

The Rational Enquirer

May 2003

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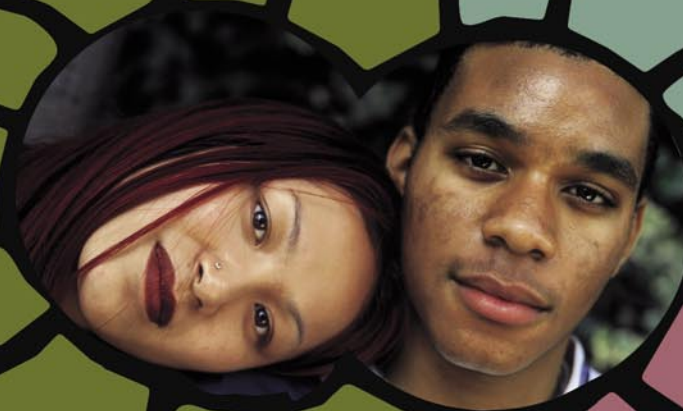
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A publication
of the Oregon Teen
Pregnancy Task Force

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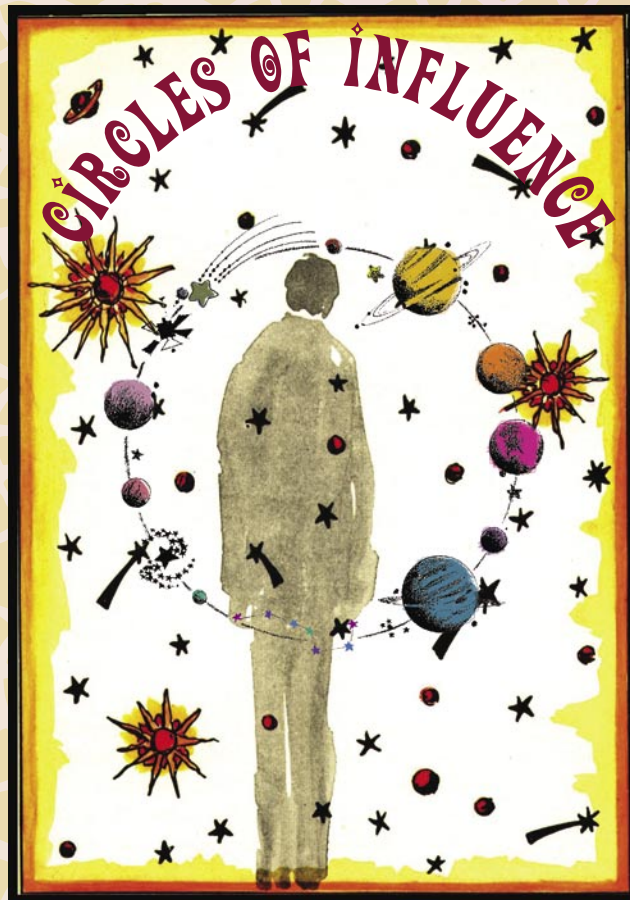
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The universe is expanding. Astronomers tell us it's just the nature of universes. Even for those of us born before the first lunar landing, this isn't exactly news. Most of us have already graduated from measuring space in city blocks or country miles to "home calling areas" and "frequent flier zones." But for a generation that started "mousing" before it could spell the word mouse, the image of our expanding universe is a perfect reflection of their reality. The circles of influence that surround today's young people are large indeed. And on the Internet, those circles are unfiltered by the usual forces of geography, community, and family.

We asked the question: With teens on the outer frontier of the Internet, how are the adults back here on earth to provide them with positive guidance? Along with some fundamental safety rules, our contributors each seem to suggest a back-to-basics approach: making the time to connect one-on-one and to really listen to one another. As we contemplate this universe of ever-widening circles, we must take care not to overlook the powerful influences that may be much closer to home. Which is why, in this issue, we make a special effort to expand our understanding of the often mysterious role of fathers.

Welcome to the Big (Virtual) City



Cyberspace is a huge city. It has libraries, universities, museums, places to have fun, and plenty of opportunities to meet wonderful people from all walks of life. Millions of teens spend time here every day, and most are safe. But here, as in any city, are places and people and situations to avoid, and others to approach only with caution. Only by knowing the dangers, and how to avoid them, can visitors safely enjoy all of the positive aspects of the Internet.

As we get older, it's natural to feel that we don't need the same restrictions as younger kids. That may be right, up to a point, but age alone doesn't put us out of danger. In fact, older teens are more likely to get in trouble online than their younger peers; more likely to explore out-of-the-way nooks and crannies; more likely to unknowingly reach out to pedophiles and exploiters.

The Internet is not private. The important thing to remember is that when you're online, whether in email, a chat room, a message board, or just visiting a web site, *you are in public*. So never write anything that you wouldn't want shared with everyone you know plus an assortment of total strangers – your name, address,

phone number, the most intimate details of your life. (Other people's personal information is off limits too.) Following this firm rule can spare both embarrassment and the even more serious risks of personal exposure. Even sharing the name of your city, school, or places you like to hang out could lead an unsuspected predator to attempt contact with you.

Always remind yourself that the people you "know" online may be totally fictional or even dangerous. Is the person you're "chatting" with really a 15-year-old girl, or a well-studied older person with a problem? "Innermost feelings" and music tastes aside, you do not know this person. It may be OK to keep communicating, as long as it's fun and safe, but be realistic about the relationship. If you feel strongly that the person is legit and you want to meet, there are some safer ways to go about it.

First, tell your parents or guardians. Assure them that you're as concerned about your own safety as they are. Ask if they'll come with you to the meeting, or if there's another adult in the family who would go. Arrange the meeting for a public place, a café or a store perhaps, and *do not* leave with the person. If anything

happens that feels weird or uncomfortable, just leave. Meeting people in person after an online relationship can be disappointing or strange for many reasons. Trust your observations and your gut.

