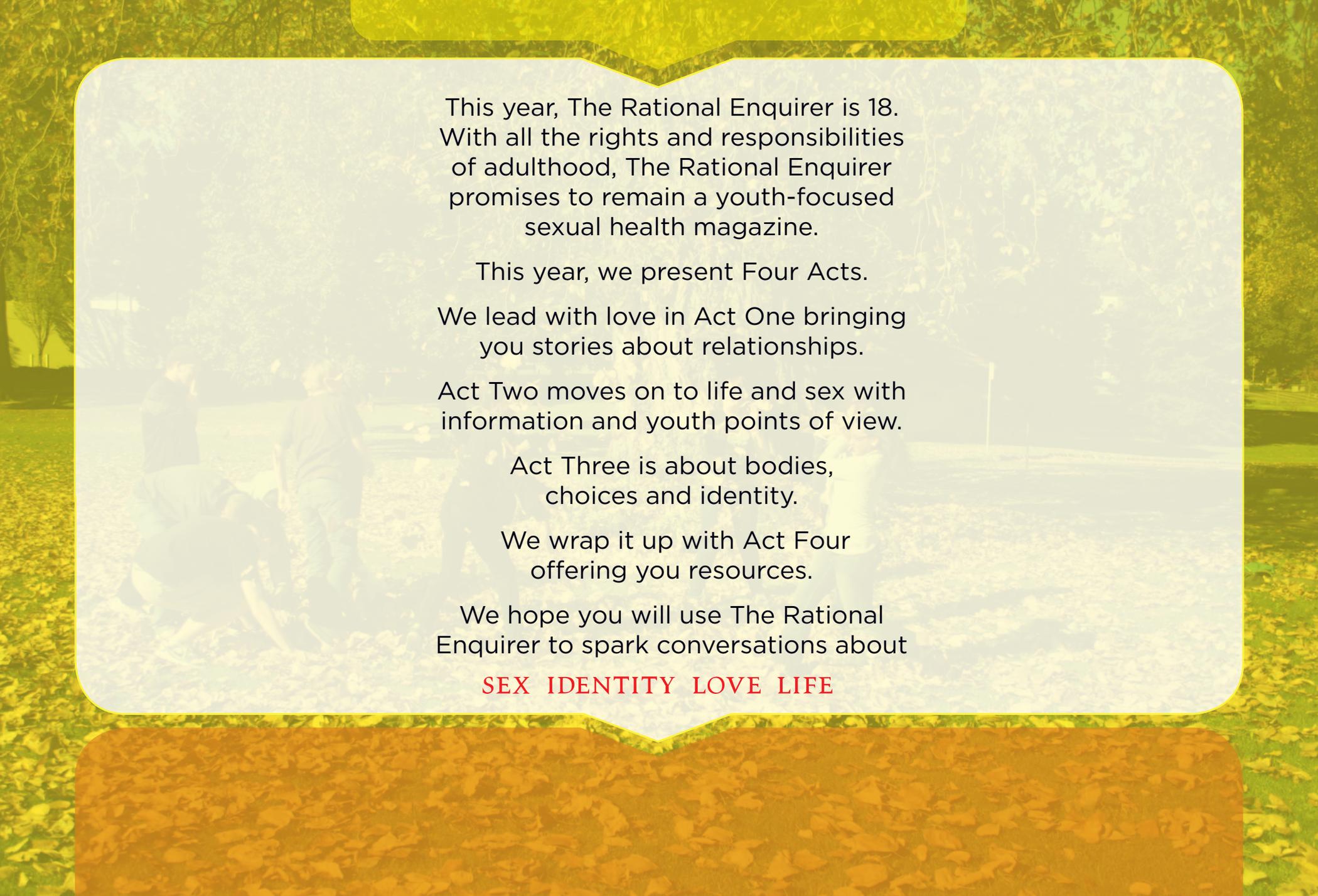


2013
**RATIONAL
ENQUIRER**
SEX IDENTITY LOVE LIFE



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The Rational Enquirer is an annual publication. If you would like to submit an article for the 2014 edition, please send a note to jessica.duke@state.or.us to get the “how to” information.



This year, The Rational Enquirer is 18. With all the rights and responsibilities of adulthood, The Rational Enquirer promises to remain a youth-focused sexual health magazine.

This year, we present Four Acts.

We lead with love in Act One bringing you stories about relationships.

Act Two moves on to life and sex with information and youth points of view.

Act Three is about bodies, choices and identity.

We wrap it up with Act Four offering you resources.

We hope you will use The Rational Enquirer to spark conversations about

SEX IDENTITY LOVE LIFE

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Act One

Relationships

Over the course of your life, you will likely have many relationships — not all of them will be romantic, but some of them may be.

Many people begin to think about romantic relationships, or even start dating, as teenagers. People date for lots of different reasons, like to meet more friends, to have someone to hang out with, to share a new experience with someone, to be close to someone, or to be loved.

Your family and culture probably have very specific ideas about dating. In some families, teenagers are not allowed to date, others have rules about when teens can start dating, who they can see, where they can go, and what they can do. It might be helpful to talk to your parents/guardians early, so that you know what they think about dating and what their rules are.

Some teens who date may go out with someone casually, and may even date more than one person at the same time. Other teens may date one person exclusively to see if they want to enter into a more serious, romantic relationship.

The media and popular culture sometimes make it feel like we have to find our “soul mate” — the one

person who can be and mean everything to us — as soon as possible. The truth is that one person can't be everything to someone else. Even people who have a romantic partner need other friends and family who care about them.



Don't give in to the pressure you may feel to find a boyfriend or girlfriend. You should know that many people prefer to hang out and share new experiences with their friends. In fact, a lot of teenagers never date. And if you do get into a relationship, don't spend all of your time with this person and ignore your friends and family.

