

# SOCIAL SKILLS

## SKILL ASSESSMENT

The following questions will help you identify the skills in which you excel and target those which you need to develop. By yourself or with your team try to answer each of the questions as honestly as possible. After completing this independent living skills assessment, review it with your team and identify those skills you would like to strengthen.

	<i>I do not know how to do this</i>	<i>I need to know more about this</i>	<i>I can do/ have done this</i>
1. Can communicate and interact appropriately in various social situations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Can tell others when I am upset or angry and express my feelings appropriately.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Can start conversations with new acquaintances.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Know how to handle conflicts with a friend, teacher, supervisor, or family member without using physical aggression.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Am aware of my values.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Know how to make good decisions by weighing the pros and cons.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Am aware of my cultural background.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Know what is important to me in friend/relationships.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Can participate in social activities with peers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Know where and how to get help if cannot handle or end an argument with a friend, teacher, employer, family member, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Know how to solve problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Can set appropriate goals for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<i>I do not know how to do this</i>	<i>I need to know more about this</i>	<i>I can do/ have done this</i>
<b>13.</b> Can set personal goals and work to accomplish them with minimal help.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>14.</b> Can make/keep friendships with people of the opposite sex.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>15.</b> Can be honest with friends and say what is on my mind.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>16.</b> Can set limits and boundaries with friends/peers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>17.</b> Know how to say “No” to a boyfriend/girlfriend who wants to get more sexually involved than I do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>18.</b> Aware of the consequences of teenage pregnancy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>19.</b> Can plan and invite peers to social activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>20.</b> Know how to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# VALUES

This next section in the workbook will focus on different social and interpersonal skills we need in order to get along with others and function well within any community setting. At first we will focus on values. Our values are the foundation beneath many personal skills like decision making, communication, and problem solving.

## Who Am I? What Are My Values?

Values help you to discover what is important to you and what is not. They will determine who your close friends are, which jobs you choose, and how you take care of yourself. Everyone has values in all areas of life, but we might not always be aware of them. Values can change due to different life experiences and events. You can explore your values by asking yourself general questions like the following:

- What do I like to do?
- What can I do well?
- Who are my friends?
- What do I look for in a good friend?
- Which adults do I respect?
- Why do I respect them?
- What makes me happy? Proud?
- What makes me sad? Angry?
- How do I want to be treated by other people?
- What do I want to change about myself?

The answers to these questions will help you discover some of your own values: the things you care about, the things you admire -- in yourself and in others around you. Discovering your own values is a first step on the road to achieving personal goals. Suppose you were about to go to a foreign country, meeting different and interesting people for the first time. You'd want to be able to tell them something about yourself and your values, let them know where you're coming from and what kind of person you're like. Finish these sentences:

One thing I admire about myself is: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I get really angry when people: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I enjoy it when my friends: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

When I am 23, I will: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I appreciate adults who: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The person I admire most is: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If I had a million dollars, I would: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

A good friend is someone who: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

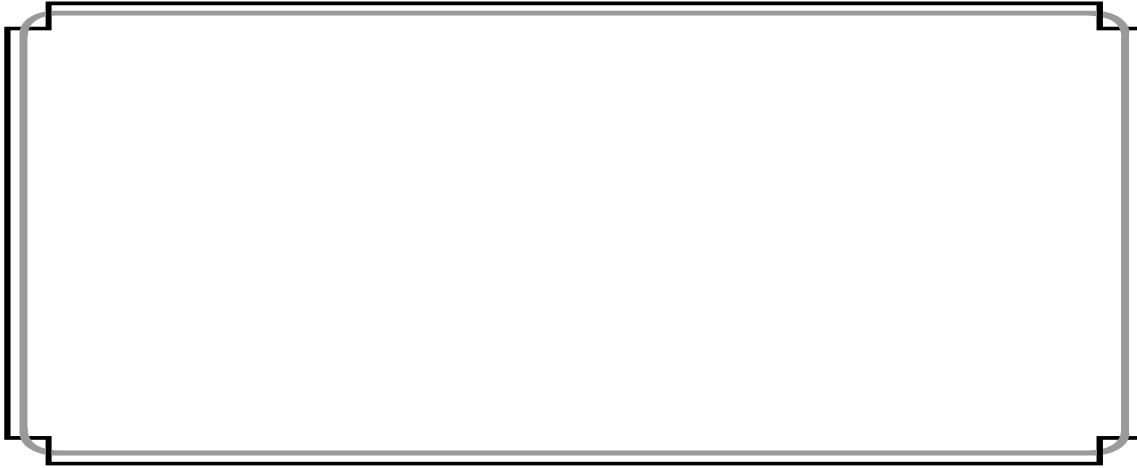
If I could have any job in the world, I would be: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One thing that is really important to me is: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If I could change one thing in the world, I would: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now look back at the sentences you completed. Did you discover something new about your values?

Now write five sentences that will tell someone new (a friend or employer) about you and your values.

A large, empty rectangular box with a double-line border, intended for writing five sentences. The box is centered on the page and occupies a significant portion of the upper half of the document.

Beginning to think about your values will also assist you with your ability to make good decisions and set goals for yourself in various areas of life. Complete the following exercise to explore what is important to you.

**Read these statements and decide if you agree or disagree:**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Disagree Strongly</b>
1. A good friend is someone you can count on in hard times.				_____
2. The best thing to do is what other kids are doing.				_____
3. A good friend is easy to find; anyone can be a good friend.				_____
4. It's always better to let adults make decisions about what's right for me.				_____
5. A good parent lets you make your own decisions every time.				_____
6. Teenagers can make good parents.				_____
7. What's happened to me in the past doesn't affect how I feel and act today.				_____
8. A good friend might not always tell you what you want to hear.				_____
9. It's better to live alone than with roommates.				_____
10. Kids in foster care never get a fair chance on the outside.				_____
11. It's good to have someone who depends on you for help and support.				_____
12. Sometimes kids who have had problems can be the best support for other kids.				_____
13. The most important thing about a job is how much money you make.				_____
14. It's more important to be healthy than rich.				_____
15. It's better to have a nice apartment than to buy a car.				_____
16. It's easy to get a job even if you drop out of high school.				_____
17. You should not have sexual intercourse until marriage.				_____

Talk about your answers with a friend and an adult. You will discover places where you agree and other places where you disagree, due to the differences in your personal value systems. Your values also might change as you get older as a result of the different life experience you'll have.

Once you have explored your values in general, you can determine your values in specific areas of life. Awareness of your values will assist you in making good decisions and setting useful goals for yourself. For example, if you determine that you value education, you might plan for higher education options.



**ACTIVITY**

By listing the things that are most important to you in each of the areas of the chart, you can begin to identify your values.

<b>Education</b>	<b>Recreation</b>	<b>Money</b>
<b>Employment</b>	<b>Friendship</b>	<b>Health</b>

And once again, values *can* change. As you start to make decisions and set goals, it will be important to re-evaluate your values.

We cannot talk about values without talking about culture. Our perception of the world, our feelings and expectations about ourselves and others are determined by culture. However, some of us might not be aware of our cultural background.

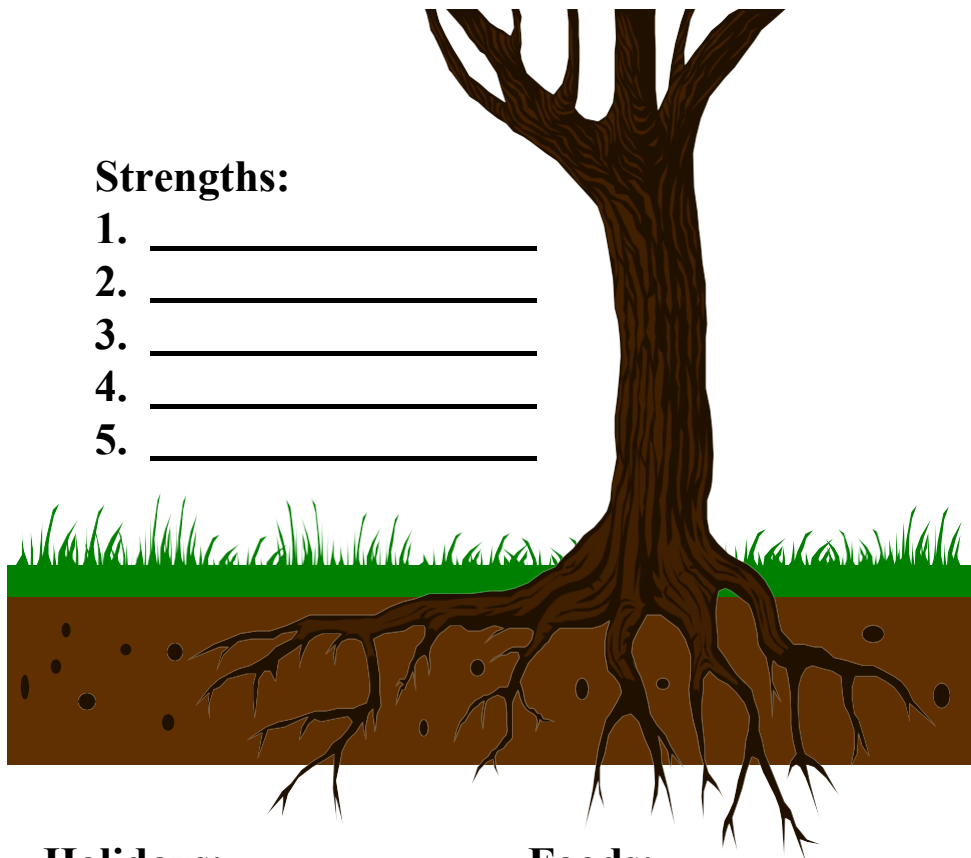
The following exercise will help you think about your own cultural roots.

## CULTURAL ROOTS EXERCISE

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Cultural Background: \_\_\_\_\_

### KNOWING YOUR ROOTS



#### Holidays:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Foods:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

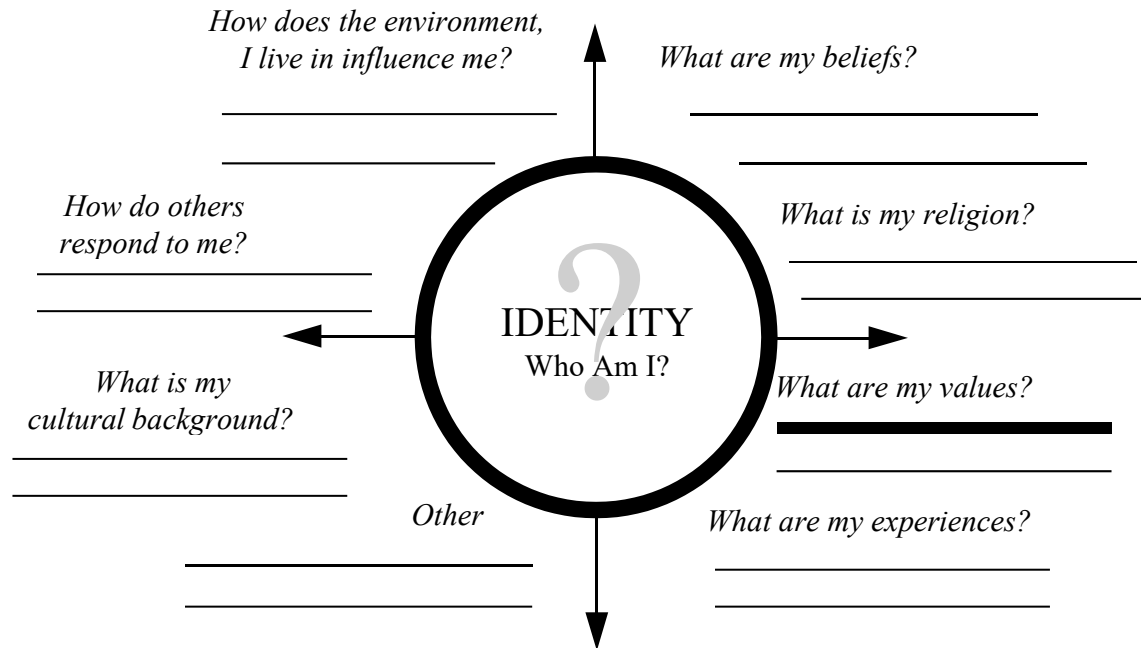
The University of Oklahoma National Resource Center for Youth Services, 1990



# CULTURAL IDENTITY

Developing a cultural identity is an important part of establishing who we are. Some of our values are based on our cultural background and help us to establish our identity.

Utilize the chart below to help you think about your cultural background and identity.



**C**onsider the following:

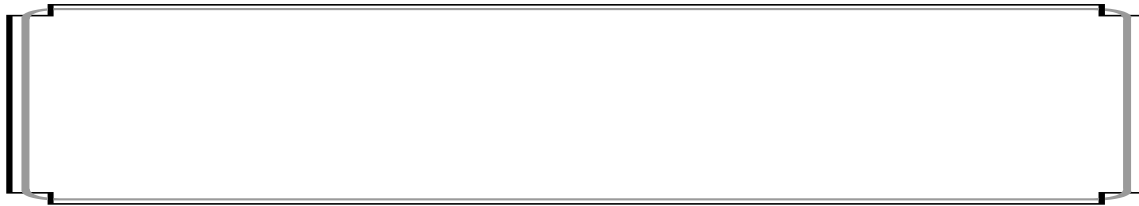
Maria, now seventeen, came to the US from the Dominican Republic when she was twelve. Maria lives in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. Although she has learned some English, she is afraid to speak it because she does not want others to make fun of her. Although Maria wants to go to college, she is not sure if she will make it because of her background.

What advice would you give to Maria?

Michael is Cambodian and has been in the US for the last eight years. His parents don't speak English and the traditions and values of their culture are very important to them. Michael attends high school and has many African American, Hispanic, and white friends. He speaks primarily English and he values the "American" way of life, participating in many American traditions. He is confused about his identity and cultural background. What advice would you give Michael?



Manuel is a seventeen-year-old Latino youth who came into care eighteen months ago. Special efforts were made to place him with a traditional Latino family who are very active in their Spanish-speaking community. Manuel makes excuses to avoid attending Latino activities, preferring to hang out with his white and African American friends, and he refuses to speak Spanish although his record indicates that English is his second language. Where do you think Manuel is in the process of developing his cultural identity?



How do you suppose other Latino youth treat Manuel?



# VALUING DIVERSITY

Now that you have researched your own cultural background, you have probably established that most of your family/ancestors (except for those of you who are American Indian) have immigrated to the US at one point or another from all over the world. The United States are often described as a “melting pot ‘.

What advantages does cultural diversity bring to society?