If the person doesn't show up, be immediately suspicious. This is a major clue that your online "friend" isn't actually who she or he said. This phony might be checking you out from a distance or even following you. End your online contact immediately and, again, let your parents know. If anything truly creepy happens – for instance, the person appears older than claimed, makes unwanted contact by phone or in person, or sends you disturbing email – contact the police and your Internet provider. These are clear signs that you have contacted an online predator.

There's a lot to see and do here in the big city, and the people can be fascinating. You can have a great time, as long as you don't let the creeps and criminals get to you. Send a clear "stay away" message by keeping strong boundaries and privacy around you. And if you know a friend who's wandering around in dangerous alleys after dark, get help from an adult to show you care.

What's a Mother To Do!

Helpful Hints from a Thoughtful Mom

As part of my ongoing quest to know all there is to know about parenting my son, I talked at length last September with a friend whose parenting skills have always impressed me. Judy MacFarland and her husband have raised two fine sons, and she's still always thinking about how to do it better.

—Elizabeth Carroll

Elizabeth Carroll: How did you teach your sons about healthy couple relationships?

Judy MacFarland: My older son once told me that he had always assumed that his marriage would be as smooth and easy as mine. I realized then that he really didn't see how much work good relationships are. He interpreted the conflicts in his relationship as a sign of personal failure. It seems my husband and I, in the interest of a peaceful home, had never modeled for him how to deal with conflict. He never saw any. It hadn't occurred to me that he thought we had none!

Now, when I ask my sons about their relationships, I ask about conflict. This way they know I see it as normal. It also gives me a chance to share the real stories about my marriage – what I've learned and how I've grown. I realize that they respect my husband and me more, knowing it hasn't always been easy.

EC: Parents hear a lot about teachable moments. How do you use them with your sons?

JM: With my younger son especially, I ask lots of questions, and I spend more time listening. I feel like I'm learning a lot about him and can offer more relevant guidance in fewer words.

My son and I learn a lot from each other just watching TV. I recommend that if parents are wondering about how their kids feel about all of the sex and aggression they see on TV, they watch it together. Watching these "reality" and "dating" shows together, as distasteful as I find them, has been a great way to start conversations about what real respectful relationships are like. It's a chance to challenge media messages, too. Television can't teach about good relationships, but what kids see modeled at home doesn't always translate into practical skills they can use today either.

I think some of the most teachable moments occur, not surprisingly, at school. Schools should help families by providing a neutral forum, where ideas about culture can be explored, debated, and

better understood. Communication and relationship skills are a part of a well-rounded education. Without them, you can't succeed.

EC: What else can we do to support our kids in forming and keeping healthy relationships?

JM: It seems many kids feel like they should be perfect all of the time. They want to be perfect at everything they try. I think we don't celebrate enough of the unique qualities that *really* matter. We need to say, "Look how you treat your friends! That's great!" This is especially true of guys. We don't tend to notice when they *do* communicate with respect and insight. Society doesn't value those qualities in boys very much – and often as men, they feel confused or bad about it. We can identify what they're doing right that's going to help them be successful later in life. Maybe we need to help young women look for and appreciate the qualities of friendship, communication, and personal responsibility in young men as well.

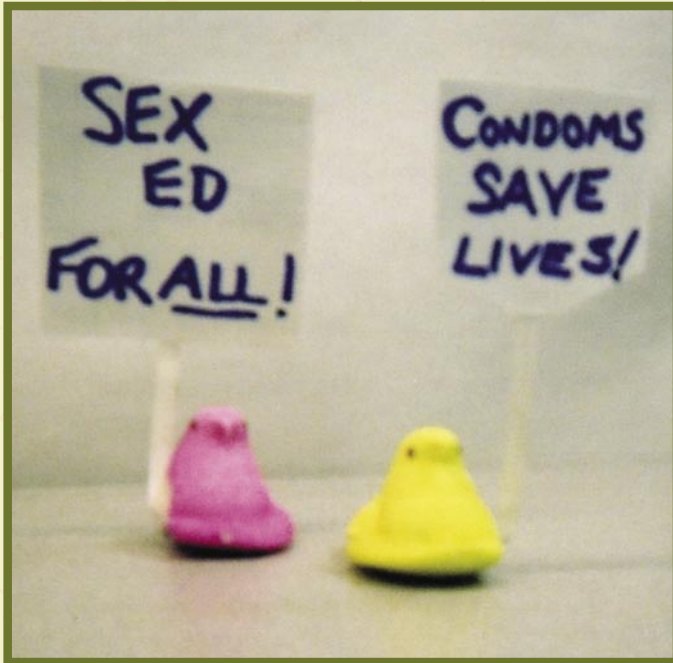
"We all want our children to live happy, productive lives, but that is so much more work than we knew at the outset. We need to get help from others. We all have a lot to learn."

How Well Do You Know the Pill?

It's been in widespread use for nearly half a century now. How much do you really know about one of the most commonly used birth control methods? Answers on page 16.

True or False?

1. The pill prevents pregnancy by keeping a woman's hormone levels more stable throughout the month.
2. If you don't like shots and don't want to take a pill every day, you're pretty much out of luck when it comes to really effective birth control.
3. Using the pill would be a waste, since you and your partner always use condoms.
4. Increasing the number of women using hormonal birth control methods contributes greatly to reductions in unintended pregnancies and abortions.
5. The pill fools a woman's body into thinking it's pregnant.
6. You can take the pill until you're ready for a child, even if that's 10 years from now, without worrying that it will decrease your chances for getting pregnant.
7. Only "certain types" of girls take the pill.



Those cute "peeps" you remember from your child's Easter basket aren't just fodder for the sweet tooth anymore. They've been put to work helping spread the word about the need for comprehensive sexuality education.

The placard-toting, marshmallow-stuffed cuties are the brainchild of SASH (Students Advocating Sexual Health), a youth peer activist group committed to improving the sexual health of young people. SASH members come from a wide range of Portland-area high schools and communities. From weekly informal community meetings to large-scale outreach projects, the members work to disperse accurate information and increase awareness.