Some dating and romantic relationships include shared sexual activity and some don't. Though it often seems like everyone is having sex — don't believe it. Many couples in dating and romantic relationships aren't having sex. Don't give in to any pressure you might feel; you have to decide what is right for you.

Source: ©SIECUS. **Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States:**

www.siecus.org

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Dating pledge

Take the pledge and promise to have healthy, safe relationships free from violence and free from fear. Then, share it with your partners, friends and family because everyone has the right to a healthy relationship!

I promise myself, future and current partners to maintain relationships that are based on respect, equality, trust and honest communication. I will value my partner's boundaries online and behind closed doors. I will never engage in any type of abuse — physical, emotional, sexual, financial or digital.

If one of my friends experiences abuse, I pledge to help them by saying something, modeling healthy communication and connecting them to resources.

I pledge to remember, demonstrate and promote the fact that **LOVE IS RESPECT.**

How can i communicate better?

Part of being in a healthy relationship is having good communication. Use the guidelines below to open up the channels of communication between you and your partner. If you're in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, be careful using these tips. You know your relationship best. If any of these tips would put you in danger, don't try them.

For healthier communication, try to:

Find the right time. If something is bothering you and you would like to have a serious conversation about it, make sure you pick the right time to talk. Don't interrupt your partner when they're watching a sports game, TV show, about to go to sleep or stressed about an upcoming test. Tell your partner you would like to talk later and find a time when you're in the same room and not doing anything important. Don't start serious conversations in public places unless you don't feel safe.

Talk face to face. Avoid talking about serious matters or issues in writing. Text messages, letters and emails can be misinterpreted. Talk in person so there aren't any unnecessary miscommunications.

Do not attack. Even when we mean well, we can sometimes come across as harsh because of our word choice. Using "you" can sound like you're attacking, which will make your partner defensive and less receptive to your message. Instead, try using "I" or "we." For example, say "I feel like we haven't been as close lately" instead of "You have been distant with me."

Be honest. Agree to be honest. Sometimes the truth hurts, but it's the key to a healthy relationship. Admit that you aren't always perfect and apologize when you make a mistake instead of making excuses. You will feel better and it will help strengthen your relationship.

Check your body language.

Make eye contact when speaking. Sit up and face your partner. Let your partner know you're listening. Show them you really care. Don't take a phone call, text or play a video game when you're talking. Listen and respond.

Use the 48-hour rule. If your partner does something that makes you angry, you need to tell them about it. But you don't have to do so right away. If you're still hurt 48 hours later, say something. If not, consider forgetting about it. But remember your partner can't read your mind. If you don't speak up when you're

upset, there is no way for them to apologize or change. Once you do mention your hurt feelings and your partner sincerely apologizes, let it go. Don't bring up past issues if they're not relevant.

How to communicate if you are angry

Stop. If you get really angry about something, stop, take a step back and breathe. Give yourself time to calm down by watching TV, talking to a friend, playing a video game, taking a walk, listening to some music or whatever helps you relax. Taking a break can keep the situation from getting worse.



Think. After you're no longer upset, think about the situation and why you got so angry. Was it how your partner spoke or something they did? Figure out the real problem then think about how to explain your feelings.

Talk. Finally, talk to your partner and when you do, follow the tips above.

Listen. After you tell your partner how you feel, remember to stop talking and listen to what they have to say. You both deserve the opportunity to express how you feel in a safe and healthy environment.

Communicating isn't always easy. At first, some of these tips may feel unnatural or awkward, but they will help you communicate better and build a healthy relationship.

Source: www.loveisrespect.org

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Social network safety

You deserve to be in a safe and healthy relationship, whether in person or online. If your partner is digitally abusive, know their behavior is not acceptable and could be illegal. Check out our tips below for staying safe on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, foursquare and others.

Only post things you want the public to see or know. Once it's online, it's no longer under your control.

Be protective of your personal information. Your phone numbers and addresses enable people to contact you directly, and things like your birth date, the schools you attended, your employer and photos with landmarks may make it easier for someone to find where you live, hang out or go to school.

Set boundaries and limits. Tell people not to post personal information, negative comments or check-ins about you on social media. Ask people not to post or tag pictures if you're not comfortable with it.

You can keep your passwords private — sharing passwords is not a requirement of being in a relationship.

Don't do or say anything online you wouldn't in person. It may seem easier to express yourself when you are not

face-to-face, but online communication can have real-life negative consequences.

Abuse or harassment Don't respond to harassing, abusive or inappropriate comments. It won't make the person stop and it could get you in trouble or even put you in danger.

Keep a record of all harassing messages, posts and comments in case you decide to tell the police or get a restraining order.

Always report inappropriate behavior to the site administrators.

Leaving an abusive relationship

If you are leaving an unhealthy relationship, start by blocking your ex on Facebook and other social networking pages. We recommend you don't check in on foursquare or other location-based sites or apps — you don't want your ex or their friends tracking your movements.



Adjust your privacy settings to reduce the amount of information that particular people can see on your page. Privacy settings on sites like Facebook allow the user to control how their information is shared and who has access to it. Remember, registering for some apps require you to change your privacy settings.

Avoid posting private details on your friends' pages. They may not have appropriate settings and doing so may allow someone to see your movements and location. The same goes for tagging yourself in pictures.

Consider what is called a "super-logoff" — deactivating your Facebook account every time you log off and reactivating it every time you log back on. This way, no one can post on your wall, tag you or see your content when you're offline, but you still have all of your friends, wall posts, photos, etc. when you log back on.

While it is inconvenient and may seem extreme, disabling your social networking page entirely may be your best option to stop continued abuse or harassment.