## **We Are All One Family Under The Sky** by Maria, 18

*I would like to send this message to all my brothers and sisters out there who think they should just stick with their color or their culture. It's not too late to start working with each other. No matter what color you are or what country you are from, we are still a family.  
I wish a lot of people would stop being prejudiced and would just stick with each other, just like a family. Color doesn't matter to me. What matters is what type of person you are inside!  
I just want everyone to remember: "We are all a family under the sky."*

What are your thoughts on Maria's article? Is she right?



What could get in the way of all people getting along?



In order for us to value diversity, we have to explore our own values and attitudes. *Circle the statement which best reflects your preferences.*

## I Prefer

- |                         |   |   |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| To be similar to others | - | To be different from others             |
| To be popular           | - | To have a few good friends              |
| My own opinion          | - | To go along with the opinions of others |
| To be a leader          | - | To be a follower                        |
| To be polite            | - | To be honest                            |
| To be outgoing          | - | To be quiet                             |
| To be tolerant          | - | To be judgmental                        |
| To feel powerful        | - | To feel knowledgeable                   |
| To fight for my beliefs | - | To give in                              |
| To accept others        | - | To criticize others                     |
| To believe in equality  | - | To believe in superiority               |
| To stand up for myself  | - | To let others speak for me              |

# VALUING DIVERSITY

Valuing diversity is an important social interpersonal skill. The first step in becoming more aware of cultural differences and learning to respect and to respond to them is to explore your own cultural values and attitudes. Please read the following statements and check the box which corresponds to your response.

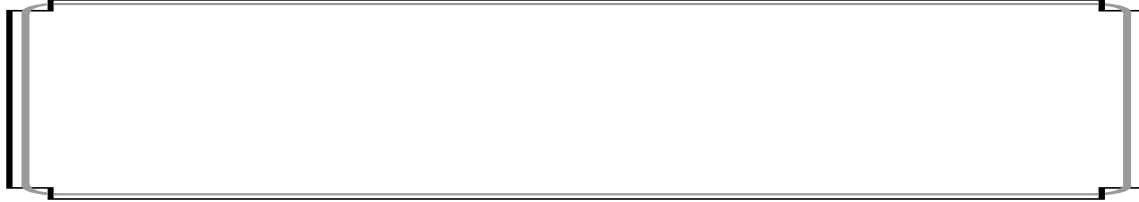
## Exploring Cultural Attitudes

	Agree	Disagree
I would like to travel to different countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I accept opinions different from my own.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I respond with compassion towards homeless people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would feel uncomfortable in a group in which I am the ethnic/racial/gender/sexual minority.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I tell or laugh at ethnic/gay jokes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am comfortable with gay people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have close friends of another ethnic/racial group.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer to conform rather than disagree in public.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People who speak a different language or act differently from me interest me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe that all students in the school system are treated equally.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Adapted from a handout used in an Oklahoma Juvenile Personal Training Program workshop on “Working with Latino Youth and Families,” 1992.

Often, misconceptions and lack of knowledge about diverse populations can lead to wrong assumptions and poor judgments.

Are you aware of common misconceptions in regards to diverse cultural groups? If so, describe.



Where do prejudice and misconceptions about diverse groups come from?




A close look at your values and where they come from will give you some idea of who you are and who you aren't. For ethnic/racially diverse youth and gay & lesbian, bisexual & transgender adolescents, this process sometimes begins with the pressure to conform to the dominant culture. Other youth may feel comfortable being different.

What is the dominant culture in the US? Do you think it is easier to be a part of the dominant culture or part of a minority?



What do youth have to do to value themselves, their culture, other minority groups, and the dominant culture?



## Exploration Exercise

*Answer the following questions.*

- Do you think that what others think of you is important?
- 

- Do you dress similarly to your peers?
- 

- Would you like to be (are you) a member of a popular group?
- 

- Do you hang out with people who are not popular?
- 

- Do you choose your friends because you like them for their personal qualities?
- 

- Do you choose your friends for their status?
- 

- Have you ever been in a situation where you were trying to get into a popular group? If so, what did you do to get in?
- 

- Has anyone who didn't really know you misjudged you?
- 

- Have you ever felt excluded from your peers?
- 

Do you believe that everybody is equal? Why or Why not?

What do you think people feel about others who are different?

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What do *you* think about people who are different? Why?

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## ACTIVITY

Imagine that you had to leave the US tomorrow to go and live in a foreign country. What do you think it would be like?

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How would you communicate?

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*How would living in a foreign country affect each of the following aspects of your life?*

- Language:

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- Family:

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- Friends:

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- Food:

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- Education:

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- Housing:

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- Jobs:

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- Customs:

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- Race:

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- Sexual Orientation:
- 

Some people differentiate between the different types of minority populations. While a person might be tolerant and supportive of some groups, he or she might not be tolerant of others. The following exercise is designed to explore diverse minority populations.

1) Joe was in a car accident a few years ago. He is paralyzed from the waist down and has neurological damage which makes his face twitch. Joe has moved to a new neighborhood recently. Tomorrow is his first day at a new school.

- How do you think Joe feels?
- 
- 

- How do you think other students will react to him?
- 

- How would you interact with Joe? Why?
- 

2) Lisa is African-American. She will attend a new school tomorrow in a primarily white neighborhood after years of attending a school with primarily students of color.

- How do you think Lisa feels?
- 
- 

- How do you think other students will react to her?
- 

- How would you interact with Lisa? Why?
-

3) Sean is an openly gay male. He recently moved to a new house with his parents. In his old school, he had many gay and straight friends. He has to attend a new school tomorrow.

- How do you think Sean feels?

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- How do you think other students will react to him?

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- How would you interact with him? Why?

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- Would it be easier for Sean to come out on his first day or later on?

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Why do you think people may react differently to each of these teens?

Explain your own reaction.

## Myths and Facts About Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual People

**Myth:** You can tell which people are gay just by looking at them.

**Fact:** Society and the media have perpetuated stereotypes of gay and lesbians for so long that people believe that the only way to identify a gay or lesbian is to look for the stereotype. There is a great deal of diversity in the gay and lesbian community.

**Myth:** I don't know any gay, lesbian, or bisexual people.

**Fact:** Statistics show that one in ten people are gay or lesbian. Given this figure, you probably do know someone who is gay, lesbian or bisexual; they probably are just not "out" to you.

**Myth:** Gay men really want to be women or just haven't found the "right woman."

**Fact:** Most gay men do not want to be women. Their sexual, affectional, and emotional orientation is towards men. A significant number of gay men have been married.

**Myth:** Gay women really want to be men or just haven't found the "right man."

**Fact:** Most gay women have no desire to be men. Their sexual, affectional, and emotional orientation is towards women. A significant number of lesbians have been married.

**Myth:** Lesbians and gay men could change if they really wanted to.

**Fact:** Most studies indicate that those who are highly motivated to change their sexual orientation may change their behavior, but not their underlying desires. In fact, it is often societal homophobia that forces people to attempt to change. Therefore, energy should be focused on dismantling homophobia so that people will feel comfortable with their orientation, whatever that may be. Another fact is that most gay or lesbian people would not want to change, even if there was a way.

**Myth:** Loving people of the same sex is abnormal and sick.

**Fact:** According to the American Psychological Association as of 1972, "It is no more abnormal or sick to be homosexual than to be left-handed." Isolation, fear from hiding, and alienation as a result of homophobia is what causes mental illness, not the orientation itself. Therefore, homophobia is what should be cured.

**Myth:** Loving people of the same sex is sinful and immoral.

**Fact:** While some religious denominations believe this, many do not. What is universally preached is that intolerance and hatred is wrong.

**Myth:** Gay men and women are more creative than other people.

**Fact:** While many gay men and lesbians are creative people who have challenged the roles which society has tried to pigeon-hole them into, they are no more creative than their heterosexual counterparts.

**Myth:** Gay school teachers can persuade young people to be gay.

**Fact:** Gay and lesbian people do not have a desire or a need to recruit. No one can be persuaded to be gay or lesbian. Gay and lesbians may encourage those in the closet to “Come Out,” but there is no desire to change heterosexuals into homosexuals.

**Myth:** Gay men are usually hairdressers, interior decorators, or artists.

**Fact:** Some gay men are hairdressers, interior decorators, and artists, but so are some straight men. This is a stereotype perpetuated by the media.

**Myth:** Gay men and women usually make poor parents.

**Fact:** One out of four families has a lesbian or gay man in its immediate family; heterosexual parents are not found to be consistently more loving or caring than their lesbian, gay or bisexual counterparts.

**Myth:** A person can become gay by associating with gay people.

**Fact:** A person cannot be made to be gay by association any more than a Caucasian could be made African-American by association.

**Myth:** Homosexuality is caused by weak parents.

**Fact:** There is no evidence that homosexuality is caused by weak or strong parents. There is no real consensus on what causes homosexuality. Most gay or lesbian teenagers sense that they are “different” during their early adolescent years.

**Myth:** Homosexuality can be cured.

**Fact:** Homosexuality is not a disease or an illness or an affliction and therefore, there is no need to cure.

(By Garry Mallon, CSW “Life Skills for Living in the Real World,” 1990.)

Do you think that gay men and lesbians have control over their sexual preference?

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Do you think that gay and lesbian couples can have as healthy and caring relationships as heterosexual couples? Why or why not?

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**C**onsider the following:

Your best friend with whom you grew up and have known for your entire life, tells you that he/she thinks he/she is gay/lesbian. What would you do? Would your relationship change? How so?

What could you do to help correct misconceptions and prejudice about gays and lesbians?

I COULD ...

### Exercise

*Fill in the blanks in the following two stories.*

1) Tim is a senior in high school. On his way home, he sees a group of about 15 kids from his school that are standing in a circle. Once he gets closer, Tim observes five Caucasians, who are eighth graders, beating up a Hispanic boy and calling him names. Tim feels \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. He is not sure what to do. He finally decides to \_\_\_\_\_ . When Tim arrives at home, he feels \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about his decision.

2) Laurie, a girl you really like and actually have wanted to go out with for quite some time comes up to you during a lunch break. She asks you if you would be interested in joining her in the gay rights march this afternoon. You are really stunned and ask Laurie if she is a lesbian. Laurie tells you that she is not a lesbian but she thinks that people need to support gay rights. You feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ . You don't really know what to do. You ask Laurie to give you until after lunch to think about it. After lunch, you tell Laurie that \_\_\_\_\_ . On your way back to class you feel \_\_\_\_\_ about your decision.

If you were a politician or a community leader, what would you change and do to help all people get along better?



What do you think you could do in your school or neighborhood to help people get along better?



## HOW CAN I MAKE A GOOD DECISION?

Every day you make *many* decisions. Some are big decisions; others are small. Some are more important than others. Some decisions you can make by yourself; other decisions you need advice from a friend, parent, or adult. As an adolescent, you have started to make new decisions about friends, sexuality, job training, clothes, drugs & alcohol, where to live, school, free time, jobs, money, family, etc. Making good decisions in all these areas is important now and in the future. Unwise decisions can bear serious consequences. You will be faced with additional important decisions when living independently. Good decision making skills will enable you to handle problems and temptations successfully.

### **What is My Decision Making Style?**

People have different decision making styles and come to solutions in different ways. Here are four young adults. Evaluate how they make decisions.

**Nick:**

I make decisions quickly. If I am in a store, I buy the first thing I see. I'll take any job I am offered, and I'll try anything once!

**Kim:**

I look around to see what other people do before I do anything! I usually follow what my best friend does, even if it's not the best thing for me.

**Tyrone:**

I take forever to make a decision. I could take days to decide what clothes to wear. I think I'm afraid to make decisions sometimes, especially important ones. Last week I lost a chance at a good job because I couldn't decide whether to apply or not.

**Teresa:**

I try to talk with someone when I have a decision to make. I ask my friends or my dad or Mrs. Abrams, my teacher, for help. Then I think about what's best for me before I decide. Then I do it!

Does one of these people sound like you? Which one?

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Do you have a friend like Nick or Tyrone or Kim or Theresa?

---

Try the following exercise to think about your own decision style. Check just one box per category to show how you would make the decision.

**Decide Now:**

How can I decide what to wear this morning?

- Do it quickly; grab the first thing I see.
- Take lots of time.
- Put it off as long as I can.
- Read my horoscope.
- Talk to a friend.
- Talk with an adult.
- Find out what other people are wearing
- Think first about what I'll be doing today, where I'll be going through the day.

**Decide Now:**

My friends are starting to drink beer every Friday after school. Should I join them? When I make this kind of decision I would probably:

- Just do what I feel like at that moment.
- Do what my friends are doing.
- Try to avoid the situation as long as I can.
- Do what is cool to do.
- Try to talk to a friend before I get in the situation.
- Read about drugs and alcohol and decide for myself.
- Just stay away from those friends.
- Talk with an adult to help me decide.

**Decide Now:**

What dentist should I call to use in the years ahead. When I make this decision, I will probably...

- Do it quickly, point to any name in the phone book.
- Take lots of time: visit and meet with at least two dentists.
- Talk with a parent.
- Talk with a friend.
- Find out whom other people go to.
- Put it off until I have a toothache.
- Read my horoscope.
- Let my social worker make the decision for me.

**Decide Now**

(Write a question that needs a decision.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

When I make this decision, I usually...

- Do it quickly.
- Take lots of time
- Put it off as long as I can.
- Read my horoscope.
- Talk to a friend.
- Avoid the situation and hope it will go away.
- Let my social worker make the decision for me.
- \_\_\_\_\_



After completing these exercises, how would you describe your decision-making style?

**I Usually Make Decisions By . . .**

As you have seen, there are many ways to go about making a decision. You can talk with a friend or just pick the first thing that comes your way. But there is a way that many people use to help them make good decisions -- and that's by taking one step at a time. Taking these steps one at a time can help you make better decisions because they make sure you look at all parts of a problem when deciding whether to buy a car -- or deciding whether to participate in training for a new job. It will help you think about the decision, get advice and then decide what is best for you. Here are the five steps:

1. Ask what decision has to be made.
2. List two or more alternative solutions and talk them over with someone else.
3. Think about the consequences of each solution, for yourself and for others.
4. Choose one solution that will work for you.
5. Evaluate the decision you make and see if it works.

Look back at your check marks. Are they usually in the same box? Do they change based on the kind of decision you are making? How do you make decisions?

- Quickly
- With help from others and some careful planning
- Slowly, never actually decide
- By doing what others do
- Not at all, let others decide for me
- By reading my horoscope

The five steps can help you slow down, think, and get help from others when you need to make an important decision. You might not need to use these steps to make a decision about what to wear to work or what to eat for breakfast each morning. But they can help you make decisions about important questions:

- What kind of job and career should I prepare for?
- What kind of friends do I want?
- How should I deal with alcohol and drugs?
- How can I keep myself healthy and strong?
- How can I start my own life and still keep in touch with my family and other important adults in my life?
- What kind of family do I want for myself as an adult?