SASH is committed to ensuring that young people learn from trusted members of the family and community, instead of from "Blind Date," Shakira, or the personal ads. "When we're reluctant to give information to young people about sexuality, they simply find out elsewhere," says coordinator Shelagh Johnson.

For more information contact Shelagh at (503) 775-4931, or visit www.ppcw.org.

Ripples on a Pond: The Power of Relationships

by E. Ann Hinds

In my work with homeless youth at Outside In, I am often struck by the many definitions they have for family and community. Many of those relationships are defined by roles, ranked according to who has power.

“We are affected by a much wider web of relationships swirling around us and impacting every aspect of our lives.”

— Riane Eisler

As we search for guidance to understand and support these teen relationships, I think we can look to the work of cultural historian Riane Eisler. What we are seeing in our world today, she says, “is the struggle between two underlying possibilities for relations: the partnership model and the dominator model.” The dominator is based on fear, resulting in struggle; the partnership is based on respect, leading to creativity and harmony.

The best hope for improving lives – our own as well as those of the people we’re trying to help – lies in the partnership model. In *The Power of Partnership*, Dr. Eisler shows how we can progress from dominator to partnership by moving step-by-step through the interrelated circles of

relationship that define our lives. At the innermost circle is the relationship with oneself. Then, like ripples on a pond, come our intimate relations with loved ones, our work and communities, our national sphere, the international community, nature, and, finally, our spiritual relations.

What do these circles look like for a young person living at the edges of conventional norms of family and community? Who provides the vital connections and support systems that many of us take for granted?

For many homeless youth, the biological lines were severed long before they were old enough to fend for themselves. Others are refugees from governmental programs, perhaps the foster care system. What we providers may see as positive interventions, they view with hopelessness or outright suspicion.

Part of the problem seems to be that the “power-over” nature of a system of providers and receivers can mimic patterns of abuse (e.g., domination) to street youth. With little or no modeling in their lives of the partnership influence (respect, love, gentleness, kindness, compassion, spiritual concern), their experience leads them to expect only the pain and fear of continued domination. The idea of mending their lives seems to them such a distant and unattainable goal that it is difficult even to risk the dreams.

Building trust and a willingness to risk those dreams requires that power and influence take the form of patience and persistence. It requires a paradigm shift from fear and intimidation to trust and participation on both sides of the circle. My sincere hope is that youth can gain entry to a world of experiences with a different set of values than those of domination and the external definitions of who they are and how they must behave. The cycle of abuse can be broken by the genuine interactions, compassion, and sense of possibility we bring to our work.

By recognizing and emphasizing glimmers of positive behavior and skills, we can instill a sense of hope for a different way of life. *That* is the power and the influence of the community of providers. *That* is the role society gives us: to fill in for missing and/or abusive families.

Other circles of influence must do their part, of course. Certainly, political and economic spheres must support the compassion and willingness that individuals and communities bring. It takes every ripple on the pond to form a current capable of effecting positive change.

Ann Hinds is a Program Director at Outside In, Portland, OR.



Homeless youth in Portland explored their own circles of relationship recently through Gorilla Theater, Outside In's Risk Education Program,. Working with a diverse team of facilitators, they created a performance based on Mexico's Day of The Dead ceremony. A traditional procession followed 6 weeks of thoughtful exploration, during which the participants considered personal losses, what it means to be supportive within a circle of friends, connection with other cultures and ways of doing things, the concept of death, and different belief systems.

Riane Eisler's Two Forms of Relationship

Dominator Model

- ✦ High degree of fear and violence.
- ✦ Authoritarian social structure: hierarchies of domination.
- ✦ Ranking of male half of humanity over female half.
- ✦ Myths and stories idealize domination and violence, and present them as normal.

Partnership Model

- ✦ Mutual trust and low degree of fear and social violence.
- ✦ Generally egalitarian social structure: hierarchies of actualization.
- ✦ Equal valuing of males and females.
- ✦ Myths and stories honor partnership and present it as normal.

“In the partnership model, we find... something in which love, rather than fear, is central, but love not just in the abstract, but love in action. I firmly believe that part of our higher destiny is to put love into action by challenging unjust authority, by truly caring for ourselves, for one another, and our Mother Earth.”

— Riane Eisler

Building Circles of Support

The Portland Fathering Center

When the doors of the Portland Fathering Center opened last September, Charles Hannah fulfilled a long-held dream. The nonprofit's mission, says Hannah, its director, is to provide young fathers and their families with information and the support they need to fully appreciate their rights, responsibilities, and resources. The fathers are typically 14 to 25 years old and low income. Most have never been fathered themselves, and many are in relationships with young women who also are without involved fathers.

Besides the absence of healthy role models, the young men usually lack the vital circle of support that surrounds their partners – the medical providers, family members, school programs, and parenting agencies that provide counsel and assistance. As a result, they have little experience identifying resources or accepting help. With few financial resources and little basic information about the daily care of children, it's no wonder they feel left out and unsure about how to become an important member of the family.

Helping to fill that "participation gap," the center currently provides five regular support groups for young fathers to local agencies; Hannah hopes to add three to four more by summer. The center also offers training and technical support to others who work with young fathers. For more information, contact Charles Hannah at (503) 221-0400 or email to www.pdxfathers@aol.com



Charles Hannah (left) is pictured with a father and daughter.

How the Fathering Center Works

Young men come to the center's support groups voluntarily, but tentatively and with almost no expectations. Hannah begins to nurture those expectations with a pair of questions: "Who has helped you become a father?" and "Who is helping you now?" Since most of the participants weren't raised by fathers, the questions raise feelings of their own unmet needs and, by extension, of their own children's needs.