Your friends' safety

If your friend is in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, be careful what you post about them. Pictures, locations, check ins — even simple statements can be used to control or hurt them. If you're unsure of what's ok to post, **get your friend's permission before you click "Share."**

Source: www.loveisrespect.org

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Top quiz

Are you a good boyfriend or girlfriend? Answer “Yes” or “No” to the following questions to find out. Make sure to write down your responses. At the end, you’ll find out how to score your answers.

- 1 Forget to thank my partner when they do something nice for me?
- 2 Ignore my partner’s calls if I don’t feel like talking?
- 3 Get jealous when my partner makes a new friend?
- 4 Have trouble making time to listen to my partner when something is bothering them?
- 5 Discourage my partner from trying something new like joining a club?
- 6 Call, text or drive by my partner’s house a lot?
- 7 Get upset when my partner wants to hang out with their friends or family?
- 8 Make fun of my partner or call them names?
- 9 Criticize my partner for their taste in music or clothing?
- 10 Make fun of my partner’s appearance?
- 11 Accuse my partner of flirting or cheating even if I’m not sure that’s what happened?
- 12 Take out my frustrations on my partner, like snapping at them or giving them attitude?
- 13 Throw things if I’m mad at my partner or do things like hit walls or drive dangerously?
- 14 Read my partner’s texts or go through their personal things, like their wallet or purse?
- 15 Tell my partner they are the reason for my bad mood even if they aren’t?
- 16 Try to make my partner feel guilty about things they have no control over?
- 17 Sometimes say things to my partner knowing that they are hurtful?
- 18 Make my partner feel bad about something nice they did for me that I didn’t like, even though I know they tried their best?
- 19 Talk down to or embarrass my partner in front of others?
- 20 Have sex with my partner even if I think they don’t want to go that far?

Scoring

So are you a good
boyfriend or girlfriend?

Give yourself one point for every “Yes” you answered to questions one through four, and five points for all “Yes” answers to numbers 5-20. Don’t give yourself any points for any “No” answers. Now that you’re finished and have your score, the next step is to find out what it means. Simply take your total score and see which of the categories below apply to you.

0

If you got zero points, congratulations! You make a good boyfriend/girlfriend! It sounds like you’re very mindful of your actions and respectful of your partner’s feelings — these are the building blocks of a healthy relationship. Keeping things on a good track takes work, so stay with it! As long as you and your partner continue like this, your relationship should grow in a healthy direction.

1-2

If you scored one or two points, there may be a couple of things in your relationship that could use a little attention. Nobody is perfect, but it is important to be mindful of your actions and try to avoid hurting your partner. Remember, communication is key to building a healthy relationship!

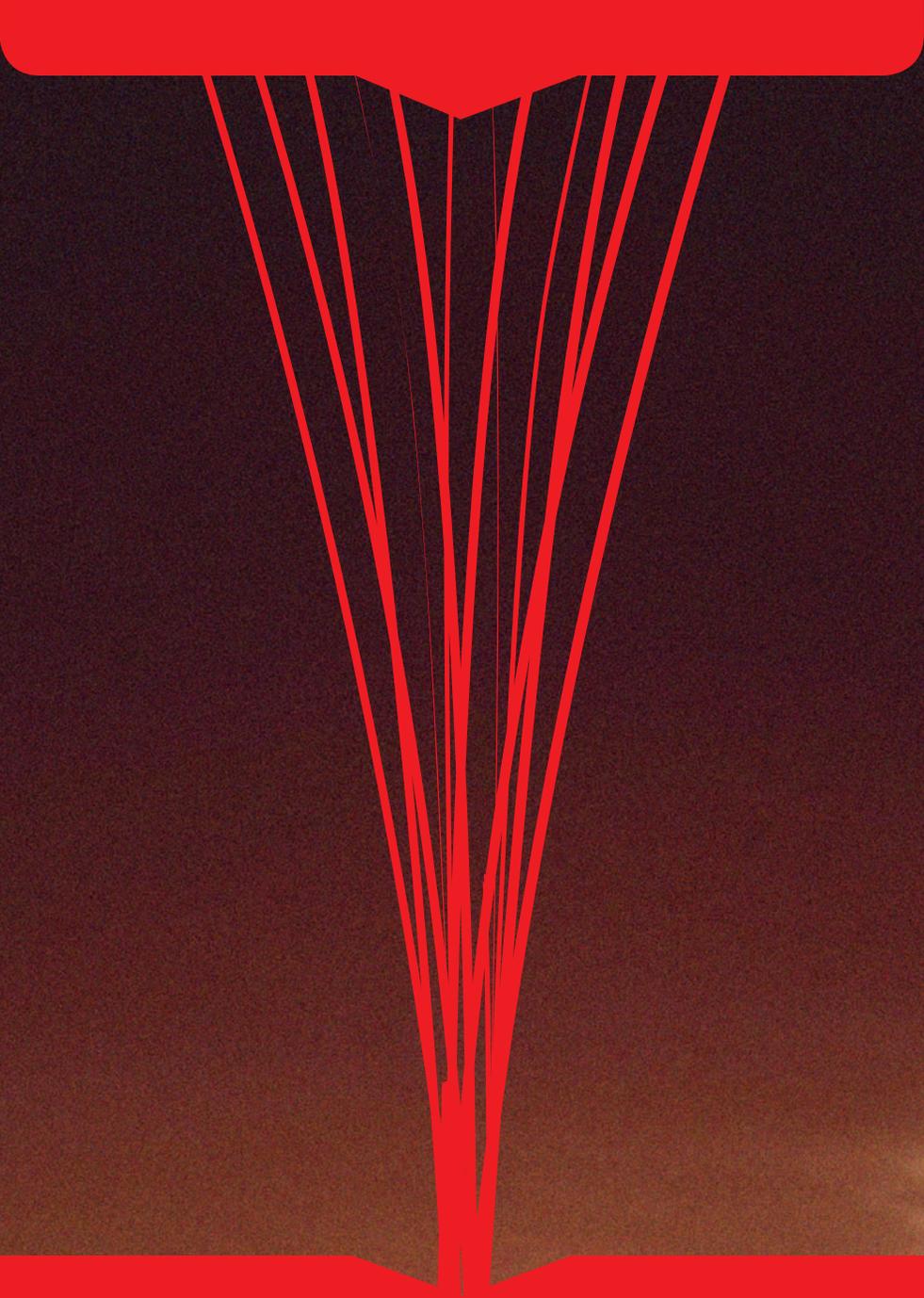
3-4

If you scored three or four points, it’s possible that some of your actions may hurt your partner and relationship. While the behaviors may not be abusive, they can worsen over time if you don’t change. Read about the different types of abuse, so that you can keep your relationship safe and healthy.

