

Chapter 29

Let's Talk about Sex: Facts and Fiction

In the last chapter we talked about love and marriage. But sex is not such an easy subject, so we would like to take another few pages to discuss the issue with you. We have had the chance to talk to many young people from different countries. Some of the teens we talked to came from countries where premarital sex is not a big issue. It is part of their culture to wait until marriage to have sex. In other countries the messages were mixed. In some places the teens were really confused and weren't sure what to think about sex.



The teens we talked to can be divided into two different camps. One group had not had sex yet. Another group had. Here are some of the comments of those who had not: *I am waiting for my future husband, I think that's pretty normal. I like to hang out with boys from my school but I know I'm not ready for anything as serious as sex. I don't want to get a girl pregnant, it could mess up both our lives. And, I play on three teams and I don't have time to deal with getting real serious right now. Sex definitely makes things more serious.* The group who had already had sex said some of these things to us: *I*

thought that if I slept with my boyfriend he would love me more. Sex was a way of filling up time because we didn't really know what to say to each other. I just did it because I didn't want the other guys to think I was scared. I didn't plan on it, it just happened. And, I thought it was going to be this big amazing experience, but it wasn't what I expected.

What do you think? It can be a hard subject to talk about. Let's take a look at the facts about sex, some of the fiction surrounding sex, and what other people have to say.

Why Sex?

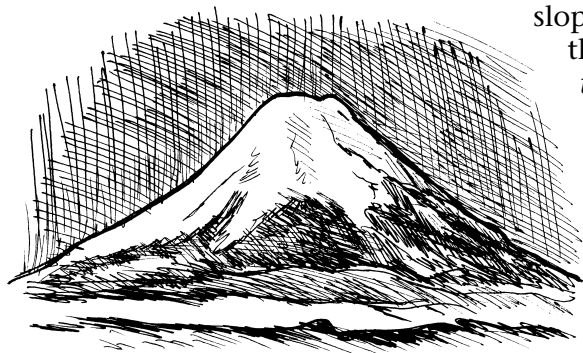
The teens we talked to had a lot to say about sex. Not only did they tell us about some of their own feelings, but they also told us why young teens get involved in having sex before they are ready. Teens may have sex because:

- ☉ *Someone said it would keep the relationship together.*
- ☉ *Everyone else is doing it.*
- ☉ *I wanted to feel loved and appreciated.*
- ☉ *I wanted to feel mature.*
- ☉ *I had intense emotional and physical feelings.*

With these reasons in mind, let's take a closer look at some of the facts, and some of the fiction about sex.

The Myth of Safe Sex

Your big brother has just passed his driving test. He is so excited that he invites you to go on a trip up a nearby mountain with him and his best friend. The friend has a new car and he and your big brother have agreed to split the driving. You ascend the moun-



tain. You are climbing up steep slopes in his friend's car. Then the friend casually says: *By the way, this car is in great condition but sometimes the brakes fail. Don't worry, we should be fine. I've driven up here before and never had any problems so far! Hang on!*

Would You Have Gone if You Knew the Risks Involved?

Not very long ago, many high school students were given condoms and told *just be responsible when you have sex and you will be okay*. Unfortunately, this approach has not worked very well. Although condoms can reduce the risk of encountering the nasty physical side effects of premarital sex, you are still playing a dangerous game. Even when condoms are used properly (and they often aren't!), they can still break or fail. A number of schools that handed out condoms in the late 80s and early 90s actually had a sharp rise in the pregnancy rate of their students. Some diseases, like AIDS, can't be reliably stopped by a condom. Also, condoms don't cover all of the areas of the body that could be infected with disease.

And *nothing* can protect you from the worst consequences of all...

The Emotional Consequences of Premarital Sex

Condoms were intended to help people avoid the inconveniences and hazards that sex may bring. Although condoms are often used, they sometimes fail. Aside from getting a life-threatening disease, there are other dire consequences. Getting pregnant. Getting someone else pregnant. Having to make a choice between abortion, adoption or having a baby. Or risking not being able to have children in the future. There is another possible consequence of having premarital sex—one thing that a condom can never prevent.

The emotional consequences.