To help participants better understand personal relationships, Hannah focuses on such issues as boundaries, expectations, and communication. By treating them with dignity and allowing them to be themselves, he models fathering in a non-threatening way. Helping them learn how to evaluate friendships is also crucial. "My

aunt once told me, 'If you hang out with nine thugs, you're bound to be the tenth. If you hang out with nine success stories, you're bound to be the tenth.' For many of these young men, the idea of surrounding yourself with people who support you is often a new concept."

To instill the picture of a loving and *healthy* father, the center educates participants on male health and wellness and encourages self-care. Concerns such as stress, HIV, and fitness are especially important, Hannah explains, because ignoring them can dramatically shorten a man's life.

The center's support network includes a circle of older men who serve as sources of information on a wide range of subjects, from diaper rash, to behavioral concerns, to enrolling kids in school. A number of them also act as individual mentors.

While the organization is not "faith-based" in the usual sense, Hannah notes that it is all about having faith in the young men he serves. Above all, he says, "when the needs of young fathers are met, and they more clearly understand the important contribution they can make, the lives of their families will improve."

"If you hang out with nine thugs, you're bound to be the tenth. If you hang out with nine success stories, you're bound to be the tenth."

Handling Stress in “The Best Years”

by Malachy Grange, R.N.

Stress is an inevitable part of modern life – and one that plays an important role in causing disease. The teen years can be particularly stressful (even though some adults, probably those with faulty memories, call them “the best years of your life.”)

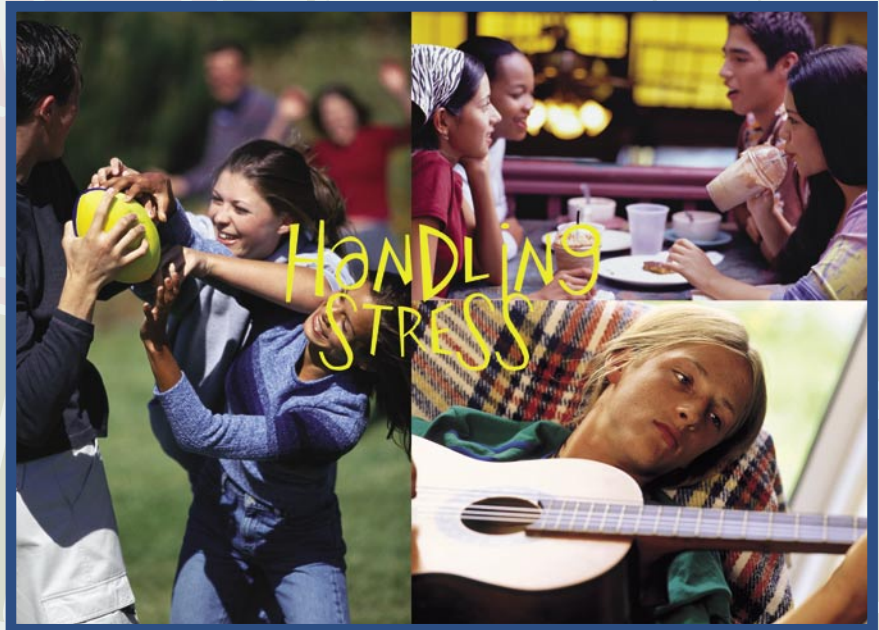
Recently, the teen health center at Marshall High School, Portland, OR, asked its clients, “How do you handle stress and difficult situations?”

The 27 students who answered the anonymous question listed 16 methods (see table). While the survey was not scientific, and the sample was limited to those who used the clinic, the answers point to some useful information.

First, the activities mentioned indicate that the students have an awareness of effective stress-coping techniques: exercise, talking to a trusted person, music, vocalizing feelings, and rest are all tried-and-true approaches.

Second, most other answers indicate creative and effective ways to handle stress: spending time alone, reading, writing, drawing, bathing, breathing, cleaning, and doing homework. Eating, sex, and TV/video can be positive or negative depending on context and frequency.

This suggests that teens don’t need us to tell them *how* to handle stress. They need us to support and encourage what they’re already doing. By building on the strengths the teens already have, we not only affirm and validate them, we may also be developing future leaders and spreading positive and diverse self-care behaviors.



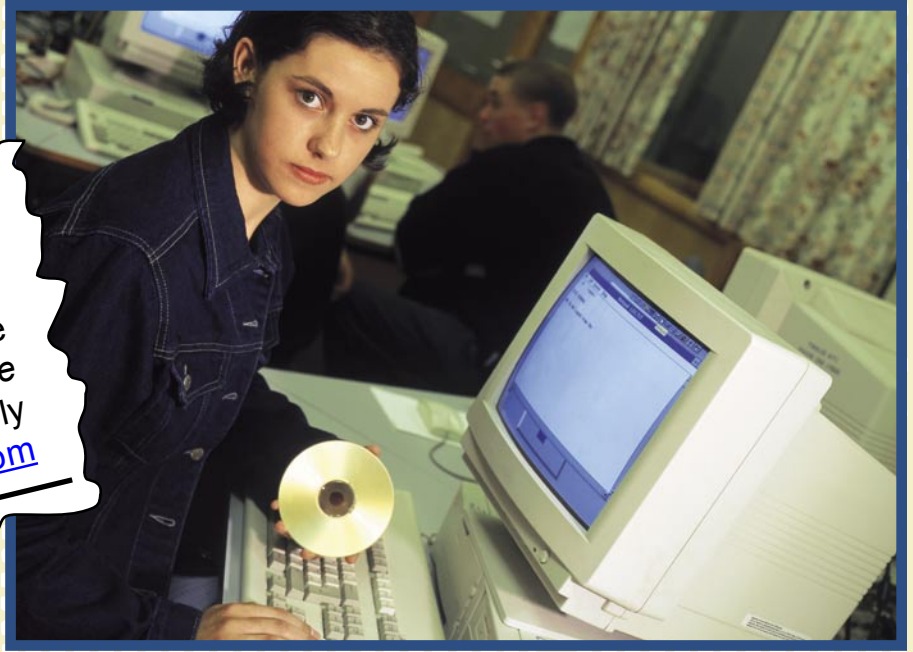
How do you handle stress?