5+

If you scored five or more points, some of your actions may be abusive. You may not realize it, but these behaviors are damaging. The first step to improving your relationship is becoming aware of your unhealthy actions and admitting they are wrong. It’s important to take responsibility for the problem and get help to end it. An unhealthy pattern is hard to change, so chat with a peer advocate for more information on how to get help.

Source: www.loveisrespect.org
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ACT TWO

IN MY OPINION

Sex education: Whose responsibility?

In 2011, U.S. high school students were surveyed about teen sexuality. The research results showed that nearly 50 percent of the high school students surveyed had had sexual intercourse, and 33.7 percent had had intercourse during the previous three months. Additionally, 39.8 percent said they hadn't used a condom the last time they'd had sex, and 76.7 percent confessed to not using birth control pills the last time they'd had intercourse. More than 15 percent had had sex with four or more partners so far in their life. Nearly half of the 19 million new STDs each year are among youth aged 15–24 years, and more than 400,000 teens aged 15–19 years gave birth in 2009. These numbers are alarming. My community reflects these statistics.

I understand that it's unrealistic to expect most teenagers to abstain from sex, no matter how much we wish they would. But it is essential for our generation and the ones to come, that we develop the tools as a nation to reduce the growing rates of young people in America who put themselves at higher risks for STDs/STIs and unplanned pregnancies. Our younger population fails at understanding how their decisions in the moment can affect their lives and everyone's around them. I have plenty of friends who have unprotected, unplanned sex with their "monogamous" partners, and forget their sexual values. While one person may be promiscuous and having sex recreationally, their partners may have very different values and beliefs as to what having that level of intimate physical contact might mean. This is one area that schools and resources everywhere don't explore with curious adolescents — communication amongst partners. Our generation is not prepared to handle the possible outcomes of these common actions responsibly.

The rates of poverty, teen pregnancies, numbers of single parents, and STIs/STDs are increasing rapidly because we still do not provide our youth with the tools and resources that are needed to mold our desired results. I was raised by a very liberal and open family. No questions are considered "bad" questions, and I started reading the book "Where Did I Come From?" by Peter Mayle when I was 3 years old. The reality is that a large majority of families in America don't grow up with the same values. It's often considered taboo for children to ask their parents about sex. It then becomes the responsibility of our communities to educate one another. This can be done by increasing funds towards health clinics in schools nationwide, creating more clinics and providing the supplies needed to provide the community with more options. Condoms should be distributed in classrooms and bathrooms. Health clinics should be accessible throughout cities to provide youth with free care, nationwide, even if they're older than 18 years of age. Classes should discuss the statistics and realities of our world today, and we should educate our youth on how to make better decisions for themselves and everyone around them.

Lauren Rojas

Lauren Rojas is from Portland, where she attends De La Salle North Catholic High School. She enjoys playing sports, writing, drawing, singing, dancing and spending time with her family, friends, and boyfriend. She is considering a future as a marine-biologist/environmentalist or a pediatrician.

Source: Statistics retrieved from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Sexual Risk Behavior: HIV, STD, & Teen Pregnancy Prevention:

www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/sexualbehaviors/

ARE YOU READY FOR SEX?

Nowadays, teens tend to fall into peer pressure over having sex. Sometimes by friends, sometimes by boyfriends and girlfriends, and even just peers in general. It is important to ask yourself during these times, “Am I really ready for sex?” Some teens tend to think if they don’t give in to peer pressure they will be labeled as “uncool” or seen as “different,” but the truth is sex is a very important thing to think about when considering having it.

There are many possibilities and outcomes that can happen when having sex.

For example, pregnancy, STDs, risk of infections, and even emotional feelings like guilt, remorse, pleasure, etc. So before having sex, you really have to ask yourself are you ready, both physically and emotionally? And are you ready to face the possible outcomes and results that can come with being sexually active?

Here are some ways to prepare yourself before becoming sexually active:

Talking to your partner about sex can be nerve-racking sometimes, and even embarrassing, but I assure you there is nothing to be nervous or ashamed of when talking to your partner about sex.

Let your partner know you’re ready to have sex.

Inform your partner you have been talking to a doctor about contraceptives, etc.

It is always good to have this conversation before making the decision about having sex so you and your partner are both on the same page when it comes to considering sex.

Talking to your parents

A lot of teens fear talking about sex to their parents because they’re embarrassed, or are scared of their parents’ reaction, or many other reasons. But the bottom line is your parents knowing about your sex life is ultimately up to you! Some teens prefer to tell their parents about their sex life just so they’re aware. Others prefer not to tell their parents about their sex life, and either choice is OK. There is no right or wrong. Your sex life is yours and only yours, so the choices you make about it are all up to you!

Talking to your doctor

Your doctor has a lot of insight when it comes to talking about sex. He/she can answer all your questions, concerns, give you information on different types of contraceptives, give you condoms, etc. Doctors are a very good start when it comes to talking about sex. And the best part is if you’re worried about your parents finding out, you can ask your doctors to keep your appointments with them confidential and, by law, unless you are in danger, they’re required to!