What do we mean by emotional consequences? Emotional consequences are the results that you do not necessarily see on the outside (like pregnancy or an STD) but that hurt on the inside. Some of these are:

- ☹ *Feeling hurt and rejected.*
- ☹ *Feelings of anger and jealousy.*
- ☹ *Feeling badly about yourself (feeling a lack of self-respect and value).*
- ☹ *Feeling used or feeling guilty about using someone else.*
- ☹ *Feeling disrespected by others, and having a ruined reputation.*
- ☹ *Feeling distrusting of other potential girlfriends or boyfriends.*
- ☹ *Feeling preoccupied with worry over getting an STD or getting pregnant.*

- ☉ *Stronger feelings of sexual interest than before.*
- ☉ *Feelings of guilt and regret.*
- ☉ *Trouble in your sexual relationship with your future wife or husband.*

Imagine that you really have met a person you can grow to love and care for deeply. Many times a relationship that could turn into a committed and worthwhile relationship will be run off the road by sex. Sex takes over. It becomes the focus of the relationship, leaving you unable to get to know that other person in other ways. Sex cuts off your communication and stunts the growth of your relationship. One young college freshman named Sean said,

I met a girl when I was 15. She was wonderful. I felt that she was the girl I would spend the rest of my life with. I knew we were young. We were both feeling unclear about sex, so we went ahead, but it ruined our closeness, and eventually we broke up. I was heartbroken. I missed her terribly, she stopped talking to me, and her family eventually moved. I still wonder what might have happened if we waited.

One of the worst consequences of having premarital sex is that you can lose respect for yourself and for the other person. Here is what one student told us:

I was dating this girl in tenth grade. She was really pretty and popular. I don't know why she picked me, but she did, and all of my friends thought it was really cool. After the first few times we went out she told me she thought we should do it. Even though I was into her I had this bad feeling about it in the back of my mind. Anyhow, we did. After that things started to change. Every time I'd see her it was like this big deal about sex. It sounds funny but I actually really regret it. Now she's with this other guy and I see them in the halls and I'm like, "Hey, are you sleeping with him too? Doesn't it bother you?" It's not cool.

The emotional pain of breaking up with a person is much less intense if you have not given them the most precious part of yourself. People are not objects that are meant to be used. At the time you may feel that you are ready, but are you ready to wake up the next day and face the consequences? Even if you are lucky enough to escape unwanted pregnancy and getting an STD (and some sexually transmitted diseases may not be detected for years), you are still left with the emotional wounds.

Decide Ahead of Time

The time to decide where you stand on the issue of premarital sex is not when you are alone in a dark room with someone you are very attracted to. The time to decide is now. For instance, you can avoid situations that will make sticking to your decision harder. Do you place yourself in tempting situations?

Plan ahead. The consequences of not planning ahead can be huge. So think about it before you get yourself into a difficult situation. The best way to avoid getting yourself into a sticky situation is—not to get yourself into a sticky situation. One way to do just that is...



Group Dating—Taking Some of the Pressure Off

Why risk the emotional and physical consequences of premarital sex when you can spend your time getting into life? One of the best ways to avoid all of the problems that premarital sex may bring you is to abstain until you are married. In the meantime, you can still have a great social life. You can go out with your guy friends and your girl friends in a group. Going out with a group of friends lightens things up. It is easier to talk to friends of the opposite sex. You don't always have to be the one to think of something to say. You won't feel pressured to get too emotionally involved in a relationship before you are ready. But you can still have fun getting to know others. Group dating takes the pressure off, and leaves the unwanted consequences in the background—far away from you.

Dealing with Peer Pressure

How can you deal with peer pressure? Will you be embarrassed if someone makes fun of you or says that *everyone else is doing it*? Here are some helpful ways to say no, and show others that you have made your choice already.

- ☉ Doing it just once won't hurt, what are you afraid of ?
*Doing it just once will hurt me—the way I feel about myself.
It could also hurt my body and my future, as well as yours.*

- ☹ Everyone else is doing it!
Who's everyone? Lots of people are waiting for their future spouse, and I'm one of them.
- ☹ If you loved me you'd sleep with me.
If you loved me you wouldn't push me to sleep with you.
- ☹ I love you.
If you love me, prove it by respecting that I am waiting.
- ☹ What's wrong with you?
What's wrong with you? I'm the one that cares enough about both of our futures to say no.
- ☹ Don't you want to experience it?
I don't want to experience getting a disease, getting pregnant or messing up my future
- ☹ Don't you think I'm good enough for you?
I think you are too good to mess up your life and our relationship.
- ☹ No one else will know.
But we both know and that's two people too many.
- ☹ If you were a real man (woman) you'd do it!
If you really cared about me you wouldn't say things like that.
- ☹ We can stop whenever you want to.
Good, let's stop now.
- ☹ If you get pregnant I'll be there for you.
You won't have to, because I'm not going to take that chance.
- ☹ What's the big deal? What are you waiting for?
It is a very big deal, and I'm waiting for my future wife (husband).

Why Do People Feel Guilty About Premarital Sex?