Percent naming this method

Some form of exercise (walk, sports, work out, hike, etc.)	100
Talk to friend or parent	89
Listen to music	49
Yell, cry, scream	49
Sleep and rest	37
Eat	26
Spend time alone	24
Read, write, draw	24
Take a bath	15
Breathe	11
Have sex	11
Watch TV/play video games	11
Clean the house	11
Do homework	11
Smoke, drink, do drugs	11

Malachy Grange is a nurse at Marshall School Based Health Center.

Women Seeking Men:
You: 20-25 yo hipster guy.
Me: 20 yo fly girl. Us:
hanging out watching the
freaks go by. Who are
all these people? Reply
abc123@personals.com



Oh What a Tangled World Wide Web We Weave...

by Anne Peterson

What if you found out that one of your friends decided to post an ad like this online? And your friend is not 20, she's 13. She tells you someone responded to the ad, and they've been exchanging email. Now she's off to meet him.

Wow, daring... and scary! But, if anyone could get away with this, it's her. She's smart and mature for her age. You can't wait to hear how it turns out, but wait... What if she's in over her head? What if she gets hurt?

Some teens who enjoy taking risks are using the web to explore their fantasies of being older and more experienced. Unfortunately, predators are also out there. Last May, a Connecticut 13-year-old was raped and murdered by a man she agreed to meet at a local mall after meeting online. The adults

in her life had taken steps they thought would keep her safe, but her actions went beyond their efforts.

Parry Afab, who runs the Internet safety website www.wiredkids.org, says teens who get into trouble on the internet often fit one of two profiles. The ones we think of first are the shy or low-self-esteem kids trying to find friends and comfort. They become victims of online predators who know how to manipulate people. They're especially vulnerable to predators who pose as other teens in trouble to work information out of unsuspecting supporters and then use it to victimize them.

The other at-risk group is the bright, high-achieving teens, often from supportive families. They're risk-takers who get thrills from

illicit activity. There are predators who are especially interested in these teens, whose lack of experience and false confidence can make them vulnerable in ways they don't realize.

So, with all this in mind, what would you do for your risk-taking friend? Is this one of those times where it's OK to stick your nose in her business? Absolutely! Tell her that you truly admire her guts and imagination, but you can't sit by and watch her do something that could be so dangerous. Let her know you plan to talk to your or her parents, and encourage her to seek their help in dealing with the situation she has set in motion, so nobody gets hurt.



Some Online Guidelines

- ✦ Never give out identifying information – address, school name, or phone number – in a public message such as on bulletin board; be sure you’re dealing with someone both you and your child know and trust before giving it out via email.
- ✦ Check out the services your child uses and whether there’s a way to block objectionable material. Get to know their online friends just as you would their other friends.
- ✦ Never allow a child to arrange a meeting with another computer user without parental permission. If a meeting is arranged, make the first one in a public spot, and be sure to accompany your child.
- ✦ Encourage your children to tell you if they get messages that are suggestive, obscene, threatening, or make them feel uncomfortable. Forward such messages to your service provider. Immediately report any online child pornography to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 1-800-843-5678 or visit the CyberTipLine at www.missingkids.com/cybertip. Also notify your online service.
- ✦ Consider keeping the computer in a family room rather than the child’s bedroom. Post reasonable rules nearby, and discuss them with your children. Monitor their compliance, especially the amount of time they spend on online.

Mixed Signals on Condoms?

“Many teens are concerned about the implicit messages they think using a condom may convey about their partner’s – or their own – sexual history.” That’s the finding of a recent survey conducted by SexSmarts, an ongoing partnership between the Kaiser Family Foundation and seventeen magazine.

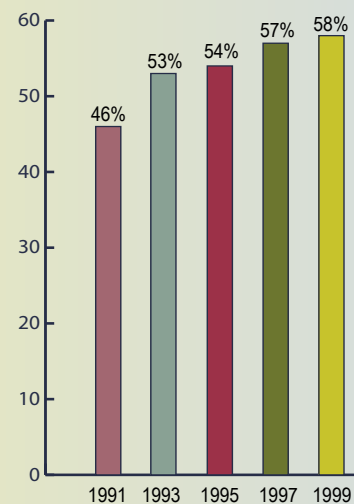
As the chart shows, two-thirds of the teens surveyed say that if a partner suggested using a condom, they would become “suspicious” about the partner’s sexual history. Half would be worried about what such a suggestion said about the partner’s suspicions of them. On the positive side, the survey suggests that teens could put these fears to rest if they simply talked more openly with one another. Nine out of 10 teens say they’d be glad their partner brought up the subject of using a condom. A large majority would in fact feel “cared for,” “respected,” and “relieved.”

The SexSmarts partnership exists to provide young people with information and resources on sexual health issues. It periodically surveys teens about their knowledge and attitudes about sex and sexual health, shedding light on issues teens need more information about.

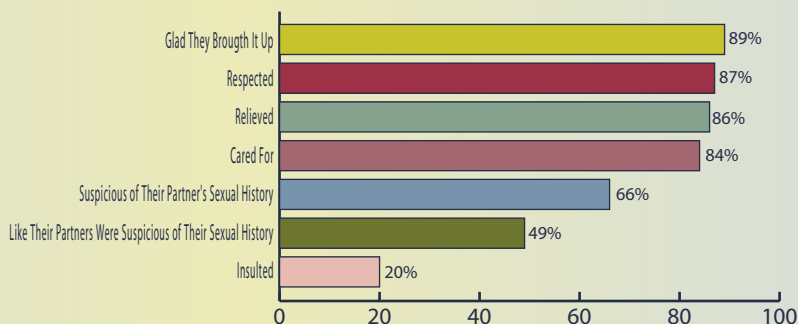


Teen Condom Use Increases

Percent of students in grades 9 through 12 who said they used a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse.