Iricia Ann

Iricia is a senior at Stevenson High (Washington). She loves to play sports and she loves animals. She is interested in a career in nursing. Iricia recently interned with a public health nurse at Rock Creek Clinic in Stevenson, Washington.

STI MYTHS AND FACTS

So much wrong information about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) gets passed around that it's no surprise the infections do too. Of course, the only way to be 100% sure you won't get an STI like herpes, chlamydia, or HIV, is not to have any type of sex (abstinence). But if you do decide to have sex, you'll need to stay informed and learn what's true — and what's not.

Here are 5 of the more common things that people get wrong about STIs.

Myth: Only “trashy” people get STIs.

Fact: STIs don't discriminate.

Rich people get STIs. Poor people get them. Athletes get them. Math geeks get them. CEOs and professors get them. Even someone having sex for the first time can get an STI. The only people who have no risk of getting an STI are people who haven't had sex or any kind of sexual contact.

What can you do? If you decide to have sex, always use a condom every time. Even if you're already on another kind of birth control, like the Pill, you should still use a

condom. That's because condoms are the only type of birth control that reduces the risk of getting an STI.

Myth: If your partner has an STI, you'll see it.

Fact: There's often no sign that a person has an STI.

Even doctors often can't tell by looking if people have STIs. So they need to do tests, like bloodwork. People with STIs might not know they have them: STIs don't always cause symptoms. But it is possible to carry and spread the virus without ever having an outbreak. Untreated STIs can add up to serious health problems, like infertility (the inability to have a baby) or pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which may land you in the hospital.

What can you do? Even if you both think you're clean, get checked out before having sex. Then use a condom every time, just to be sure. It can take a while for some STIs to show up on tests.

Myth: You can avoid STIs by having oral or anal sex.

Fact: Where there's sex (oral, anal, vaginal, or even just sexual contact), there can be STIs.

The viruses or bacteria that cause STIs can enter the body through tiny cuts or tears in the mouth and anus, as well as the genitals. Some STIs, like herpes or genital warts, can spread just through skin-to-skin contact with an infected area or sore.

What can you do? Use a condom or a dental dam every time you have oral or anal sex. If the taste of latex isn't your thing, there are flavored condoms made specifically for oral sex.

Myth: Once you've had an STI, there's no chance of getting it again.

Fact: You can get some STIs more than just once.

Some STIs are yours for life, like herpes and HIV. Others, like chlamydia and gonorrhea, can be treated, but you may get infected again if you have sexual contact with someone who has them.

What can you do? Protect yourself with condoms, of course! And if you're having sex, let your doctor know so you can get tested regularly. If you do get diagnosed with an STI, your partner should be treated at the same time you are. That way your partner will avoid future problems — and avoid reinfecting you.

Myth: If you get checked and you're STI-free, your partner doesn't need to get checked as well.

Fact: Your partner could have an STI and not know it.

Who wants to make the effort to get tested, find out they're clean, and then end up catching an STI from a partner anyway?

What can you do? Get tested together. It may not be your most romantic date, but nothing says "I care" like trying to protect a boyfriend or girlfriend from illness. STIs are more than just an embarrassment. They're a serious health problem. Left untreated, some STIs can cause permanent damage, such as infertility and even death.

There are tons of myths out there about sex and STIs — the ones above are just a few of them. Luckily, you only need to remember these essential truths:

The only way to 100% avoid STIs (and pregnancy) is not to have sex.

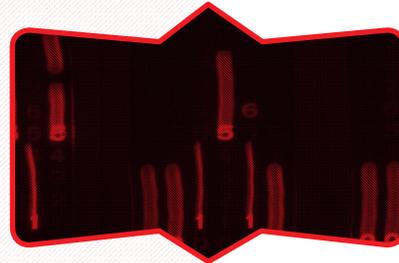
If you do have sex, use a condom every time.

If you have had sex, get tested for STIs

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KidsHealth®

<http://kidshealth.org/>

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THE DANISH DIFFERENCE

My name is Sofie and I am an exchange student living in Portland, Oregon, this year. I am from Denmark and I'm a junior, studying at a high school here in the city. I have been here for five months now.

I think it is interesting that even though there are a lot of opinions and norms that we share, there are still a few that are so different. I think that where you see most differences is with young people in high schools. One of the first things I noticed when I got here was how immature everybody my own age seemed to me. I started discussing it with some of my fellow exchange student friends and discovered they had the same impression of young Americans. They seemed really immature to us. That made me think about what Americans do differently than Danes that causes these obvious differences.



Three weeks into my stay, 50 other exchange students and I were invited to a dance some 17-year-olds were having. We stood outside laughing. We could not believe how they were dancing. Rubbing themselves against each other like that. We would become familiar with “grinding” quickly. How can someone call that dancing and do it with everybody looking? We thought it was the grossest thing we had ever seen.

A thing that is very different here is how parents talk to their kids about sex. All I hear them say is “don’t do it.” What I have heard my entire life is “it is OK, just be safe.” In Denmark sex education is not avoided. We hear about it in school, from our parents and the media. Most parents are OK with girls and boys together in their rooms with the doors closed. Even to spend the night! As long as they trust their child to be safe, there is no problem in that.

My impression of young Americans, is that they are far from being safe when it comes to sex. Their parents won’t allow it, so a lot of people have to hide it. It doesn’t stop them. Now, I’m not saying that everybody in Denmark is being safe, but if you take a look at statistics, the U.S. has a teenage birth rate that is a lot higher than the Danish one.* Maybe the reason why Americans do “grind” at parties is because that is the only place they can do whatever they want without having their parents stop them.