Guilt is your conscience's way of sending you a warning. That warning is saying: *Watch out! You are out of line with your values! You are doing something that is going to hurt you (and someone else)! Stop now before it's too late! If you decide not to listen to the voice now, you may be sorry later. Remember, your conscience is there to help you sort out your actions.*

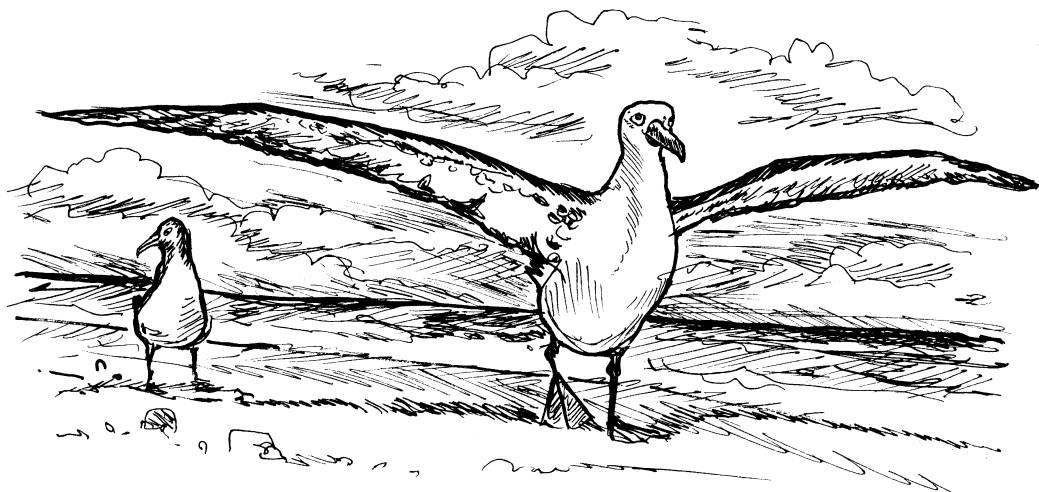
Did You Know That:

- ☹ *Couples that are engaged and sleep together are more likely to break their engagement. The more frequent the sex, the greater the chance that they will break their plans to marry.*
- ☹ *There is no 100% sure way to avoid getting pregnant and sexually transmitted diseases except for abstinence.*
- ☹ *People who are committed to saving themselves for marriage are much less likely to have sex with other people outside their marriage.*
- ☹ *Some couples report that they got married because they were having sex and they felt guilty and trapped in the relationship.*
- ☹ *Having sex with your partner will not make her or him love you. If he or she says that they love you, then they will be willing to wait.*
- ☹ *Having premarital sex often marks the end of the relationship, instead of a beginning.*

It's Not Too Late

Maybe you have done some things in the past that you regret. No matter what your mistakes were, you can choose to wait, from this point on, for your future husband or wife. You can decide from today to wait until the night of your wedding. Many people have already taken this path. Did you know that more than half of America's teenagers are waiting to have sex until they are married, and have not broken that commitment yet? Most people don't know that. Most people think that everyone else is doing it, but that isn't the case. Join the crowd, and wait for your future husband or wife.

It is also important to take care of your body. Almost all towns and cities have free health clinics where teens can go anonymously to be tested and treated. It is important that you see a doctor and tell them about your sexual involvement of the past. This way, if you have any medical problems they can help you to deal with them right away. Some STDs can be treated—and sooner is much better than later.



You Are Free

When you make a choice to wait to have sex until you are married, you are making a choice to be free. You will be free from worry over unwanted pregnancy; worry over getting an STD or other contagious disease (remember, many diseases can be totally invisible to the naked eye); and worry over being broken-hearted or used physically. You will be free to go after your goals and pursue your dreams. You will be free to discover your talents and uncover your potential. You will be free from guilt and embarrassment. You will be free to develop caring relationships with people of the opposite sex without worry or fear. Deciding to wait until marriage is one of the most important decisions you will make in your life. So, think about it. What have you got to lose?



Journal

In movies and TV programs, the consequences of having unmarried sex are rarely looked at. People seem to have consequence-free sex. How is this image wrong? What do you think are the biggest risks?



To Do

1. In groups, take turns role playing possible *lines* and *come-backs*. How can you say *no* to someone who is really putting pressure on you to have sex? Are there some lines

that we didn't think of? What would you say to these lines?

2. Imagine that you are a movie critic and write for a magazine column. After watching a popular movie, write a critique about the main characters. How did they behave? Do you think that they made good choices? Do you think that the movie was realistic in showing some of the possible consequences of having premarital sex (if there was any sex in the movie)?

Key Ideas

- Ⓢ Condoms do not protect against all diseases, can break, and cannot stop the emotional consequences of having premarital sex.
- Ⓢ More than half of America's teens are virgins.



**Nothing in life is as good as the marriage
of true minds between man and woman.
As good? Life itself.**

Pearl S. Buck