Source: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1999). Youth Risk Behavior Trends, from Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, and 1999.





Kathy Norman, in black, with STARS teen leaders and former Oregon First Lady, Sharon Kitzhaber.

The Barbara Ross Service Award was established in 2000 in honor of Representative Barbara Ross as a way of recognizing those Oregonians who share her inspiration, vision, and leadership in the area of teen pregnancy.

Kudos to Kathy

The Oregon Teen Pregnancy Task Force has awarded the 2002 Barbara Ross Service Award to Kathy Norman for her passionate leadership, advocacy, and dedication in promoting the health and success of adolescents. Her entire 18-year career has been devoted to the well-being of Oregon's young people, whom she's served as a talented health educator and counselor. In 1995, Kathy joined the Multnomah County Health Department, a move that would gain her statewide and national recognition for her work in developing Oregon's Students Today Aren't Ready for Sex (STARS) program.

Kathy has also been an advocate and visionary for the development of respectful strength-based services for teen parents. Her work was instrumental in the development of *Directions*, the guidebook designed to help young parents make healthy choices and prevent unprepared pregnancies.

"Because of her influence, I am able to have conversations with my friends and family about healthy relationships. Kathy has tremendous dedication to not only the program, but also to her students and staff... I appreciate everything she has done for me."
Geoff McFarland, Teen Leader

"I have met hundreds of dedicated people, hundreds of intelligent people, and hundreds of people who are compassionate and intuitive. I've met people with savvy, people with great counseling skills, shrewd administrators, creative program developers, and people who really know how to stick to a budget and a time line. What's incredible and rare is that Kathy Norman encompasses all these skills and presents them to clients, students, staff, and peers with a sense of humor that sweeps people up in her confidence and enthusiasm."
Jay Wurscher, Colleague, Friend, Former Boss

The Word on Kathy

"She has always had a target and a goal in mind – to help young teens have a better life and find the right road in life to travel. When things get tough, we have never seen Kathy back down from an obstacle. She always does this with determination, energy, and a smile. We are so proud of what she has accomplished, but I guess you could say we are somewhat biased."
Mom and Dad

"I have had the pleasure of working with Kathy for the past six years and truly see her as an energetic visionary and a transformative leader in her field.... She is greatly admired by her professional colleagues, staff, and school and agency personnel. She truly deserves this award."
Diane Ruminski, Supervisor, STARS Program, Multnomah County Health Department



A Mother at 14; a President at 20

Portland State University's new student body president had her daughter, Dominique, when she was 14.

In a culture where more than half of teen mothers drop out of high school and only 5% ever make it to college, Kristin Wallace is a profound exception. At 14, she gave birth to her daughter, Dominique, and still graduated high school with a 3.86 grade point average.

Now, as *The Oregonian* newspaper reported last September, the 20-year-old junior represents the 22,000 students at Oregon's largest university – a student body president with personal knowledge of the sacrifices made by students who juggle work, financial aid, and family.

As a young teen, Kristin had thought she was the strong one who kept her family together. In seventh grade, she reached out to a 14-year-old boy with his own family problems, and allowed

herself to be persuaded that “the first time” would be safe.

It wasn't.

After considering all her options, she enrolled in a school for teen moms, giving up friends and teen pleasures for her daughter. Now, as she works to teach Dominique, she also works to educate herself – often stretching the patience of both of them.

Kristin reluctantly entered politics her freshman year when she learned that the federal child-care grants paying for Dominique's on-campus day care were threatened. She volunteered in the student government office and lobbied classmates to register and vote.

That spring, she traveled to Washington, D.C., to discuss

child-care grants and education policy with Rep. David Wu. Encouraged by her reception there, and supported by her family, she threw herself into campus politics with campaigns to fight tuition increases, bring black and Latino studies majors to PSU, and build a study area for students with children.

Today, she admits getting starry-eyed around some local politicians and thinks about joining them some day. She hopes to earn a master's degree, looking toward a career as teacher or midwife.

“I just hope I'm teaching [Dominique] that if there's an opportunity, you need to go for it,” she told *The Oregonian*. “You can't time your life perfectly, you can't plan everything.”

Life *With* Father

by Howard Hiton

There is a wealth of research that we should be using to educate men about the power of their presence in their children's lives.

- In one study, preschool age children whose fathers were responsible for 40% or more of the family's child care tasks had higher scores on assessments of cognitive development, had more of a sense of mastery over their environments, and exhibited more empathy than those children whose fathers were less involved.
- Higher levels of father involvement in activities with their children, such as eating meals together, going on outings, and helping with homework, are associated with fewer behavior problems, higher levels of sociability, and a high level of school performance among children and adolescents.
- Several studies have documented a positive relationship between the provision of child support and the well-being of school age children.

A father's involvement is particularly important in the first year of life. Many hospital maternity units across the country have programs to teach



men about the importance of their presence. Early childhood education programs such as Head Start have done a wonderful job of making father involvement a priority. Staff training has helped Head Start employees see things from men's perspective, enabling them to create a father-friendly atmosphere.

Some schools offer father-child book groups, publicize the importance of father involvement in newsletters, and sponsor boys' night out events where fathers chaperone their sons at an all-night school party. Schools note that it has been relatively easy to get 25 men to volunteer for these activities, and that having so many dads networking with each other has been one of the many benefits. At teacher-parent conferences, some teachers seize the opportunity to engage fathers by prescribing a book for him to read with his child.

Informing and motivating fathers is a public health issue. Men must

continue to confront society's limiting expectations of fathers by participating more fully in their children's lives. Families and workplaces must find ways to enable greater father involvement. And finally, we must take every opportunity to recognize the importance of the

small and large things men are doing for their kids every day.