I think that by the time Danes turn 17 they have usually experienced so much more than 17-year-old Americans have, and that is maybe what makes us feel older here. I never realized how independent I was back home! At first I thought it was really strange, but after awhile I realized that the way things work in America make perfect sense to the people that have grown up with

it, just as much as the Danish way to do things makes sense to me! I think the way to have a healthy relationship with sex is by teaching about how to be safe rather than forbidding it.

This is just my opinion.

Sofie Lauritzen

Sofie is from Roskilde, Denmark. She enjoys playing tennis and listening to music. She is looking forward to studying astronomy at a university in Copenhagen, Denmark, after she has graduated.

Teen birth rates shown are from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S.) and Statistics Denmark.

**2011 Teen Birth Rates*

United States: 31.3 births per 1,000 teens aged 15-19 years old

Denmark 4.6 births per 1,000 teens aged 15-19 years old

DENTAL DAMS

Dental Dams are great at protecting against STDs during oral sex.

THE FACTS

Dental dams are thin sheets of latex or polyurethane (rubber) that come in lots of different colors, sizes, and flavors. They are a great way to way to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) during oral sex performed on the vagina or anus.

Dental dams get their name because they can be used during different dental procedures. But because dental dams can protect both against skin-to-skin contact and the exchange of body fluids (like semen, vaginal fluid, and blood), they are becoming a popular safe sex tool.

USING DENTAL DAMS

1. Check the expiration date on the dental dam package. If it is still good, unfold the dental dam and visually check it for any holes or tears.
2. If the dental dam has cornstarch powder on it, rinse that off with water. Starch may cause an infection in the vagina and irritation on the anus.
3. Apply water-based lubricant to the side of the dental dam that will touch your partner's genitals. This increases your partner's sensitivity.
4. Place the dental dam over your partner's genitals and hold it in place, so it doesn't move too much.

5. Remember that only one side of the dam should come into contact with the genitals, and one side should come into contact with the mouth.
6. When you are finished performing oral sex on your partner, throw out the dam. Dental dams should be used only once
 - a) Prevent exchanging any body fluids (like vaginal fluid, semen, or blood) with your partner, and
 - b) Prevent any direct skin-to-skin contact with your partner's genitals and your mouth.
7. Wash your hands with soap and water. Keep in mind that when you use a dental dam, you have two safer sex goals. To prevent spreading or getting STDs you must:

BUYING DENTAL DAMS

Dental dams can be challenging to find. A promising first stop for those seeking them are sexual health organizations, like Planned Parenthood, or online. You can also buy dental dams at some pharmacies, gas stations and grocery stores. Testing centers and clinics may also have them available for free.

CREATING YOUR OWN DENTAL DAMS

If you are having trouble finding dental dams, unlubricated or dry condoms can be made easily into good substitutes. With scissors carefully snip off the elastic band part and tip of a condom and then cut down its length. The resulting rectangular piece of latex or polyurethane is stretchable.

You can also cut open a medical glove, either made of latex or nitrile (for those with latex sensitivities). The easiest way to make a glove into a dental dam is to cut the four fingers off the top of the glove, and then slit down the side of the glove — leaving the thumb intact. If you do this, you can use the thumb to insert your tongue or finger into your partner while still practicing safe oral sex.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Dental dams are a great way to prevent STDs and play it safe during oral sex. If you still have questions after reading this fact sheet, check out the sites below, but also remember that your doctor, nurse or other health care provider can provide you with more information about the resources available in your local area.

TO LEARN MORE VISIT:

www.plannedparenthood.org

www.weRnative.org

Source: WeRNative.org For Native Youth by Native Youth.

www.npaihb.org/images/epicenter/docs/PRT/2012/dec2012/WeRNativeDental%20Dams%20Fact%20Sheet_FINAL.pdf

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Act Three

Whoa! my breasts are different!

Having different-sized breasts is perfectly normal. It's quite common for girls to have different-sized breasts or nipples, especially as they develop during puberty. Everyone's different, and no two women's breasts will look exactly the same. In fact, asymmetry — where one body part, like a foot or a hand, is a slightly different size or shape from its partner — is quite common in humans.





When girls begin puberty, usually between the ages of 8 and 13, their breasts begin to develop starting with just a little swelling under the nipple. This is known as breast budding. You may notice that one of your breasts starts developing before the other or that one is growing more quickly. Many times this difference in breast size evens out once a girl is older, usually by age 20. But it's also perfectly normal for women's breasts to remain different sizes even when they're fully developed.

Some girls with different-sized breasts worry that there's something medically wrong, but chances are, for a teen, there isn't. If you're really worried about your breast size, talk to your doctor or gynecologist. He or she should be able to reassure you that your breasts are normal.

Girls who notice their breasts are different sizes are aware of their breasts — and that's good news. Being aware of your breasts can help you stay healthy! Learning how your breasts normally look (and feel) can help you notice any changes that might not be normal. Your doctor can teach you how to do a

breast self-exam (BSE) that will help you become familiar with your breasts so you can identify any changes.

Some girls worry about their different-sized breasts for cosmetic reasons. Many girls with different-sized breasts or nipples just accept that they are normal and don't do anything differently. But other girls feel self-conscious. It's likely that no one else notices your breasts look different, though. Other people usually can't see the difference in the size of a girl's breasts — even if that difference is a full cup size.

The fact is that exercises, supplements, or diets won't change the size or shape of a girl's breasts — only plastic surgery can do that. (And most doctors recommend that a girl wait until her breasts have finished growing before considering plastic surgery.) Some girls decide to wear especially supportive bras or special inserts that make their breasts appear more equal in size. Talk to a lingerie salesperson if you want some suggestions for evening things out. It may also help to talk to your mom, older sister, or an aunt or grandmother — they may have worried about having different-sized breasts during their teen years, too.