Try the five step method to help solve these problems. First, look at the example below:

**Decide Now:**

I'm used to having someone else (like my DSS worker) make decisions for me. Now all of a sudden she's talking about my having a part in planning for my own goals. She wants me to decide how many hours I can work after school and still get my school work done. I can't decide how many hours to work: two hours each day or five hours each day.

1. *Ask yourself what decision to make.* The decision is: Should I work two hours a day (ten hours per week) or five hours each day (25 hours per week)?
2. *List two or more alternative solutions.*
  - a. work two hours each day
  - b. work five hours each day
  - c. work two hours each day and few extra hours on the weekends.
3. *Think about what will happen when you make your choice.*
  - a. Work two hours each day

*Pros:*

- Get a little bit of extra money
- Still have time for school work and friends; school is important for better job in the future
- Build up job experience and recommendations
- Not too tiring

*Cons:*

- Not enough extra money

- Feel too wimpy -- not really working
- Hate school and want to get a real job
- I can handle more than two hours

b. Work five hours each day

*Pros:*

- More money -- can save for the future
- Maybe get a better job recommendation

*Cons:*

- Might be too tired at night
- No time for other things: school and friends
- If I flunk, then I might drop out

c. Work two hours each day and a few extra hours on weekends

*Pros:*

- Can get schoolwork done and still get some extra money
- Can work as much as I want on weekends
- Gives me time for friends during the week

*Cons:*

- Really cuts down on weekend social time with friends
- Might need to rest up on weekends

4. *Make your choice.* Which option would you choose in the example above? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. *Evaluate.* Will your decision work? What do other people think of your decision? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Decide Now:**

You have been saving for your senior prom which is next week. You have worked out a budget for the cost of tickets, flowers, car, etc., and have decided that you need \$100 in order to attend. You have \$102 in your savings account. On Friday, your friends ask you to go out to dinner and movies with them. You really would like to go, but if you spend money on the movie and dinner you will not have enough for the prom. What would you do?

1. Ask: *(What decision has to be made?)* \_\_\_\_\_

2. List: *(2 or more different solutions).*

a: \_\_\_\_\_

b: \_\_\_\_\_

c: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Think: *(about the results of each for yourself and others).*

a: (positive): \_\_\_\_\_

(negative): \_\_\_\_\_

b: (positive): \_\_\_\_\_

(negative): \_\_\_\_\_

c: (positive): \_\_\_\_\_

(negative): \_\_\_\_\_

4. Choose: *(Make your decision here.)*

5. Evaluate: *(Do you think your decision will work out well? What do others think of your decision?)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## ACTIVITY

Think about the decisions you will make in the next few months (or years). Write down two important decisions in the designated space. Use the five step method to make your decisions. Discuss the outcome with your foster parent, social worker, or staff.

### Friends

Choose a decision that you need to make regarding friendship.

1. Ask: \_\_\_\_\_

2. List: \_\_\_\_\_

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Think:

a. positive: \_\_\_\_\_

negative: \_\_\_\_\_

b. positive: \_\_\_\_\_

negative: \_\_\_\_\_

c. positive: \_\_\_\_\_

negative: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Choose: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Evaluate: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Jobs

Choose a decision that you need to make regarding employment.

1. Ask: \_\_\_\_\_

2. List: \_\_\_\_\_

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Think:**

- a. positive: \_\_\_\_\_  
negative: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. positive: \_\_\_\_\_  
negative: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. positive: \_\_\_\_\_  
negative: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Choose:** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Evaluate:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Personal Health**

Choose a decision that you need to make regarding your personal health.

**1. Ask:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. List:** \_\_\_\_\_

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Think:**

- a. positive: \_\_\_\_\_  
negative: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. positive: \_\_\_\_\_  
negative: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. positive: \_\_\_\_\_  
negative: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Choose:** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Evaluate:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# PROBLEM SOLVING

As you take on the responsibilities of adulthood, you will have to make some very important decisions which will affect your future. You will also need to find solutions for new and unfamiliar problems. Although decision-making and problem-solving is not always easy, practice can make it easier.



## ACTIVITY

Find solutions/make decisions about the following problems.

**(1)** You live in your own apartment. You come home from a birthday party at 11:30 p.m. Standing outside your door, you realize that you have lost your house keys. What would you do?

Possible Solution:	
Pros:	Cons:
Decision:	
Evaluation:	

**(2)** Your supervisor tells you that you are laid off. You think you have done a good job and worked hard for him. You need the job to pay for your rent and food. Also, you believe that you deserve an explanation. What would you do?

Possible Solution:	
Pros:	Cons:
Decision:	
Evaluation:	

(3) You are enjoying living alone in your own apartment. Your rent, however, is \$400 a month, which takes up most of your income. One of the people you know from work has suggested that you move in with him/her to share expenses. This way, you would only have to pay \$250 in rent. However, you don't particularly like that person and you are not sure if you could get along with him or her in that kind of living situation.

Possible Solution:	
Pros:	Cons:
Decision:	
Evaluation:	

(4) You are thinking about buying a car. A friend of yours has a 10 year old pick-up, with 100,000 miles on it, which he would sell to you for \$1,000. The car is in good shape and you think it will last you for at least two years. However, you also went to a new car dealership and looked at new models. The salesman tried to convince you that you are able to afford a new car, paying \$1,000 down and \$250 a month for the next five years. You earn \$800 a month, pay \$300 in rent, and have a few other expenses. What would you do?

Possible Solution:	
Pros:	Cons:
Decision:	
Evaluation:	





**ACTIVITY**

Can you think of two problems you might face while living independently? Describe them below, find a solution, and discuss the outcome with your foster parent, social worker, or staff.

**Problem # 1:**

A large, empty rectangular box with a double-line border and rounded corners, intended for writing the first problem.

**Problem # 2:**

A large, empty rectangular box with a double-line border and rounded corners, intended for writing the second problem.

# WHAT ARE MY PERSONAL GOALS?

We have talked a lot about personal values, decision making, and goals. Now it is time to practice making decisions about future goals. Let's look at several different areas. We will utilize the five steps.

## ① Education

### ① Ask.

What are two educational options I would consider once I finish high school or complete my GED?

Option A

Option B

### ② List. *What are ways of obtaining more information about each option?*

What are the entry requirements for each educational program? What are the possible career options and wages after I complete my education?

### ③ Think *(about the results)*.

What are some good and difficult aspects about each option?

A. Option A is good because \_\_\_\_\_  
but it might be hard because \_\_\_\_\_

B. Option B is good because \_\_\_\_\_  
but it might be hard because \_\_\_\_\_

### ④ Chose.

If you could choose only one, which option would you choose:

Option A

Option B

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

### ⑤ Evaluate.

Did this checklist help you make a decision about what educational option you want to pursue? In what ways?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2 Jobs.**

**① Ask.**

What are two jobs you might like to have when you are 21 years old?

Job A

Job B

**② List.** *What are some ways you could get those jobs?*

What are the entry requirements for each job? How can you find out if there are a lot of openings in this type of job?

**③ Think** *(about the results).*

What are some good and difficult things about each job?

- A. Job A is good because \_\_\_\_\_  
but it might be hard because \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Job B is good because \_\_\_\_\_  
but it might be hard because \_\_\_\_\_

**④ Chose.**

If you could choose only one job, which one would it be?

Job A

Job B

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**⑤ Evaluate.**

Did this checklist help you make a decision about what job you might want to obtain? In what ways?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name one personal goal you have about work and jobs: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### 3 Health.

① **Ask.**

How can I keep myself healthy?

② **List.**

What are some habits that will help me stay healthy?

Foods

Activities & Exercises

③ **Think** (*about the results*).

A. It's good to eat healthy food because \_\_\_\_\_

B. It's important to exercise because \_\_\_\_\_

C. One thing I like, that I might have to be careful about is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

④ **Chose.**

In order to stay healthy, I will be sure to \_\_\_\_\_

and stay away from \_\_\_\_\_

⑤ **Evaluate.**

Did this checklist help you think about personal health goals?

\_\_\_\_\_

Name one personal goal you have for your health \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### ④ Friends.

① **Ask.**

How will I make new friends as I become an adult?

② **List.**

Three places I might meet new friends/

A.

B.

C.

③ **Think** (*about the results*).

A. One easy thing about making new friends here (A) is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ but one difficult thing is: \_\_\_\_\_

B. One easy thing about making new friends here (B) is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ but one difficult thing is: \_\_\_\_\_

C. One easy thing about making new friends here (C) is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ but one difficult thing is: \_\_\_\_\_

④ **Choose.**

One way I will try to find new friends is \_\_\_\_\_

⑤ **Evaluate.**

Did this checklist help you discover helpful ways to make new friends?

\_\_\_\_\_

Name one personal goal you have for your future friendships \_\_\_\_\_

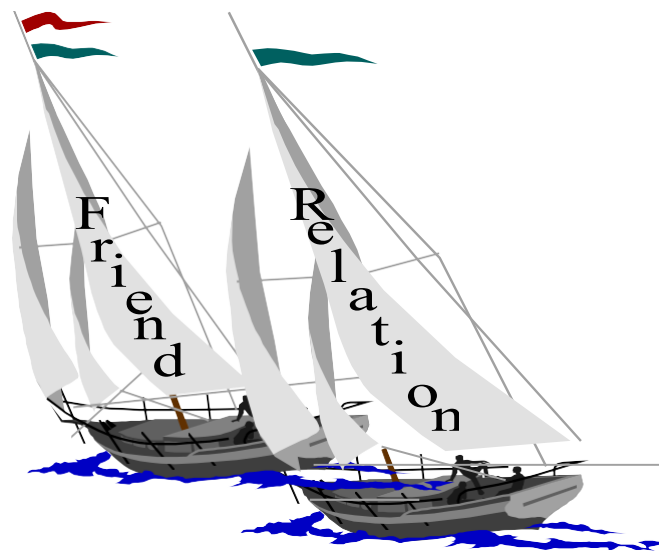
\_\_\_\_\_

Personal goals can change due to new information, different circumstances, and personal events. You can use the goal setting/decision making steps to set new goals or evaluate your present ones in all areas of life. Short term goals often help us get moving in the right direction, but they also help us establish and reach our long term goals. Let's evaluate and summarize your personal goals.

Short Term	Long Term
Education	
Employment	
Health	
Money Management	
Friends/Relationships	
Family	
Recreation	
Transportation	
Living Situation	

# RELATIONSHIPS

Throughout our lives, we all depend on social interactions with others. During adolescence, friendships, dating, and relationships are an important part of life for most of you. Our experiences with friends and relationships can influence us greatly. Positive interactions with others help us feel good about ourselves, while bad experiences might have a negative impact on our sense of self-worth. Interacting positively with others and building healthy relationships might not always be easy and both require many skills. In the following section we will build on the skills we have discussed in the previous exercises to work on the social skills necessary to develop positive friendships and relationships.



## RELATIONSHIPS / PERSONAL SKILLS

In order for us to make good decisions, we have to know who we are. We have to know what is important to us and what is not. Our values often direct our relationships with others and our actions in general.

Nobody is born with a firm set of values. We all develop our values “along the way.” We learn to distinguish right from wrong, develop preferences and life philosophies. However, as we discussed previously, our values are not carved into stone. They can change due to our life experiences or new information. Different people have different values, each according to his/her own development, personalities, and cultural backgrounds.

Positive values can help us to live our lives in a healthy way and guide us through difficult and confusing situations. Most of us establish values in many areas of life. It is particularly valuable to determine what is important to us in the areas of friendship and relationships.

Use the following exercise to explore some of your values. Circle your preference in each part.

**I PREFER**

To have a few good friends	-	Lots of acquaintances (not as good friends)
Good looks	-	A nice personality
To listen to the advice of others	-	To do things my own way
Have a good talk with someone	-	Go to the movies
Honesty	-	Excitement
Long lasting relationships	-	Short relationships
Hanging with the popular crowd	-	Having friends I can trust
To take the initiative in getting to know someone	-	To wait for others to approach me
To get to know someone before dating	-	To start dating right away
To only date people I like	-	To date anyone who asks me out
To rush into relationships	-	To take things slow
To be a part of defining expectations and limits in a friendship or relationship	-	To let others set limits and expectations
To communicate my thoughts and feelings	-	To hide my thoughts and feelings



In summary, describe what is important to you in a good friend.

What are some of the values our society and your cultural background have taught you?

Describe what is important to you in a dating relationship. Are the qualities you look for in a friend the same ones you value in a person you would date? Why or why not?

One way to shield ourselves against negative experiences is to live by our positive values and expectations.

**C**onsider the following:

Kathy is a junior in high school. Tom, a senior and the captain of the football team, asks her out on a date. Kathy is not sure what to do. She knows that Tom is fooling around a lot and has heard him bragging to his friends about having had sex with many girls. Her best friend fell for him and has been hurting since Tom broke up with her after only four dates. On the other hand, Kathy thinks that Tom is very attractive and it would be pretty cool to be seen with such an older, popular guy. Kathy hopes that he really likes her and wonders if things might be different for her.

How would personal values help Kathy make a decision?

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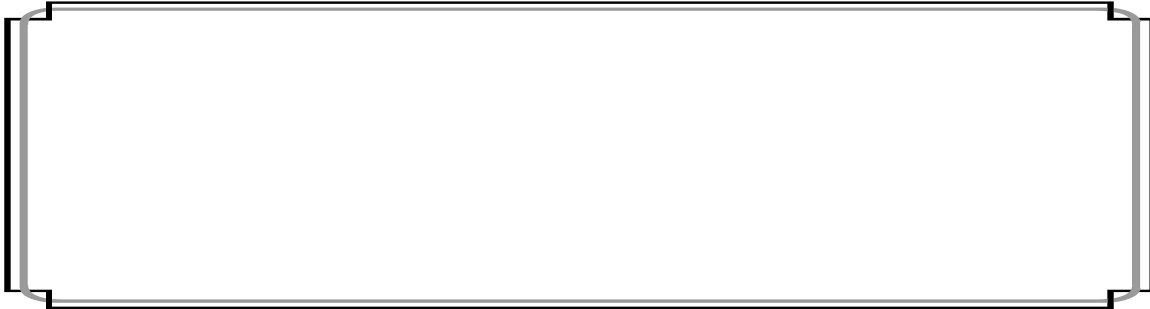
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Find two ends to Kathy's story using the two different set of values below.