Here are a few resources in print and on the web:

- Braun Levine, Suzanne. *Father Courage*. Harcourt Publishing, 2000.
- ChildTrends Research Brief, "What Do Fathers Contribute to Children's Well-Being?" www.childtrends.org
- Dads and Daughters is an organization promoting fathering daughters. www.dasanddaughters.org
- Dads at a Distance is an organization promoting father involvement for dads whose work takes them from home. www.daads.com

Howard Hiton is a licensed professional counselor in private practice with a growing emphasis on boy's issues.

Chasing Clues, Finding Fathers

There are many ways to involve fathers in the school lives of their kids. One of the most imaginative I've seen was a recent father-child scavenger hunt at Riverview Elementary in Vancouver, WA.

After a few words from me on the role of fathers, the students and their "dad figures" were given clues to find locations in the building. When they found the location, they were asked to discuss a question together and record their responses:

- What is something you like to do with the man you came with tonight?
- What would you like to do more of?
- What is a book or magazine you like?
- How do you get yourself calm when you get angry?

About 30 kids and their father figures participated. In addition to fathers, we had grandfathers, older brothers, neighbors, and mentors. Only two of them had ever attended a PTA meeting, and only about five had volunteered in the classroom.

In addition being reminded about the importance of their roles, the men had time to talk with their sons about important boy issues, spend time in the school, talk with other fathers, and connect with school staff. – *Howard Hiton*



Beyond the Condom Sexual Health for Young Men

- Do you suspect that most adults don't think young men are responsible?
- Do they seem to want to *involve* young men in their health programs just because it would be good for the girls, or do they really care about guys?
- Does male sexual health begin and end with the condom?

Good questions. How would you answer them? And who's listening, anyway?

Oregon's school-based health centers, that's who. Using a checklist called *The Male-Friendly Walk-Through*, clinics throughout the state are asking young men how to improve everything – from clinic waiting rooms to physical exams to the conversations they have about sexual health.

The checklist is one tool in **Sexual Health for Young Men**, a program to help Oregon health care providers educate and communicate with more young men about sexual health concerns. The complete toolkit includes helpful resources and ideas, and a video that covers basically everything the young male mind can wonder about his body and sexual health (including much more than condoms). Other videos are also in the planning stage.

The program is offered at no charge. For more information, call (503) 988-3663, ext. 29579.

Check Your Pill IQ Here

(Answers to quiz on page 5).



- 1. True.** By keeping estrogen levels stable, the eggs in your ovaries never ripen, nor are they released.
No egg = no pregnancy.
- 2. False.** Two new birth control methods now becoming available are at least as effective as the pill: the Ortho Evra patch and the NuvaRing. (See chart on page 17.)
- 3. False.** Although condoms do prevent pregnancy for 85 out of 100 couples who use them, what about that other 15? Sexually active people who want the highest level of pregnancy protection should choose a method that is 99% effective or higher. That means a hormonal method: the pill, Depo Provera, Ortho Evra, or the NuvaRing. Condoms are still essential, though: the pill is zero percent effective against sexually transmitted infections. Only condoms give you that protection.
- 4. True.** Countries with higher rates of usage of hormonal methods (e.g., the pill) have much lower rates of unintended pregnancy – plus lower numbers of abortions and complications related to unplanned pregnancy. In the U.S., women choose hormonal methods less often and have higher rates of unintended pregnancy.

- 5. False.** The faulty “fooling the body” analogy is often used to explain the fact that when you start the pill, you will not ovulate each month and might experience physical symptoms such as breast tenderness. When you’re pregnant, your body will know it. If you have any doubts, ask a woman who has experienced both the pill and pregnancy. She’ll tell you.
- 6. True.** The pill and other monthly hormonal methods do not themselves decrease future fertility. Women who delay motherhood until their mid-30s or later may experience delays or difficulty in getting pregnant. This is due to age, not the pill.
- 7. False.** Women who take the pill do have one thing in common: They’re in touch with the facts that they’re sexually active and do not currently plan to get pregnant. The methods we choose should fit our family planning goals as well as our personal

preferences, schedule, partners, and medical history, but they don’t define who we are. Women of all descriptions take the pill during the years they absolutely do not want to get pregnant; others choose different hormonal methods. If they move into a stage of life where pregnancy is not unwelcome, even if it’s not the plan, they may switch to a method with a little more risk – condoms, diaphragm, or withdrawal, perhaps. Those in a stable, monogamous relationship who want to delay parenthood for three to five years may choose an IUD. Those who’ve had all the children they plan on may decide on sterilization (vasectomy for him; tubal ligation for her).

If you were unsure of some of these answers, you can bet you’re not alone. And since wrong answers can sometimes have bad consequences, we all need to help get the facts out. One way is to share this quiz with others.

The Ring and the Patch: New Options in Birth Control

When used correctly, the ring and patch offer easy, 99%-effective ways to prevent pregnancy. Both these new hormone methods work like the pill to stop your body from releasing an egg, so there's no egg to be fertilized. Also like the pill, they can produce some hormonal side effects, which often go away by the third month. A prescription is required, so talk to your health care provider to see if they're right for you. Neither method provides protection against STDs and HIV; for that, they should be used in combination with latex condoms.

Method	How to Use It	Unique Benefits
<p>NuvaRing A small, flexible ring inserted into the vagina, where it delivers a steady dose of hormones that keep your own hormone levels steadier.</p>	<p>A once-a-month method. Insert the ring like a tampon. Ring stays in place for 3 weeks, followed by one week off. Menstrual period usually starts 2-3 days after removal. Insert new ring 1 week after previous ring was removed.</p>	<p>Inserted once a month in the privacy of home. Cannot be inserted the wrong way. Latex-free: won't cause a reaction in those allergic to latex.</p>
<p>Ortho Evra patch A stick-on square patch containing hormones that enter your body through the skin.</p>	<p>Place patch on upper arm, torso, or buttock. Apply new patch the same day of each week for 3 weeks. Go patch-free the 4th week – your menstrual period week.</p>	<p>Small, thin, smooth enough that it can hide under clothes. Has to be changed only once a week. Retains sticking power when worn while bathing, swimming, and exercising.</p>

Most teens can get birth control free from a local health department, family planning agency, or Planned Parenthood. Call your local health department or SafeNet (1-800-723-3638) to find out where you can get free birth control.