Everyone develops differently, and it's normal for the two sides of our bodies to be a little different from each other. We humans aren't as evenly proportioned as we appear at first glance!

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Is my penis normal?

Just about every guy wonders how he measures up in the “down-there” department at one time or another. Here’s the lowdown for any guy who’s ever worried about whether his penis is a normal size.

There’s a fairly wide range of normal penis sizes — just as there is for every other body part. And just like other parts of the body, how a penis appears at different stages of a guy’s life varies quite a bit. You wouldn’t expect someone who is 11 years old to look the same as someone who’s 19.

Guys normally develop at different times. Some may start developing as early as 9. Others may not start developing until 15 or even later. The age at which a guy starts to grow varies from person to person. It all depends on when he enters puberty and his hormones start doing their thing.

Growth in penis size is just one part of puberty, which also includes such changes as pubic hair development, testicular growth, muscle development, and a growth spurt. Late starters almost always catch up fine — they just reach full maturity a little later.

Penises come in different sizes, shapes, and colors. These traits are hereditary, like eye color or foot size, and there’s nothing you can do to change them. Despite what you may hear or read, no special exercises, supplements, or diets will speed up the development process or change a guy’s size.

Also, like his feet, a guy’s penis may appear smaller to him just because the perspective is different when he’s looking down.

And there’s a lot less difference in penis size between guys when they get an erection than when their penises are relaxed.

In addition to size, guys also wonder about other aspects of how their penises look, such as whether the skin covering the penis is normal or if it’s OK for a guy’s penis to hang to the left or right (it is!). If you’re concerned about how your penis looks, ask your doctor. Guys who are reaching puberty should have regular testicular exams, so that’s a good time to ask your doctor any questions.

Taking a ride on the hormonal roller coaster means lots of changes — and a lot of common worries — for both guys and girls. Just as guys may wonder about how their penises develop, lots of girls ask the same thing about their breasts.

If you’re wondering about your development, don’t try to compare yourself to your older brother or your best friend — they’re probably at a different stage of development than you are anyway. The important thing to remember is that it’s OK to not be a mirror image of the guy at the next urinal.

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Choosing what to do

When it comes to sexual behavior, there are as many different possible decisions as there are people and couples. Some people feel sexual desire but don't act on it at all. Others choose to act on it alone through masturbation but decide not to be sexual with anyone else. Some people may decide to engage in some sexual behaviors but not others. The important thing is that you make the choice for yourself and stick to it.

Remember, decisions can change. You may choose to be sexual with a partner today and change your mind next week. Or you may have been sexual with a partner in the past and decide not to be with future partners. Just because you've done something before doesn't mean you have to or even should do it again — even with the same partner. Each decision is unique. So think about it.

Here are some questions to ask yourself before you engage in any sexual behavior.

Who is your partner?

What is your relationship with this person? Sexual activity often involves many feelings and emotions that can be confusing. How will you and your partner handle

these feelings if they come up? How will sex change your relationship with this person?

Do you feel safe?

Consider your partner, the situation, the location... Do you feel safe and taken care of? Do you feel respected by your partner? Do you respect your partner? Can you talk and listen to him/her? Are you worried that someone might walk in?

Is it consensual?

No one has the right to be sexual with another person without that person's explicit permission. Have you talked about what behaviors you give permission for and have permission to start?

Have you talked about where you will stop? Do you feel like your partner respects your decisions? Do you respect your partner's decisions?

What is your motivation?

Why are you thinking of doing this? People can have many reasons for having sex, like to become closer, to feel loved, to express love, to feel good, to satisfy curiosity, to gain popularity, to get someone to like them, to fit in, or to rebel. Let's face it, some of these aren't very good reasons for getting sexually involved with someone else. Be honest with yourself, what are your reasons?

Is it non-exploitative?

Exploitation is when one person uses someone else for selfish reasons. Exploitation should not be part of sexual relationships. Partners should be interested in each other's well-being as well as their own. Are you and your partner looking out for each other?

Are you being honest?

Have you talked to your partner about your feelings, what you want to do, and what you don't want to do? Were you truthful in these conversations? Being honest with yourself and your partner can help you have a better relationship.

Is it pleasurable?

One reason that many people participate in various sexual activities is because these behaviors provide physical, emotional, and psychological pleasure. Does the sexual activity you are considering or engaging in feel good?

Is it protected?

Most sexual behaviors carry some risk of STDs or pregnancy. It's important to protect yourself from these risks — either by avoiding behaviors and eliminating the risk or by using effective protection and reducing the risk. Do you understand the risk involved in each behavior you are considering? Do you understand the benefits of abstaining from some or all risky behaviors? Do you understand how condoms or birth control can reduce your risk? Do you know how to use condoms or birth control correctly?

What does your gut instinct say?

A lot of people talk about listening to their inner voice or gut to let them know whether they are making the right decision. Think about a time that this was true for you. Maybe saying yes made you feel happy and excited or maybe it made you feel nervous and embarrassed. Maybe after you said no, you felt like a weight was lifted off your shoulders. Whatever the decision is — if it feels wrong, it is wrong for you. And remember, you can always change your mind. Even if you're in the middle of sexual activity, you can ask to stop. There is never a point of no return. You and your partner always have the right, the ability, and the responsibility to stop if either one of you changes your mind.

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Opening the jar

My name is Grant, and I'm gay. Or bi. Or somewhere in between. For a long time I agonized over which one it was, and I still am if truth be told. It was two weeks short ago that I came out to a couple of good friends over a good burrito. Before this I had just liked boys (and occasionally girls) and let it be, but once I was faced with the question "Grant, are you gay?" I had to answer and I could not bring myself to lie, I did not want to and I am glad I did not.