**Values I**

- Enjoys hanging out with the popular crowd
- Starts dating right away
- Dates anyone who asks her
- Lets others set limits

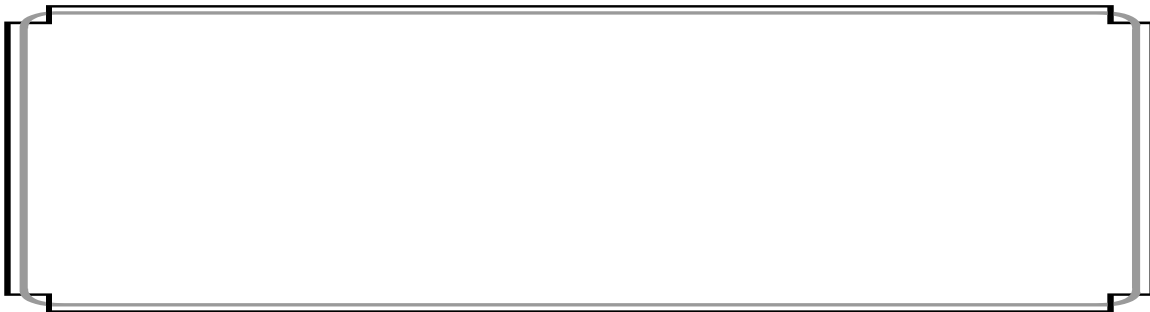
**End Of The Story:**



**Values II**

- Trust
- Getting to know someone before dating
- Long-lasting relationships
- Set limits and expectations

**End Of The Story:**



Which of your two endings do you think is best for Kathy and why?



How would you handle a situation like Kathy's?



Values also help determine the quality of friendships and relationships.

**C**onsider the following:

Chandra and Isaac have been dating for a while and getting along pretty well. Lately, however, Isaac has been having a difficult time. He has a lot of personal problems and is having trouble in school. He wants to talk to Chandra about it but she tells him that she doesn't want to deal with problems.. She just wants to have fun times like they used to.

Do you think that Chandra and Isaac have different values? Describe.



Let's look at the following chart to determine which values make relationships/friendships work. Choose the six values most important to you and describe why they are so.

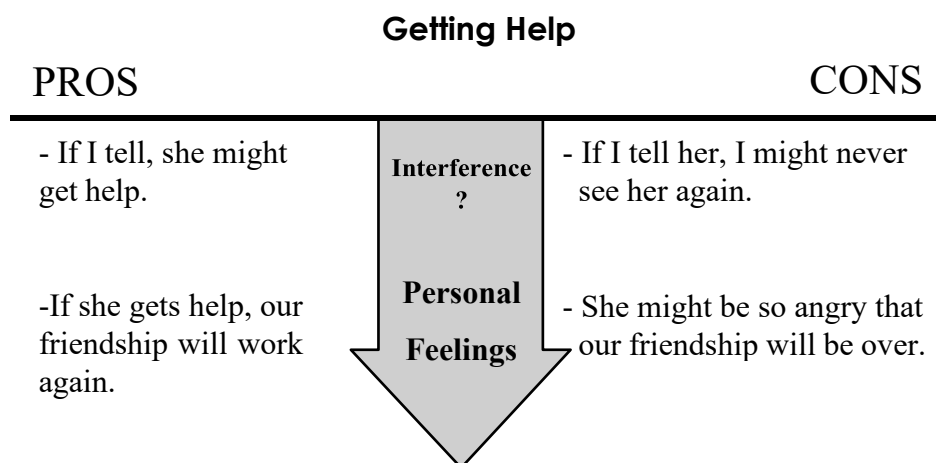
<p><b>Honesty</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>Trust</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>Commitment</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>Reliability</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>Acceptance of Boundaries</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>Appreciation</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>Respect</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>Tolerance</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>Openness</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>Sharing</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>Consistency</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>Dependability</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>Sensitivity</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>Thoughtfulness</b></p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

## DECISION MAKING IN RELATIONSHIPS

Once we have established what is important to us, we usually base our decision making on those values. We all are faced with many decisions every day, in all areas of life. Good decision-making is based on the concept that we have to evaluate pros and cons carefully in order to come up with the best possible solution. Good decision-making in friendships and relationships is difficult at times because our personal feelings might interfere with our ability to objectively weigh the pros and cons as we discussed in the previous Decision Making section.

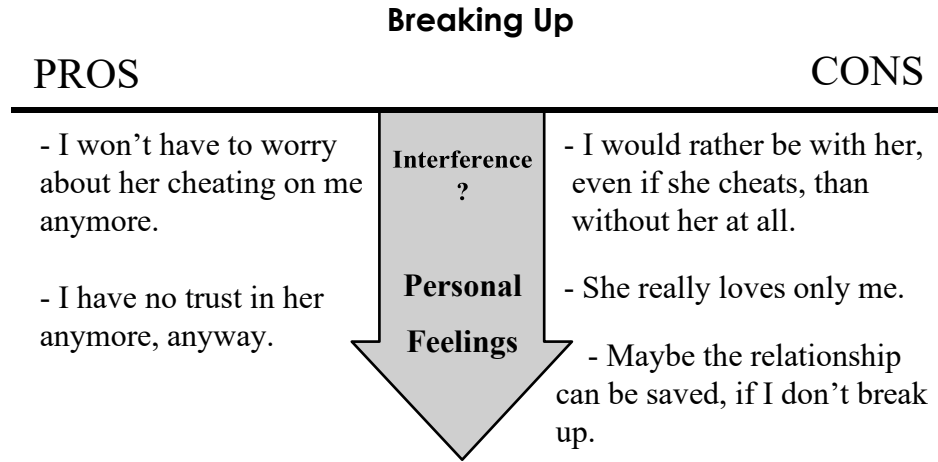
**C**onsider the following:

Maria and Sabrina have been friends since kindergarten. Recently, it has seemed to Maria that Sabrina has been behaving strangely. She is moody and hardly ever feels like doing anything with her. One day after school, Maria saw Sabrina hanging out with a bad crowd and doing drugs. Maria confronted her friend and suggested that she should get help. Sabrina told her that if she told anyone about her drug use, she could forget about ever seeing her again. Maria is not sure what to do. She knows that Sabrina needs help, but she doesn't want to lose her as a friend. She weighs the pros and cons.



What would you do in a situation like this? Why? Would your personal feelings interfere?

Steven has been going out with Amber for five months. Recently, Amber has been spending almost no time with him, and Steven has heard from others that she has been cheating on him. When he confronted her, she admitted that she has been seeing his best friend. Amber said that she cared for Steven very much but could not promise that it wouldn't happen again. Steven debates whether or not to break up with her.

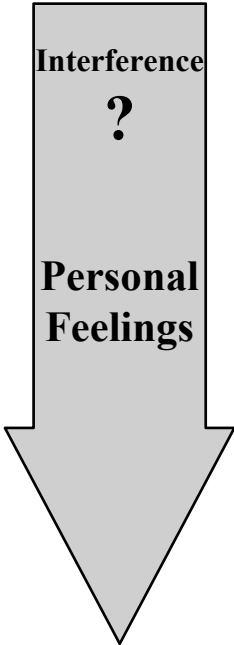


How would you decide? Why?

When we make decisions in regard to friends/relationships, we should always ask ourselves:

- What are the pros and cons?
- What are the alternatives/solutions?
- What short-term/long-term consequences will my decision have for me?
- What might possibly interfere with my making an objective decision?

Did you ever have to make a difficult decision? Are you about to make a decision about a friend or relationship? If so, describe your problem and utilize the decision-making chart below to help you find a solution.

<b>PROBLEM:</b>	
<b>Possible Solution:</b>	
<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>
	
<b>SOLUTION:</b>	

# COMMUNICATION

Our ability to interact with others greatly depends on our ability to communicate effectively. We need to be able to convey our thoughts and feelings to others as well as hear and understand the thoughts and feelings of others. There are two kinds of communication, verbal and nonverbal. It is important to remember that non-verbal communication is often just as important as what you say. Effective communication in our relationships with others should consist of:

- ⇒ Communicating thoughts and feelings clearly.
- ⇒ Listening carefully to others.
- ⇒ Body language which supports the spoken word.

Many of the misunderstandings, conflicts, and fights in people's relationships are the result of poor communication.

**C**onsider the following:

Tina and Marc have been dating for six weeks. They enjoy each other's company and get along well. Tonight they had planned a night out at the movies. They were supposed to meet at the theatre at seven o'clock. Tina arrived twenty minutes late, and Marc is really aggravated.

MARC: What on earth is the matter with you?

TINA: Marc, I am. . .

MARC: Don't even try making up excuses. I have been waiting here twenty minutes!

TINA: Listen, please, I. . .

MARC: The movie's been on now for at least fifteen minutes. It's too late to go in now. You have ruined my evening!

TINA: Marc, let me explain. I was. . .

MARC: I hope you're happy. I really wanted to see that movie. I should have gone out with my friends!

TINA: Marc, I'm really getting angry. Why won't you let me explain?

MARC: You're getting angry? You don't have any right to be angry. You're the one who's late!

TINA: I don't have to stand here and listen to you yell at me. I'm going home. Don't ask me out again.

Tina turns around and leaves. Marc is puzzled. He does not understand why Tina went home and does not want to see him again. All he wanted to do was to get his point across. He really likes her and wondered what went wrong.



What do you think went wrong?

What is the difference between assertive and aggressive communication?

Aggressive	Assertive

How could Marc have made his point in an assertive rather than an aggressive manner? Fill in Marc's parts as well as Tina's responses in the exercise below.

MARC:

TINA:

MARC:

TINA:

MARC:

TINA:

MARC:

TINA:

Sometimes people have difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings, such as in the next example.

April and Laura have been friends since the second grade. They got into a big fight over a guy they both like, and in the two weeks since the fight, they have not spoken to each other. They both miss the other's company and would like to be friends again. One afternoon they meet on the subway.

APRIL: Hi.

LAURA: Hey.

APRIL: How's it going?

LAURA: All right, I guess.

APRIL: What's new?

LAURA: Nothing much. What have you been up to?

APRIL: Nothing really.

LAURA: Hmm.

APRIL: Yeah.

LAURA: So did you get the new Bon Jovi CD?

APRIL: Yes! Are those new jeans you're wearing?

LAURA: Yes. You like them?

APRIL: Sure.

LAURA: Did you hear that Reggi is going out with José?

APRIL: Yeah. That's no big surprise, is it?

LAURA: Yeah.

APRIL: Hmm.

LAURA: Well, this is my stop.

APRIL: Okay, see ya.

LAURA: See ya.

Were Laura and April able to tell each other that they want to be friends again? Did they talk about their fight? What do you think went wrong?



How would you approach the conversation? Fill in the blanks in the exercise below so that April and Laura can be friends again.

APRIL:

LAURA:

APRIL:

LAURA:

APRIL:

LAURA:

APRIL:

LAURA:

APRIL:

LAURA:

APRIL:

LAURA:

APRIL:

LAURA:

APRIL:

LAURA:

Often, emotions might interfere with our ability to communicate effectively. Have you ever experienced situations like that? Complete the exercise below by circling those moods which might make it difficult for you to communicate.

Happy      intimidated      Nervous  
Sad      **Angry**      TIRED  
Anxious      ambivalent      insecure  
                 relaxed      in Love...  
JEALOUS      guilty

If you circled one or more of the items above, describe why these moods make it difficult for you to talk to others.

Develop strategies with your foster parents, social worker, or staff on how you might improve your communication skills in those situations.

As we stated in the beginning of this segment, communication can be divided into verbal and non-verbal expressions. So far, we have only focused on the verbal means of communicating with others. However, body language is important as well. Non-verbal communication can consist of gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, movements, posture, etc.



Our body language usually coincides with the words we speak. If it doesn't, we might be sending conflicting messages to others. Imagine, for example, your supervisor asking you to come to her office for an important talk. She explains that you have done a good job and offers you a promotion, but she has her head down and is slouched in her chair all the while. She does not even look at you. How would that make you feel? You would probably be uncomfortable and confused. Body language is an important facet of communicating.



### ACTIVITY

Complete the following exercise by answering how you would best communicate (both verbally and non-verbally) in each situation.

Situation	Effective Communication
<p>You forgot that you were supposed to meet your friend yesterday to play basketball after school. During your lunch break today, your friend lets you know that he/she is kind of mad. You feel guilty and want to apologize. What would you say to your friend? How would you convey your feelings through your body language?</p>	<p>⇒</p> <p>⇒</p> <hr/> <p><i>Body Language (non-verbal)</i></p>
<p>There is this boy/ girl in your class you talked to a few times. You really like him/her and would like to ask him/her out to the dance on Saturday. However you are somewhat nervous and fear that he/she might reject you. What would you say to him or her? What body language would you use?</p>	<p>⇒</p> <p>⇒</p> <hr/> <p><i>Body Language (non-verbal)</i></p>

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Effective Communication</b>
<p>You have been going out with someone for twelve months. Lately the relationship has not been working out. You have been fighting and spend less and less time together. You want to break up with him/her but don't want to hurt his/her feelings. You are somewhat sad but think that it is best to end it. What words and body language would you use?</p>	<p>⇒</p> <p>⇒</p>
	<p><i>Body Language (non-verbal)</i></p>
<p>You are angry at one of your friends for putting you down and making fun of you in front of a crowd. What would you say?</p>	<p>⇒</p> <p>⇒</p>
	<p><i>Body Language (non-verbal)</i></p>

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Good communication skills are necessary to resolve conflicts. All of you have probably been in situations where you did not agree with others. In those situations, it is important to negotiate and, at times, compromise.

Why do you think conflict resolution and negotiating is important in all relationships?



What skills/qualities do you think are important in resolving conflicts?



How do you usually deal with conflicts in a relationship?



How can good negotiation skills help you to be assertive and in control?



What could you do if anger interferes with your ability to solve a conflict?



Create your own example (story) which reflects good conflict resolution and negotiation skills.

MY EXAMPLE:

## IN SUMMARY:

Ask yourself these questions.

- Why are good relationships/friendships important to you?
- How would you describe good relationships and/or friendships
- What are some of the things you do not want in a relationship and/or friendship?
- What personal skills do you have to work on to improve your ability to form relationships with others?

Develop strategies with your foster parent, social worker, or staff for ways in which you can improve those personal skills.



# LOVE

Love seems to be the center of much of our society's attention. We hear love songs on the radio, watch movies about happy or unhappy love, and every so often we'll hear the people around us talking about being in love. Love seems to have great power and influence over us. Myths and stories about many different kinds of love go back thousands of years. But what, in actuality, is love?

What is your definition of love?

There are many different kinds of love - love of family, friends, a pet, as well as love of a potential partner. Can you think of other types of love?

What (if any) is the difference between friendship and love?



What is the difference between dating and love?

How would you know if were in love?