Sex in the U.S. and Europe: An Ocean Apart?

by Elizabeth Carroll

America's progressive family planning community has been focusing on Western Europe lately. Several countries there have been generating extraordinarily successful nationwide responses to the problem of unintended pregnancy – with the result that their teen pregnancy and STD rates are among the lowest in the world.

As James Wagoner, president of Advocates for Youth, observes, “These nations seem to have an unwritten social contract [with youth] which states: We'll respect your rights to independence and privacy; in return you'll take the steps you need to avoid pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections.” Such statements have been supported by political leaders, and have become linked with the strong national identities of the citizenry.

Desirable results and cohesive vision like these can be inspiring, but we should pause a moment to consider how they relate to life in the USA. We're an entirely different sort of nation, after all. We're huge – many of our 50 states are as large as European countries. Most of us may still trace ancestors back to Europe, yet a growing number do not. Our diversity in language, culture, and religious thought challenge our efforts to form a cohesive response to sexual health issues.

This “land of the free” is a place where thinking for oneself is at the root of national identity.

“Cohesive” is often a case of “all working in our own unique way toward the goal we relate to,” rather than toward a common goal. Many are united by religious or cultural beliefs that are at odds with family planning and comprehensive sexuality education.

“The different landscapes between America and Western Europe call for different approaches.”

The different landscapes between America and Western Europe call for different approaches. Most Americans probably agree with the vast majority of, say, Swedes, that their children should receive comprehensive sex education and services. But those who oppose this idea cannot simply be excluded or ignored.

So, if we're not Western Europe (and probably never will be), how can we achieve comparable outcomes while respecting each other's differences. Perhaps what we really need are as many solutions as we have cultures. Some will come from Europe, others from Latin America, Africa, and Thailand – and New York and Texas and Portland. They may be church-based, school-based, or beauty salon-based, and they may find success primarily in culturally specific communities. Some will be generated by youth and some by grandparents.

Somewhere in these efforts, we may find a common ground that inspires a national campaign or even a national identity. Perhaps, considering our great diversity, the message will need to be something like, “We all love our children. How can we give them what they will need to build their own healthy families when the time is right?” Could a message this soft motivate the changes needed to produce real outcomes? Maybe not right away, but it might bring a few more folks to the table, and they may help discover what will work.

We could begin by agreeing that the message, “Europe is better, smarter, an example to us all” is not likely to move Americans to action. For many it is a message loaded with a thousand years of painful history. Our unique nature and history require that we find relevant messages addressing the health disparities in our own communities – that we find our own unique paths in family planning. This being America, the path will most likely resemble the L.A. freeway system. Not very bucolic, but it gets us where we need to go.

“We all love our children. How can we give them what they will need to build their own healthy families when the time is right?”



HPV and Cervical Cancer

One of the most common sexually transmitted diseases, HPV can cause warts in the genital areas of men and women. Of more concern, however, is its association with cervical cancer, which kills 250,000 women worldwide every year. The cancer is relatively rare in the U.S. (about 4,000 deaths per year). Still, HPV detection and treatment – primarily pap smears and colposcopy – carry great financial, physical, and emotional costs. Once infected with HPV, a person will carry it for life, can infect sexual partners, and requires ongoing follow-up. (For more information, log on to www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/stdhpv.htm)

Good News on the HPV Front

Scientists have produced several vaccines in the past year that show promise in the fight against HPV (human papillomavirus). One of them had a 100% success rate in preventing new infections. Significantly, it targets HPV-16, one of the strains believed to be associated with more than half of all cervical cancers. (To provide broad protection from cancer, a vaccine would have to target several of the many strains of HPV.)

While we wait for a vaccine to become available, there are precautions that can help prevent infection. Although condoms and

dental dams are recommended, they *cannot* always protect from HPV, because the virus can be spread from skin around the genital area, as well as through vaginal, anal, and oral intercourse. Having sex with only one partner who is not infected can be effective – as long as both partners remember that not all HPV strains cause detectable warts, so a person can be wart-free *and* infected. Finally, women who had sexual intercourse at a young (teen) age seem to be at greater risk, so delaying first intercourse into adulthood may reduce the risk of HPV-related cervical cancer.

Two-thirds of people who have sexual contact with someone who has genital warts will themselves develop warts according to the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Disease.

INFORMATION (ONLINE), PLEASE

Sites for Teens

www.teengrowth.com – comprehensive questions and user-friendly answers about puberty

www.goaskalice.columbia.edu – real questions about almost anything, answered by Columbia University graduate students; extremely informative and timely

www.teenhealthfx.com – interactive site with a Q&A format

www.teenwire.com – Planned Parenthood site with many links, including local clinics

www.teenink.com – teen poetry and other writing

www.iwannaknow.org – sexual health and STD info sponsored by the American Social Health Association

www.advocatesforyouth.org – promotes activism aimed at promoting comprehensive sexuality education

Sites for Parents and Teens

www.newmoon.org – jam-packed girl-focused site with lots of games and links; on the young side

www.daughters.com – parents of daughters find lots to think about and “try at home”

www.familiesaretalking.org – lots of links for parents and kids

www.aboutourkids.org – focuses on mental health concerns

www.siecus.org – comprehensive site offering articles, links, and resources about sexuality across a wide age span

www.dhs.state.or.us/publichealth/fp/fplinks.cfm – state site with lots of links

Sites for Parents and Educators

www.lifespaneducation.com – “promoting healthy human relations” in and out of the classroom

www.teachingteens.com – educators’ online resource on puberty and menstruation

www.etr.org/recapp – lots of info and materials to order for your program

www.teenpregnancy.org – site of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

For additional copies of this issue, call (503) 731-4021, or download a copy at: www.healthoregon.org/ah/re

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