So I answered "yes." And I felt relieved, like a splinter being removed. But then it dawned on me that now I have been labeled. I have always looked down at the whole idea of sticking people in jars like that with distaste. I realized I couldn't be completely gay, I still liked women sometimes (if not often). I felt a bigger splinter being put in its place.

My pain was crushing but short-lived. It quickly dawned on me that I had not been labeled like a butterfly in a jar, but described, like a naturalist jotting notes down about a butterfly in a field. These titles given to us by society are no more than that.

You don't have to adhere to them, not at all! I decided to be who I am. I am not gay, I am not bi or straight or anything but Grant. And Grant likes boys, sometimes girls, chocolate ice cream and good books.

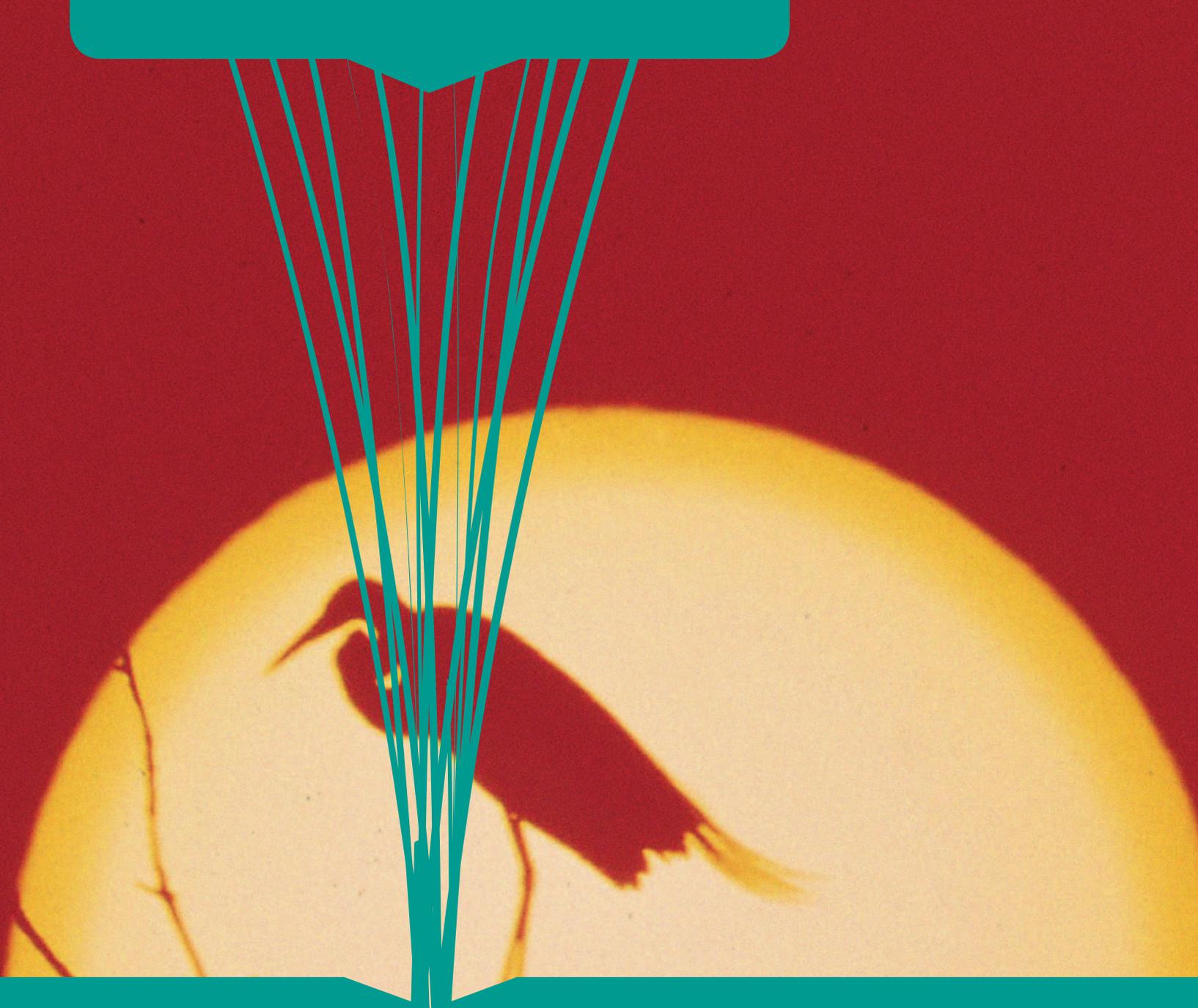
You can't get through life without people describing you, but this is so that they can understand you, they don't have the benefit of being in your head. Let them observe, but not capture. Open up your jar, and be yourself, whoever that is.

Grant

Source: <http://us.reachout.com/real-stories/story/opening-the-jar>

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About ReachOut — ReachOut is an information and support service using evidence-based principles and technology to help teens and young adults facing tough times and struggling with mental health issues. All content is written by teens and young adults, for teens and young adults, to meet them where they are, and help them recognize their own strengths and use those strengths to overcome their difficulties and/or seek help if necessary. The Inspire USA Foundation oversees ReachOut.





ACT FOUR

EPILOGUE

Thank you for reading. What's next is up to you. Share The Rational Enquirer with friends, parents, and teachers. Talk with others about the issues presented in these pages. Remember, not everyone has to agree. Healthy sexuality is about making the right choices for you. Approach others' choices with respect. If The Rational Enquirer articles find you needing more information take a look at the resources on page 34.

RESOURCES

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 STD testing are available. Call **1-800-723-3638** or go to **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**.

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**.

National AIDS/STD Hotline provides information and referral on sexually transmitted infections. Call **1-800-232-4636**.

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**.

Open Adoption & Family Services offers pregnancy option counseling and open adoption services. Call **1-800-772-1115** or go to **www.openadopt.org**.

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

CREDITS

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