Let's explore some of your values, experiences, and preferences by circling the phrases below which best describe your ideas about love of a potential partner:

Love at First Sight	-	Love develops slowly
Based on physical appearance	-	Based on personality
To fall in love often	-	To fall in love rarely
Love is a kind of game	-	Love is special
Love means commitment	-	Love means fun
Love is mysterious	-	Love is based on logical attraction
Love means work	-	Love just happens
Love means shared interests	-	Love means opposites attract
Intellect	-	Life philosophy
Love means sex	-	There are many ways to love someone without having sex
Attraction	-	Trusting, positive feeling
Love means taking care of someone	-	Love is confusing

What is important to you in a loving relationship?



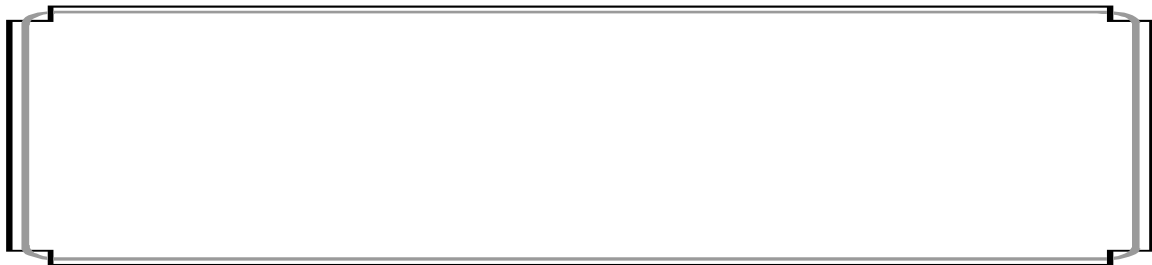
Just as in friendly relationships, your values in regard to love are important. All too often, we engage in relationships we expect to be loving ones but that turn out differently. Many of us probably dream about the perfect love and are convinced that, magically, the right person will come along and we'll live happily ever after.

The truth is that we are rarely able to live out a "fairy tale" love. A love relationship takes a lot of work and commitment by everyone involved. If we approach love with fantastic or unrealistic expectations, we're likely to be disappointed, less caring, and perhaps miss out on something special.

**C**onsider the following:

Susi is having lunch with her friends at school. She points out a boy at another table, a boy Susi thinks is really cute. Although she has never spoken to him, she tells her girlfriends that she is "so much in love with him!"

Can Susi really be "in love" with him? Why or why not?



Although we might be attracted to someone as soon as we meet him/her, love develops over time. The term "falling in love" implies that we don't have any control over who we have loving feelings for. It's actually a misleading expression. Similar to our choices in friendships, we can control who we fall in love with and influence the quality of a relationship to a certain extent.

Consider the following:

Maurice and Melanie have been going out for several months. Melanie never really thought about it before now but thinks that she might be in love with Maurice. Maurice believes that he loves Melanie and he hates the thought of her liking someone else. He is often jealous and always wants Melanie to tell him exactly where she is or what she is doing. For the past few weeks, Maurice has been asking her to call and get his permission before she goes anywhere. When Melanie tries to explain to him that he should trust her, he tells her that if she really loved him she would do as he says. Melanie does not like to be controlled and kept from her friends but is beginning to think that love means you have to give up everything for the other person.

What are Maurice and Melanie's values or concepts about love?

Do you agree with their values/concepts? Why or why not?

What do you think might happen in their relationship?

## Things To Think About

Loving relationships are often defined as “partnerships.” Why do you think that is so?



Do you think the personal skills (communication, decision-making, and conflict resolution) important to good friendships and general relationships are also important in loving relationships? Why or why not?



What do people mean when they say things like “Love is giving and receiving?”



What do you think is important in a loving relationship?

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# SEXUALITY

Adolescence is a time of sexual awakening. During your teen years, you will discover in yourself a whole new range of sexual interests, feelings, and urges due to the maturation of the sexual and reproductive systems in your body. You will become aware of your own sexual orientation which most psychologists agree has been set since the age of five or six, and you will experience sexual attraction based on that orientation. The issues of relationships and sexuality are very complex. They not only include your physical development, but your personal skills, cultural issues, and expectations as well. You will face important decisions about relationships and intimacy which will have a great impact on the rest of your life. You have to be prepared to make them!

Making the right decisions and choices may prevent you from getting hurt, engaging in unhealthy or destructive relationships, an unwanted pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. Many of you probably struggle with your own identity and expectations in regard to relationships and sexuality. Some of you might have made some poor choices. However, many skills to make good decisions which promote healthy relationships can be learned and will be addressed in the following section.

## MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Knowledge about yourself and your personal skills in regard to relationships and love form the foundation to develop a healthy sexuality. Unfortunately, the term “sexuality” is often misunderstood as “sleeping with someone.” Like relationships in general, the issue of sexuality is not about having sex. Sexuality includes how we deal with our sexual feelings and the decisions and boundaries that we make. It involves respect, communication, and the many ways we can give and receive love. Sex is glorified through the media, through movies and television, and we encounter many messages about sex throughout the day whether we like it or not.

**Following are some common myths and misconceptions about sex:**

- ***Love equals sex.*** All too often people think that love and sex are interchangeable when they are really two vastly different notions. It is possible to have a healthy sexuality, love someone, and not sleep together. Contrary to popular belief, many teens are not sexually active.
- ***Everyone is having sex and it really isn't a big deal.*** A recent study shows that more and more teens decide to wait to have sex until they are older or get married. Sex is a complex and intimate step to take, one which requires not only physical maturity but emotional and mental maturity as well.
- ***Sex is always a wonderful and pleasurable experience.*** The truth is that often, particularly if you are not ready, it is not and you will end up getting hurt. Making the right decisions about sex is more important than ever, not only to protect you from negative experience or unwanted pregnancy but also from potentially deadly sexually transmitted diseases.

- ***Having sex will help to keep someone in a relationship.*** The reality is that if a relationship is not working without sex, it won't work with it. Sex has so many complex implications that it can be disastrous for a relationship that isn't on solid ground.
- ***Some people can become closer and find love through sex.*** The act of sex itself will not provide anyone with the love they are looking for.
- ***People have to live up to their partner's expectations.*** Some people might believe that if their boyfriend or girlfriend is ready to have sex, they should be ready as well. The only expectation you have to live up to is your own!
- ***Kissing and fondling inevitably leads to sex.*** Sex is never inevitable. It is a choice. We all set our own boundaries as to how far we're willing to go and what we can handle emotionally. It is important that both partners respect those boundaries.



### ACTIVITY

With these misconceptions in mind, think back to the personal skills discussed in the previous section. Utilize your values, communication techniques, and conflict resolution skills to work on the following exercises.

Austin and Julie have been going out for three months. One evening they are alone at home and start to kiss. Austin tells Julie how much he loves her and that he wants to have sex with her. Julie tells him that she likes him a lot, but she is not sure if she is ready to have sex. She feels that they haven't known each other long enough and thinks that she is too young to engage in a sexual relationship. Austin tells Julie that being in love means that two people sleep together, and if she really liked him as much as she said she did, she would sleep with him.

- What is Austin's misconception?

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- What advice would you give to Julie?

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- What could Julie say to Austin?

JULIE:

AUSTIN:

JULIE:

AUSTIN:

It works the other way around, too!

2. Aaron could not believe that Jeanette would ask him out. He is the envy of every other boy in school! They are on their second date. Jeanette asked Aaron to sleep with her tonight, but he said “no.” She got angry and told him that everyone is having sex and it won’t be a big deal. If he wouldn’t have sex with her, someone else would. Now Aaron is afraid that Jeanette will never ask him out again. He thinks he might have made a mistake.

- What is Jeanette’s misconception? \_\_\_\_\_
- What advice would you give Aaron? \_\_\_\_\_
- Does it seem funny that a girl asks a boy to sleep with her? Why or why not?

- 
- What could Aaron say to Jeanette?

Aaron:

Jeanette:

Aaron:

Jeanette:

3. Anthony and Brenda have been going out for four months. Although initially they had a good relationship, they’ve been fighting lately and spending less time together. Tonight they met at the park and Anthony told Brenda that he thinks they should break up. Brenda doesn’t want to lose him. Although they never slept together before, Brenda is debating whether or not to ask him to have sex with her. She figures that way she might not lose him and maybe they would feel close and love each other again.

- What is Brenda’s misconception? \_\_\_\_\_
- What advice would you give her? \_\_\_\_\_



- How could Brenda let Anthony know how she feels by doing something other than by sleeping with him?

Brenda:

Anthony:

Brenda:

Anthony:

4. Zachary and Christine have been going out for two weeks. On Saturday, they drive to the beach and start to kiss and touch each other. When Christine tells Zachary to stop, Zach gets angry and tells Christine that she has led him on and that now she has to go through with it.

- What is Zachary's misconception? \_\_\_\_\_
- What advice would you give Christine? \_\_\_\_\_
- What could Christine say to Zach?

Christine:

Zach:

Christine:

Zach:

Remember that the decision whether or not to have sex is a very personal one and should not be based on circumstance. Only you can decide whether you are ready.

**You can say no at any time! Nobody should be pressured into any kind of sexual relationship.**

## ABSTINENCE

There are many different ways to show someone we like and love him or her. How would you show your affection for someone without having sex?

**I would:**

In most of the previous examples, the youth involved decided to say “no” to having sex. While it might not always be easy to say no and wait to have sex, it is the right decision for many of you! There are many health and personal reasons which make abstinence an important option.

Can you think of reasons to not engage in a sexual relationship at present?

Some of your reasons might include:

- Abstinence coincides with your personal values and beliefs.
- Abstinence is 100% effective in preventing pregnancy. (No other method of birth control is infallible.)
- Abstinence greatly reduces serious health risks like STD’s and cervical cancer.
- Abstinence can show that you are a strong and mature person by not giving in to peer pressure. It can also show that you can exert control over your own impulses.
- Abstinence can help partners to develop a better friendship and evaluate their feelings for each other.
- Abstinence might help prevent you from getting hurt emotionally. You will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have not compromised your values, that you’ve done nothing that you did not want to do.

At any point in your life, your choice of whether or not to have sex should be a conscious and informed decision. It is important that you evaluate whether or not you are ready and are aware of possible consequences. You should know how to reduce risks of pregnancy and STD's. Having sex should never be circumstantial. Before engaging in any kind of sexual relationship, you should ask yourself:

- (1) Am I really ready? Is my partner ready?
- (2) How do I feel about my relationship with my partner? Do we agree on its terms?
- (3) Am I being influenced or pressured by a person or situation to make this decision?
- (4) Is there anything which might interfere with my ability to make a good decision?
- (5) Am I aware of the consequences of teen pregnancy ? Am I aware of the potential risk of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS?
- (6) Have I communicated clearly my feelings and concerns about having sex and the risks involved?
- (7) Am I knowledgeable about the various methods for preventing STD infection and pregnancy?
- (8) What other alternatives do I have?
- (9) What are my values around sexuality and how do they influence my decision-making?
- (10) Is this a good decision for me at this time?

Let's consider these questions in depth.

### ***Am I ready?***

Only you can determine whether or not you are ready. There are many things to be considered. Evaluate your feelings and thoughts. Are you nervous, happy, scared? Have you thought about this clearly? Have you talked to someone you trust, someone who can share an informed opinion or offer wise advice? Do you think that you have sufficient knowledge about sexuality? Do you think you might still be too young? Do you feel pressured or guilty? You should not make **any** decision until you can answer these questions to your satisfaction..

### ***How do I see the relationship with my boy/girlfriend? Do we agree on its terms?***

Evaluating the relationship you share with your boyfriend or girlfriend is an important part of your decision to refrain from any kind of sexual activity. Sometimes, particularly in the spirit of a moment, one might see his or her relationship differently from how it really is. It is helpful to know the following information about yourself, your boyfriend or girlfriend, and your relationship:

**My Boy/Girlfriend**

**Me**

His/her values are: \_\_\_\_\_

My values are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

He/she feels \_\_\_\_\_  
about me.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
about him/her.

In the future, he/she would like to: \_\_\_\_\_

In the future, I would like to: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If he/she could change something in our  
relationship, he/she would \_\_\_\_\_

If I could change something in our  
relationship, I would \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

He/she expects our relationship to be \_\_\_\_\_

I expect our relationship to be \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I would hurt him/her if \_\_\_\_\_

He/she would hurt me if \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

He/she would break up with me if \_\_\_\_\_

I would break up with him/her if \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**We**

We have known each other for \_\_\_\_\_.

We spend \_\_\_\_\_ time together and usually \_\_\_\_\_.

We communicate best when \_\_\_\_\_.

We have difficulty talking when \_\_\_\_\_.

It is \_\_\_\_\_ to talk about expectations, boundaries and limits.

We \_\_\_\_\_ resolve conflicts by \_\_\_\_\_.

We \_\_\_\_\_ respect and trust each other.

**Additions:**

*(3) Am I being influenced or pressured by a person or situation to make this decision?*



*(4) Is there anything that might interfere with my ability to make a good judgment?*

We talked previously about the possibility of personal feeling interfering with one's ability to make good decisions. What other circumstances might impair your decision making ability?



When we are under a lot of pressure or taken by surprise, we might not be able to make good decisions.

Consider the following:

Jonathon and Sheila have been going out for several months, but they rarely spend time alone together. Tonight they are at a party and have the opportunity to be alone. Jonathon asks Sheila to have sex with him, since this is one of the few opportunities they have for some privacy. Sheila is not sure what she wants to do. Jonathon pressures her to make a quick decision in order to take advantage of the opportunity.

Does Sheila have time to think about what she wants and to make a good decision?  
Do they have time to talk about and obtain birth control or STD prevention?

The best way to handle situations like these is to delay a decision until you have had enough time to think about and evaluate all the factors involved.

How could Sheila tell Jonathon that she wants to delay the decision?

Sheila:

Jonathon:

Sheila:

Jonathon:

Sheila:

Jonathon:

**Warning:**

A major obstruction to good decision making is the use of alcohol or drugs. Under the influence of any substance, you cannot think clearly and are much more likely to engage in dangerous behaviors or make unwise decisions which you will regret later.

*(5a) Am I aware of the consequences of teen pregnancy?*

**TEENAGE PREGNANCY**

Let's evaluate some of the facts associated with teenage pregnancy:

**FACT:** Most babies born to teenage mothers will grow up in poverty.

**FACT:** Many teenage mothers will drop out of high school

**FACT:** Teenage mothers will earn much less money throughout their lives than women who waited until their twenties to have children.

**FACT:** Babies born to teenage mothers are more likely to have low birth weight and birth defects.

**FACT:** Many fathers of children born to teenage mothers will not be involved in their upbringing.

**FACT:** The stress of being a teenage parent is enormous and many are not able to cope with it.

**FACT:** Many teenage parents do not have the parenting skills necessary to raise a child in a nurturing, loving, and consistent environment.

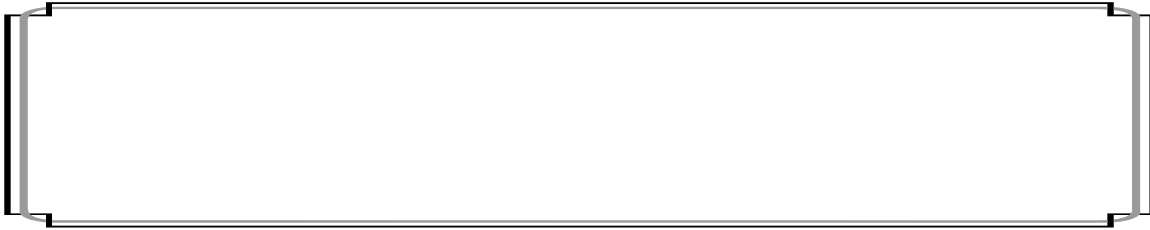
**FACT:** Many teenage parents are isolated from their peers.

Can you think about additional facts related to teenage pregnancy?

- **FACT:**
  
- **FACT:**
  
- **FACT:**
  
- **FACT:**

Imagine what your life would be like if you were pregnant or about become a father. How would your life change?

What do you think your life and your child's life would be like?



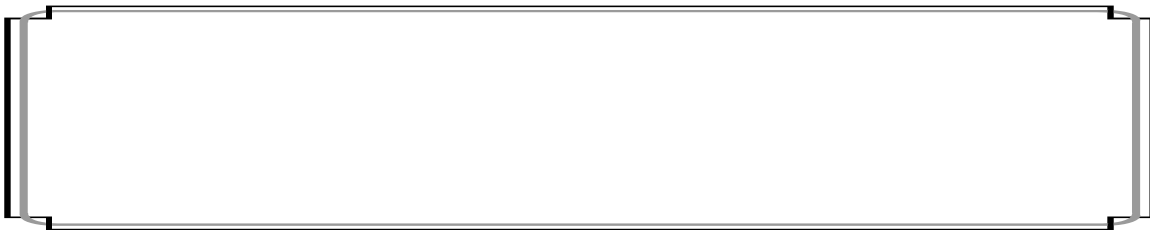
Are you emotionally/financially/socially equipped to be a good parent at this point in your life?



How would you support your child?



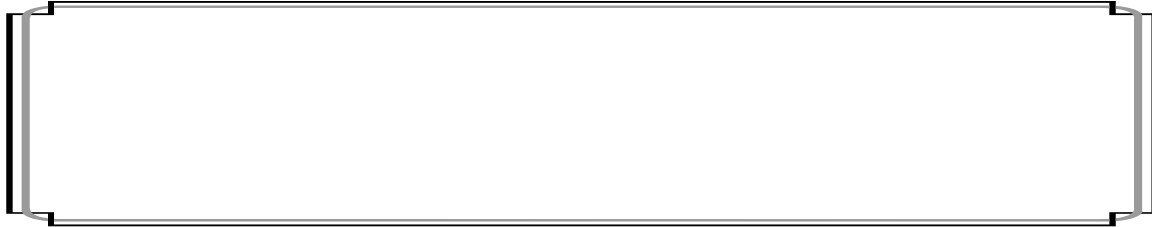
What impact would parenthood have on your future goals?



If you were a teen parent, what would your life look like a year from now? In five years? Ten?



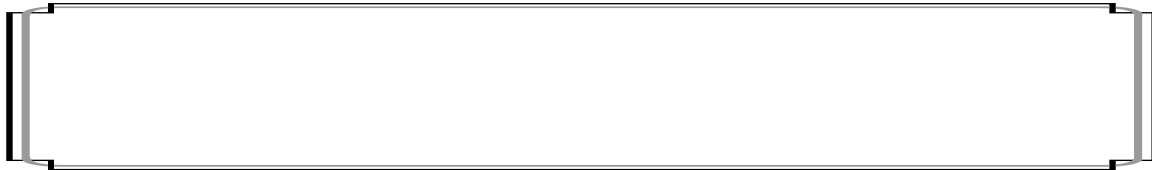
Imagine for a moment that you are a baby, ready to be born. Would you chose yourself as a parent?



Some youth have misconceptions about pregnancy and wrongfully view having a child as a possible solution to their problems.

**C**onsider the following:

**Emily**, 17, is in a foster home. She is debating whether or not to try to get pregnant. Emily thinks that by having a child, she will become independent, have money, and be respected. What are Emily's misconceptions? Are these good reasons for having a child? What do you think?



The truth is: **none** of Emily's reasons are valid!! Most teenage mothers are not well respected by the community at large. Most teens are not ready nor equipped to be good, responsible parents. They ought to complete their education, obtain a stable living environment, and gain emotional maturity before having children. Emily may or may not qualify for financial assistance and even if she does qualify, it will be available to her only for a brief period of time. She would have to work very hard to support herself and her child for many years.

**Paul** is thinking about asking his girlfriend to have his baby. He thinks that it is cool to have a child and that he would be more respected by his peers. What are Paul's misconceptions? What do you think of his reason for wanting a child?





None of Paul's reasons are valid, either. It is totally irresponsible to have a child because it is "cool". Having children is a big decision, one which everyone has to carefully consider and prepare for. NO child deserves to be born for the purpose of benefiting the image of one of his/her parents! Paul's friends will probably not respect him anymore if he acts so irresponsibly, and Paul will have to pay child support for many years -- something he hasn't thought of!

**Andrea** had a lot of tough experiences in her life. She thinks about getting pregnant so she'll have someone who will love her. She also has difficulty in school and thinks that if she got pregnant, she could drop out and would not have to worry about her education anymore. What are Andrea's misconceptions? Are these good reasons for having a child?



Bringing a child into the world will not solve personal or emotional problems. In fact, it can cause more confusion and add to present difficulties. Education will have to be an ongoing concern for Andrea because it will be very difficult to support both herself and her child on minimum wage employment.

Lately, **Lisa** and her boyfriend have been fighting constantly. Recently, her boyfriend told her that he is thinking about breaking up with her. Now she is thinking about getting pregnant in order to save their relationship. What is Lisa's misconception? Is this a good reason for having a child?



Having a baby will not save any relationship. Having a child can bring additional stressors to the relationship and create new conflicts.

Having a child is an enormous responsibility which influences the rest of a parent's life. Every child in this world deserves love, security, safety, and a good start. To bring up a child without those qualities or for selfish/wrong reasons is irresponsible and will hurt everyone involved. Can you think of additional invalid reasons and misconceptions regarding parenthood?



*(5b) Are we aware of the potential risks of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS?*

## **SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES**

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's) are one of the risks you run when you have sex without the proper protection. There are a number of serious diseases that are spread by sexual contact - gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, chlamydia, etc. Many of them can be quickly and efficiently cured by a doctor or clinician but become quite dangerous if they are not treated.

AIDS, which is a fatal, sexually transmitted disease, is discussed in the next section.

Here are some facts you should know about STD's:

- In America, more than 12 million people get an STD every year.
- One in eight teens will contract an STD every year.
- STD's (including the HIV virus which causes AIDS) can be spread through all manners of sexual contact. In terms of sexually transmitted diseases, sexual contact is described as any kind of intimate contact involving these four areas of the body: penis, vagina, mouth, or anus.
- You can be infected with an STD more than once and can even have more than one STD at the same time. Treatment for an STD does not make you immune from getting it again.
- You cannot develop immunity to any of these diseases, and there is no vaccine to prevent them. In the case of herpes, the disease is **permanent** and there is no cure.
- STD's cannot be contracted by sitting on toilet seats or touching door knobs. Most STD's need to occupy warm, moist places to survive, which is why they affect the areas they do and will not last long outside of/away from the human body.
- Statistically, the prime candidates for STD infection are between 15 and 24 years old and sexually active (often with more than one partner).
- STD's can affect men, women, and children. A pregnant woman can infect her baby.
- STD's can result in infertility or sterility if left untreated. It is important to get treatment even if the symptoms of the STD go away. The STD will remain transmissible and may continue to affect the body until it has been treated. **NO** STD will go away by itself.
- Your risk of getting an STD increases with the number of sexual partners you have.
- A person who has been diagnosed with an STD must contact all his or her sexual partners so that they, too, can get the necessary medical treatment. Symptoms of STD's may not always be noticed.
- It is important that women have regular doctor's check-ups and pap smears in order to detect pre-cancerous conditions or possible STD's.
- In Massachusetts, minors may be examined and treated for an STD without parental consent.

## Prevention of STD's:

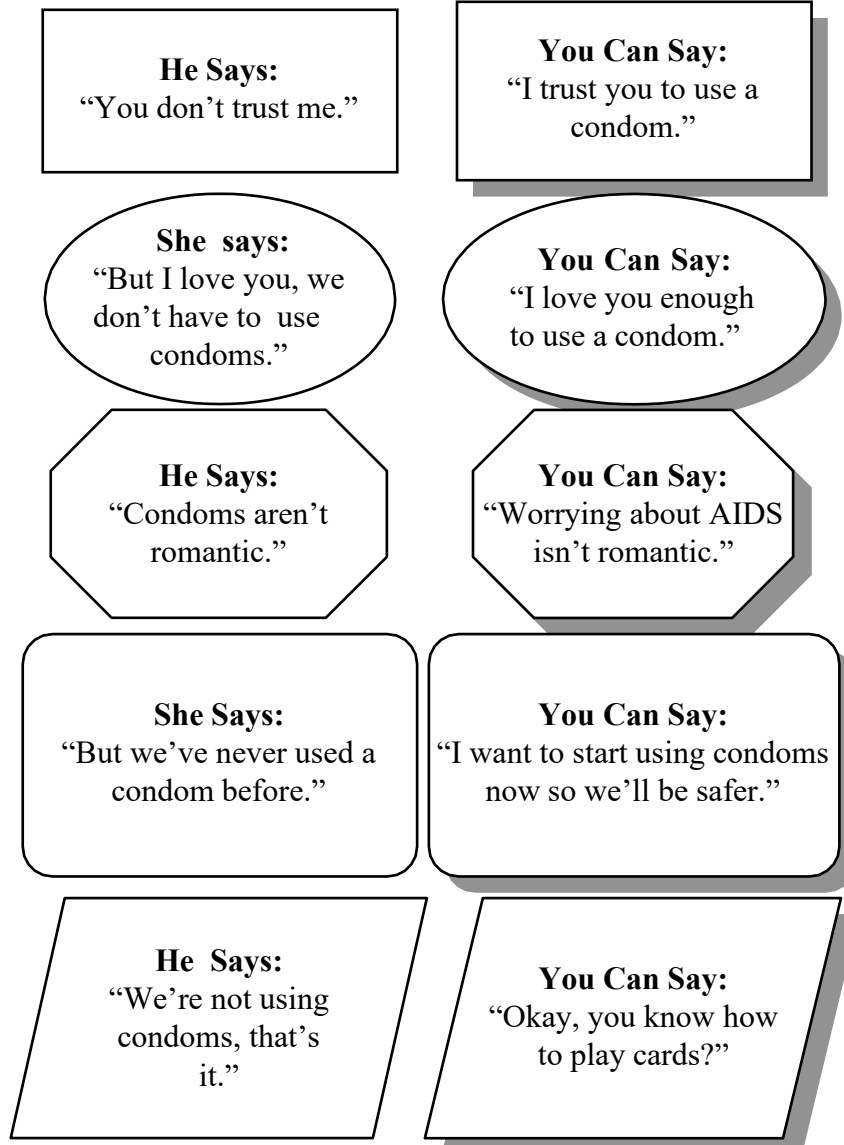
There is only one sure way to protect yourself against the risk of infection, and that is to have no sexual contact. Abstinence is the surest, safest, and most effective method of prevention. However, if you do have sex, you must protect yourself. Here are some recommendations. These are not guaranteed methods of preventing STD's, but if you use them in combination, you will lower your risk of infection.

- A male should use a latex condom (a “rubber” or “skin”) during sexual intercourse, oral sex, and other forms of foreplay. If you are allergic to latex, you can use a polyurethane ( a type of plastic ) condom.
- A female can use the vaginally – inserted female condom. OR insist that her male partner use a latex condom. The male and female condoms should **not** be used at the same time – they pull each other off.
- A dental dam (a square piece of latex used by dentists), or plastic food wrap should be used when performing oral sex on a female. Do not reuse these items.
- A male should urinate and wash his genitals with hot, soapy water immediately before and following sex.

**Protect yourself!** This is not the time to be shy. Young adults (under age 25) are quickly becoming the fastest growing at-risk age group, currently accounting for up to 50% of all new cases of HIV infection in the U.S. Talk beforehand with your partner about the type(s) of protection you will both use. If he or she refuses to use protection, then you refuse to have sex. Do not allow yourself to be used. The risk is too great.

## What can someone say when his/her partner is unwilling to use condoms?

Here are some examples of possible responses:



From “Condom Facts,” Harvard Community Health Plan Foundation, 1994.

The following chart presents some basic information about the more common sexually transmitted diseases. If you discover any of the listed symptoms, call your doctor or clinic.

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

<b>Disease:</b>	<b>How it is Spread</b>	<b>Symptoms in a Woman</b>	<b>Symptoms in a Man</b>	<b>Risks If Not Treated</b>
<b>Gonorrhea</b>  <i>Cause:</i> bacteria	Sexual contact.	Pus-like vaginal discharge, vaginal soreness, low abdominal pain, painful urination	Pus-like discharge from the penis.	Sterility, scar tissue. Women: Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (inflammation of the tubes), blindness in newborn.
<b>Syphilis</b>  <i>Cause:</i> spirochete	Sexual contact congenital.	Rashes appearing almost anywhere on the body, including palms of hands and soles of feet. Chancre (lesion) on or in vagina, anus, or mouth. Loss of facial or scalp hair in patches.	Rashes or hair loss in the same pattern as in women. Chancre on or around penis.	Brain damage, paralysis, heart disease. A pregnant woman can pass syphilis to her baby causing a variety of birth defects including damage to skin, bone, eyes, liver, and teeth.
<b>Herpes Simplex II</b>  <i>Cause:</i> virus	Direct contact with virus in blisters or with virus being shed and no blisters.	Painful, fluid-filled blister (or cluster of blisters) on, in, or around vagina. Often accompanied by swollen glands in groin area. Painful urination and fever.	Same as in women, only on or around penis.	Genital herpes is caused by a virus and cannot be cured. Eventually, the blisters and infection will get better. The infection will return. Flare-ups may be caused by stress and fatigue. Genital herpes may be passed from an infected pregnant woman to her newborn during birth, causing infant death or neurological damage.
<b>Non-specific urethritis (called NGU, NSU)</b>  <i>Causes:</i> chlamydia, bacteria & others	Sexual contact.	Symptoms similar to those caused by gonorrhea.	Occasionally, heavy pus-like discharge. More frequently a mild watery discharge.	Women: Pelvic Inflammatory Disease. Male: Chronic urinary tract infection. Possible sterility in men and women.
<b>Trichomonas Vaginalis (called Trich)</b>  <i>Causes:</i> protozoan	Sexual contact.	Heavy, frothy, often yellow, foul-smelling vaginal itching, often severe and continuous.	Most often none, occasionally mild discharge from the penis.	Skin irritation and gland infection. Cervical tissue may be damaged.
<b>Monilial Vaginitis (yeast infection)</b>  <i>Cause:</i> fungal	Sexual contacts and non-sexual conditions, i.e. antibiotics, diabetes, pregnancy, birth control pills.	Women: cheesy discharge, itching, scratching.	Usually no symptoms.	Secondary bacterial infection from scratching. Infection of newborn in untreated mother.
<b>Venereal Warts</b>  <i>Cause:</i> virus	Sexual contact, hands to sex organs.	Wart-like growths. Sometimes with itching and irritation.	Same.	The openings of the vagina, penis, and rectum may be blocked.
<b>Pediculosis Pubic (crabs)</b>  <i>Cause:</i> louse	Sexual contact, occasionally from bedding and clothing.	Intense itching. Crabs and eggs attached to pubic hair.	Same.	Skin infection from scratching.

## Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)

PID is the most common serious infection involving a woman's reproductive system (the fallopian tubes and/or ovaries). Some sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) cause the development of PID. If it is not treated quickly, PID can damage the reproductive system, limiting or ending a woman's ability to have children.

Any of the following can be symptoms of PID (the first three are especially important):

- Abdominal pain or tenderness
- Increased menstrual cramps
- Pain in lower back
- Change in menstrual cycle (period)
- Bleeding much greater than usual during menstruation
- Vaginal bleeding at times other than menstruation.
- Nausea, loss of appetite, and vomiting
- Vaginal discharge
- Burning during urination
- Chills
- Fever

If you think you might have PID, call your doctor or go to a clinic or hospital emergency room. Don't wait! Tell the doctor what your symptoms are and what you think you might have.

## Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B, inflammation of the liver, is highly contagious virus, more prevalent than HIV, that is transmitted through exchange of bodily fluids, (including saliva), sexual activity, sharing dirty needles, razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers, and unclean tools for body piercing or tattooing. It can cause serious liver damage, and potentially death, if not treated properly.

According to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), there are an estimated 1.25 million Americans currently chronically infected with the disease, resulting in 6,000 deaths per year from liver disease, including liver cancer.

As of October 1999, the CDC reports that **the three major groups at risk for contracting Hepatitis B are:**

Sexually active heterosexuals.  
Men who have sex with men.  
Injection drug users.

# Hepatitis B

Common symptoms are:

- Rashes.
- Jaundice
- Fatigue.
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Bodily and/or abdominal aches
- Loss of appetite.

Less common symptoms include:

- Dark urine
- Light-colored stools.
- Jaundice.
- Generalized itching.
- Altered mental state, stupor, or coma.

However, a large number of people are infected with the disease have no symptoms at all, and are unaware of their ability to transmit it to others.

## *Prevention*

This disease is prevented in two ways:

Hepatitis B is prevented through consistent use of latex condoms and dental dams when engaging in sexual activity, and by refusing to share needles. In addition, choose not to share razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers, or unclean tools for tattooing and body piercing. Even kissing can place you at risk of contracting this highly contagious disease.

There is a vaccine for Hepatitis B. It is given in a series of three shots. It is effective in both preventing you from contracting the disease, as well as helping you manage with the disease should you be living with it. If you are among one or more of the high-risk groups listed above, plan to take action immediately to protect yourself from this disease.

## **Treatment**

After exposure to the virus, the vaccine, along with shots of immune globulin, work to strengthen your immune system and fight off the disease. Effective treatment also includes a lot of rest, a good diet, no use of alcohol or other drugs, and appropriate medical supervision of your progress.

With the right interventions, the disease may become suppressed enough that you can resume full functioning. However, Hepatitis B is considered a chronic disease that can recur. If left unmanaged or untreated, serious liver damage could result in the need for a liver transplant, or even death.

## **Resources -- Sexually Transmitted Diseases**

If you have questions or need help, call or visit any one of the following information centers or clinics. Assistance will be given free and anonymously. (You won't have to give your name.)

National STD Hotline  
1-800-227-8922

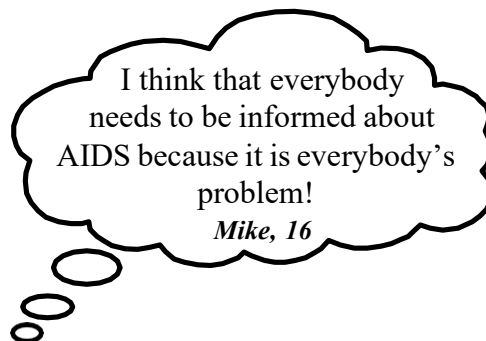


# HIV/AIDS

Talking about HIV/AIDS might be scary for many of you. Nobody really wants to think about being sick or dying. However, it is important to talk and to learn about HIV and AIDS in order to stay healthy.

**Fact:** More than 80 percent of all AIDS cases occur among individuals under 29 years of age.

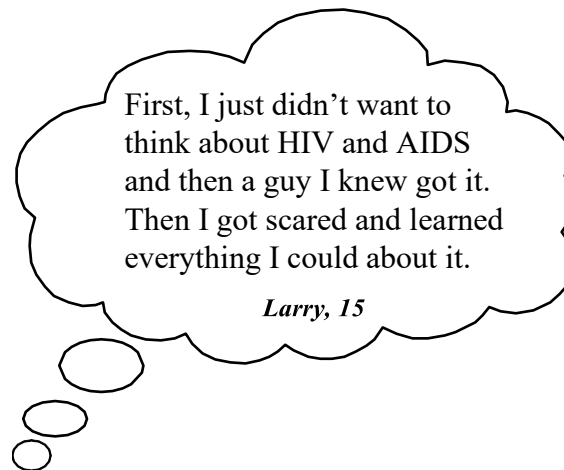
Since the incubation period between infection with HIV and the onset of AIDS averages ten years, many 20-29 with AIDS were probably infected as teenagers. Knowing about the virus, the disease, and the ways it is spread will help you prevent infection. If you utilize your knowledge about HIV/AIDS in addition to the personal skills (decision making and communication skills) we talked about earlier, you will be able to protect yourself. So, let's take a closer look at the basic facts of HIV/AIDS.



## Basic Facts About HIV/AIDS

- AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is caused by a virus called HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus).
- This virus weakens the body's immune system, destroying its ability to fight infection.
- The virus allows other infections (such as pneumonia or cancer) to attack the body.
- AIDS damages the brain and the nervous system.
- The HIV/AIDS virus is present in blood, semen, and vaginal secretions of anyone who has been infected.
- You cannot tell by anyone's appearance whether or not they have HIV or AIDS. Many people who are infected look and feel fine.
- The disease incubation period (the span of time before it becomes an active disease) can take from several months to more than ten years.

- HIV/AIDS is not a gay disease. It affects people regardless of color, age, and sexual orientation. AIDS is a serious problem for all people of all ethnic groups. The disease has affected more than 10,000,000 people worldwide, most of them heterosexual.
- At this time, AIDS is a fatal disease. There is no known cure or vaccine. Many new drugs called protease inhibitors (a mixture of anti-virus drugs, a.k.a. the “drug cocktail”) do an excellent job of suppressing the virus and slowing its ability to break down the immune system. However, these drugs do not work for all people. A sizeable number of people have found the sheer number of pills, plus the mandatory schedule for taking them, to be an extremely difficult regimen to follow. There are also a number of people who have found the drug cocktail to have little to no effect on the disease’s impact to their body. **Keep In Mind:** Even if you can tolerate the mixture of drugs and suppress the presence of HIV in the blood, you can still pass the virus on to your sexual partner(s). As of this writing, a carrier of the virus cannot be cured of the disease.



## Stages of HIV/AIDS Infection

1. HIV infected. The virus is present in the bloodstream but does not show up in tests for up to six months. It **CAN BE TRANSMITTED** at this stage!
2. HIV positive or Seropositive: The antibodies to the virus are detectable by a blood test.
3. Symptomatic (formerly called AIDS Related Complex or ARC): The immune system weakens, allowing opportunistic diseases or infections to take hold.
4. Full-blown AIDS: A total or near-total immune system shutdown occurs which leaves the person susceptible to any disease or infection.

Although the span of time between HIV infection and full-blown AIDS has increased dramatically in the last decade for gay men, this period is significantly shorter for populations affected later in the epidemic (IV-drug users, women, and people of color).

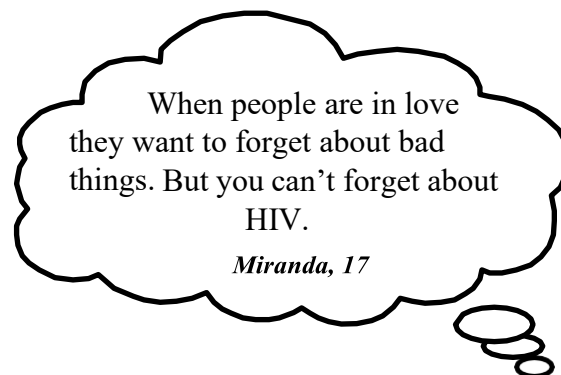
## What Are The Symptoms?

Many of the early symptoms of AIDS or AIDS-related illnesses are very similar to the symptoms of common minor illnesses, like a cold or the flu. AIDS and AIDS-related illnesses, however, are much more severe and last much longer.

Symptoms include:

- Feeling very tired every day for at least one month
- Losing your appetite and losing weight for no reason
- Swollen glands (lymph nodes) in your neck, under your ears, in your armpits, and in the groin area which last for at least one month.
- Fevers above 100 degrees, night sweats, and chills which last from several days to several weeks
- Diarrhea that lasts for more than two weeks
- Thrush, a thick white coating in the mouth (not just the tongue) which lasts for weeks.
- A dry cough (not from smoking) that lasts for more than two weeks and shortness of breath.
- Weakness in your arm and leg on one side of your body; coordination problems
- Constant headache, changes in memory or vision
- Easy bruising, purple bumps or blotches on the skin, or unexplained bleeding from any part of the body.

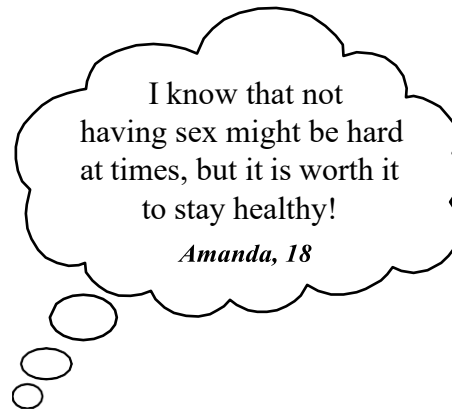
If you think you have any of these symptoms, call your doctor or clinic for an appointment.



## How Is HIV/AIDS Spread?

There are three ways the virus is spread:

- Having sex of any kind with a person who is infected with the virus. Any exchange of blood, semen, or vaginal discharge can spread the virus. Using condoms and dental dams significantly decrease the chance of infection, but it cannot entirely eliminate the risk of spreading the disease.
- Sharing needles, syringes, cookers, or cotton balls for drug injections.
- HIV-infected mothers can pass the virus on to their babies during pregnancy or birth. The risk to the unborn child can be significantly decreased if the pregnant mother uses AZT, an anti-virus drug.



## How To Protect Yourself Against HIV/AIDS

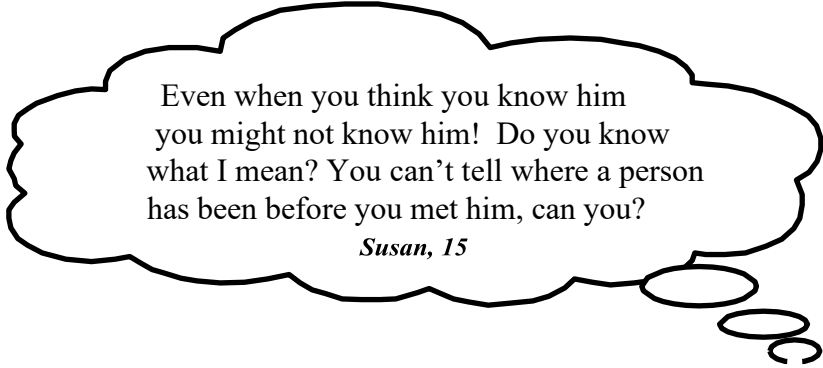
Use your communication skills, decision making skills, and values to say **NO** to sex and drugs. Abstinence is the only 100% effective way to protect yourself from getting HIV/AIDS.

If you should have sex, play it safe (or **safer** -- there is no such thing as safe sex). You should discuss the danger of AIDS with your partner. Talk about what you are feeling; get to know one another. You'll feel less nervous and more in control. Talk about what protection you'll use. Remember the responsibility is not hers or his; it's yours!

- Use latex or polyurethane condoms, for men or women. They will greatly lower your risk of becoming infected with the AIDS virus. (Sheepskin condoms won't work. They cannot prevent the virus from spreading).
- Male and female condoms must not be used at the same time; they pull each other off.

Drinking alcohol and using drugs can make you do things you'll be sorry about later. They also weaken your immune system making you more vulnerable to HIV infection.

Don't share any needles or syringes. Any infected blood, even a drop left in the needle, could enter your bloodstream and, as a result, infect you with the virus.

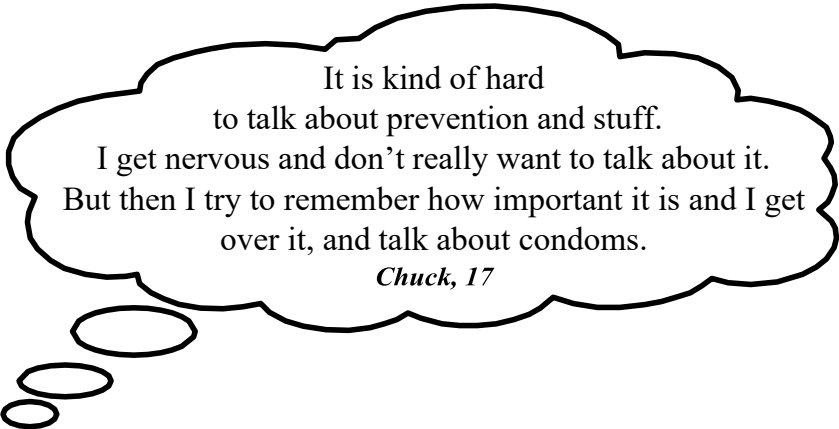


Even when you think you know him  
you might not know him! Do you know  
what I mean? You can't tell where a person  
has been before you met him, can you?

*Susan, 15*

## **Gays & Lesbian Youth and HIV/AIDS**

For sexual-minority youth, HIV infection is compounded by additional issues not faced by their heterosexual peers. The need to hide their orientation, the lack of positive adult role models, the low self-esteem that tends to be more severe for sexual minority youth than for their heterosexual peers, and the belief that disclosure of their orientation could lead to abandonment, abuse, and/or eviction from their homes, schools, and/or churches can all lead to sexual acting-out as a way of feeling good, needed, or loved.



It is kind of hard  
to talk about prevention and stuff.  
I get nervous and don't really want to talk about it.  
But then I try to remember how important it is and I get  
over it, and talk about condoms.

*Chuck, 17*

## **HIV Testing**

The way to determine whether or not someone is HIV positive or negative is through a blood test. The blood test can be administered at clinics, through doctors' offices, or at anonymous test sites. The results usually take 2 weeks. The test determines whether or not HIV antibodies are found in the blood tested. If there are antibodies present, the test is positive and the virus can be spread. However, because it can take the body up to six months (and in very rare exceptions, up to a year) to make the antibodies, the test is only accurate if administered 6 months after a possible exposure to HIV. For more information, refer to the list of Resources at the end of the section.

## True or False

Take a few minutes to answer “True” or “False” to the following statements, using what you know and what you have learned about HIV and AIDS.

1. \_\_\_ Most people who are infected with the AIDS virus look and feel fine.
2. \_\_\_ You can get AIDS from even one sexual experience.
3. \_\_\_ If you donate blood, you might get AIDS.
4. \_\_\_ If you have sex using contraceptive foam, jelly, or cream **without** a condom (rubber), you will **not** be protected against the AIDS virus.
5. \_\_\_ Babies can be born with the virus if the mother is infected.
6. \_\_\_ The only way to know if a person is infected with HIV is through a blood test.
7. \_\_\_ You’ll be safe from the AIDS virus if you only have sex with someone of the opposite sex.
8. \_\_\_ Working or going to school with someone who has AIDS is dangerous because you might catch the virus from him/her.
9. \_\_\_ A negative result on an HIV antibody test proves that you do not have the virus and you never will.
10. \_\_\_ You cannot get infected with the AIDS virus through swimming pools, showers, or bathrooms shared with people who have AIDS.
11. \_\_\_ Using the male and female condom at the same time increases the effectiveness of both.

**Answers:**

1. **True.** Many people infected with the HIV virus do not look or feel sick. The symptoms of AIDS do not appear immediately after a person becomes infected. In fact, the incubation period may range from a few months to over ten years. So the symptoms may not show up for quite a while. You can't tell by looking at someone whether or not he/she has been infected with the HIV virus.
2. **True.** If you have sex with an infected person even once without protection, you can get AIDS.
3. **False.** You cannot get AIDS by donating blood. New, sterilized equipment is used for every donor each time he or she gives blood.
4. **True.** Using a spermicide (foam, jelly, or cream) without a condom will not prevent infection. Only latex or polyurethane male and female condoms (not sheepskin) should be used to prevent infection. It was previously thought that contraceptive foams, jellies, and creams provided additional benefits in killing the virus. However, recent studies have not supported this belief. **The most current and thorough bodies of research have shown that the active ingredient in these products, nonoxynol-9, either has no effect on the virus or actually increases the risk of transmission.**
5. **True.** The virus can be passed from the mother to her baby during pregnancy or at birth.
6. **True.** The HIV antibody blood test is the only way to determine if a person is carrying the virus.
7. **False.** You can become infected by having sex with anyone (male or female) who carries the HIV virus **and** by sharing drug needles.
8. **False.** There is no evidence that the virus is spread through casual, social contact. Therefore, you can ride the bus with, shake hands with, talk to, eat with, and work with a person who has HIV or AIDS and not be at any risk.
9. **False.** No medical test can prove that you will **never** get HIV/AIDS, since it is mostly up to your behavior, awareness, and precaution. Also, the antibody test will not always detect the virus for up to six months following infection.
10. **True.** The HIV/AIDS virus must live within human cells and cannot survive long outside the body. There is no evidence that HIV is carried in tears or saliva, or that it could "contaminate" air, surfaces, or water.
11. **False.** The male and female condoms should not be used at the same time- they pull each other off.

## **Exercises**

Utilize what you have learned in the previous sections to complete the following exercise.

**Bethany** and her friends are talking about sex and HIV. Her friends tell Bethany that they will postpone having sex because they are really scared of HIV/AIDS. Bethany tells them that she is not afraid of AIDS because it won't happen to her. What do you think?

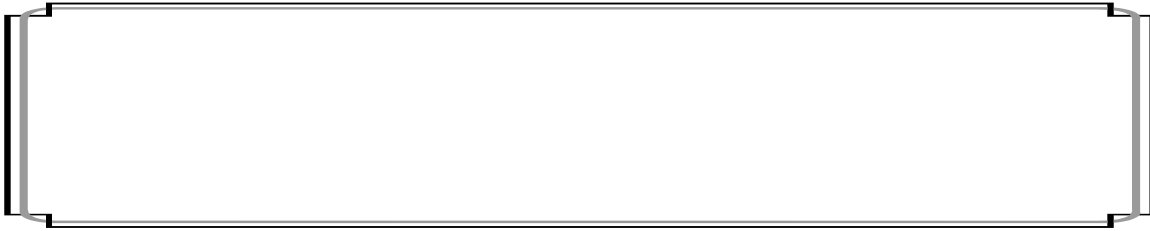
**Ed and Marc** are talking about HIV. Ed states that he would always use a latex condom if he decides to have sex. Marc says that Ed is silly because only gay men get AIDS. What do you think?

**Pedro and Sabrina** are discussing possible prevention methods, in case they decide to have sex. Sabrina takes birth control pills and Pedro believes that they won't need any other protection. Sabrina tells him that she is afraid of HIV and would like him to use a condom. Pedro tells her that he looks and feels just fine, so how could he possibly have HIV? What do you think?

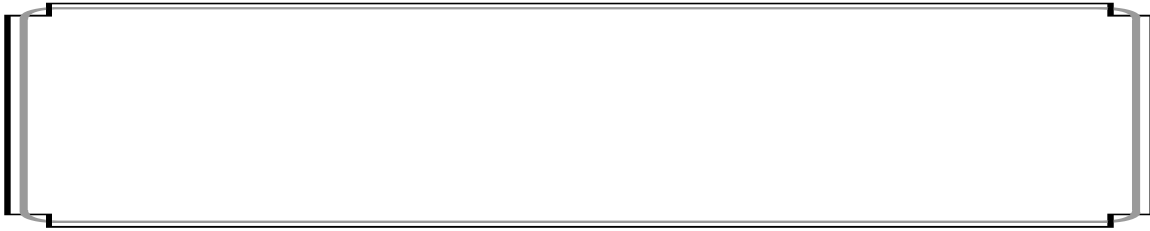
Imagine what your life would be like if you contracted HIV. How would your life change?



What impact would the HIV virus have on your future goals?



How would you tell your family and friends?



HIV and AIDS are a serious business. Everybody is at risk and everybody has to take steps to protect him/herself. For further information, refer to the resource listing on the next page.

## Resources

For further information about HIV and AIDS, contact the following agencies:

AIDS Action Committee Hotline

800-235-2331 Statewide

The Action Committee or the hotline can give information on where to find support groups.

Latino AIDS Hotline

800-637-3776

National AIDS Hotline TTY/TDD Services

800-243-7889

General information line, with information on test sites, care facilities, and support groups in your area.

Positive Directions

800-794-7337

Peer support line. Referrals for support groups.

Youth Only AIDS Line

800-788-1234

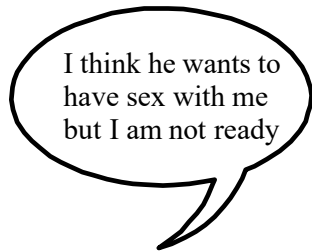
*(6) Have I communicated clearly my feelings and concerns about sex and the risks involved?*

Although it might not always be easy, communication about any kind of sexual activity is vital! If you do not communicate, you might get hurt, encounter misunderstandings and conflicts, and primarily, you will not be prepared. Communication is particularly important to determine boundaries and limits, as well as to discuss the possible risks and methods of birth control and STD protection.

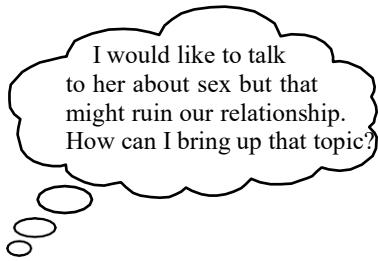


## ACTIVITY

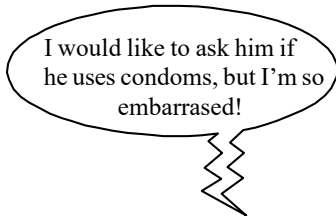
Utilize your communication skills to complete the following exercise. What would you say in the following situations?



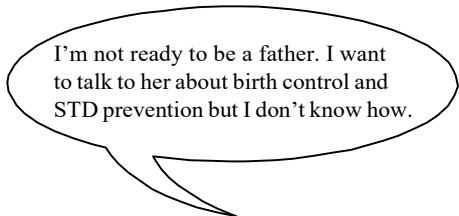
**I Would Say:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



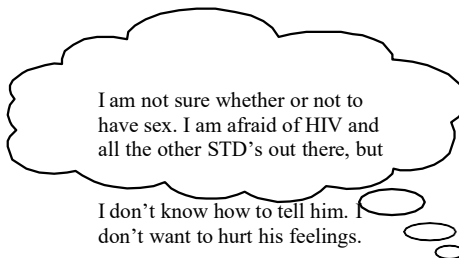
**I Would Say:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**I Would Say:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**I Would Say:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**I Would Say:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I have genital warts, an STD.  
 But I am not sure how to tell her.  
 If she finds out, she may not  
 want to go out with me anymore.

**I Would Say:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Kissing and touching feels  
 good, but I don't want to  
 go all the way

**I Would Say:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*(7) Am I knowledgeable about the various methods for preventing STD infection and pregnancy?*

To be able to reduce the risk of pregnancy as well as sexually transmitted diseases, you will have to be well informed about all options available to you. Abstinence is the **only** method of birth control and STD prevention which is 100% effective and free of side effects. However, several products are available which greatly reduce the risk of STD's and pregnancy. Everyone who is sexually active needs to protect him/herself!

Do not assume you can't get an STD or become pregnant because:

- Your boyfriend tells you he will be "careful".
- Your girlfriend tells you it is the time of the month when it is "safe".
- Your boyfriend tells you he has a low sperm count.
- You had sex before and nothing happened.
- Your boyfriend tells you he can't have children.
- Your girlfriend tells you she is sterile.
- Your boy/girlfriend tells you that you are the "first one".
- You are too young.

None of these excuses are valid. "Excuses" are not appropriate precautions against sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancy.

**NOTE:**

If you should decide to engage in a sexual relationship at any time in your life, you need to be informed about the birth control and STD prevention options available to you. Talking about and planning for birth control & STD prevention options is **both** partners responsibility. Look at the following chart and evaluate the various options listed.

## BIRTH CONTROL/STD PREVENTION

METHOD	PROS	CONS	COST	EFFECTIVENESS	STD PROTECTION?
<b>Continuous Abstinence</b>	Only 100% safe & effective method of birth control & STD protection. No side effects.	May be affected by peer pressure	NONE	100%	<b>YES</b>
<b>Condoms</b>					
Unlubricated	Easy availability. Effective STD prevention.	Might tear. Ineffective if used incorrectly or with oil-based lubricant (Vaseline).	25¢/ea.	90%	<b>YES</b>
Lubricated	Easy availability. Effective STD prevention.	Might not stay in place. Ineffective if used incorrectly or with oil-based lubricant.	50¢/ea.	90%	<b>YES</b>
Sheepskin	Easy availability.	No STD prevention.	\$2.50/ea.	90%	<b>NO</b>
<b>Female Condom</b>	STD protection. Easy availability. Effective in STD prevention. Gives females more control.	Possible difficulty with insertion. Might not stay in place.	\$2.50/ea.	72 -97%	<b>YES</b>
<b>Spermicidal Cream, Jelly, Foam</b>	Easy availability.	Possible irritations. Ineffective STD prevention. Should be used with a condom.	\$8.00	72-97%	<b>NO</b>

<b>METHOD</b>	<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>EFFECTIVENESS</b>	<b>STD PROTECTION?</b>
<b>Norplant</b>	6 Capsules inserted in a female's arm that protects against pregnancy for 5 years..	Does not protect against STDs. Medical procedure is needed for insertion. Possible hormonal side effects include headaches, depression, weight gain.	\$500-\$600 Usually covered by Medicaid	99.9%	<b>NO</b>
<b>Depo Provera</b>	Hormone shot which protects against pregnancy for 12 weeks.	No STD prevention. Possible side effects include weight gain, headaches, and depression.	\$30 -75 per shot Usually covered by Medicaid	99.7%	<b>NO</b>
<b>Pill</b>	Can help protect against certain cancers, pelvic inflammatory disease and ovarian cysts. Can help menstrual cramps & acne.	No STD prevention. Must be taken daily to be effective. Rare health risks like heart attack & stroke.	\$8-25 per month Usually covered by Medicaid	99.9%	<b>NO</b>
<b>Diaphragm or Cervical Cap</b>	Can last for several years.	No STD prevention. Needs to be fitted to a women's body. Needs to be used with spermicidal jelly or cream to be an effective form of birth control. Might cause irritations. Might be difficult to use.	\$20 plus \$8 for spermicidal jelly or cream.	82 - 94%	<b>NO</b>

<b>METHOD</b>	<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>EFFECTIVENESS</b>	<b>STD PROTECTION?</b>
<b>IUD (Intrauterine Device)</b>	Can protect against pregnancy for up to eight years after physician inserts device in the uterus.	No STD prevention. Chance of tubal infection and puncture of uterus wall. Might increase cramps. Medical procedure needed for insertion and removal.	\$150.00	98%	<b>NO</b>
<b>Sterilization (Women)</b>	Operation which blocks the tubes for permanent pregnancy prevention.	No STD prevention. Permanent procedure which should not be considered by anyone who might want to have children in the future. Chance of medical complications.	\$1,200 Usually at least partially covered by Medicaid or insurance.	99.7%	<b>NO</b>
<b>Vasectomy (Men)</b>	Operation which blocks the tubes which carry sperm for permanent pregnancy prevention.	No STD prevention. Permanent procedure which should not be considered by anyone who might want to have children in the future. Chance of medical complications.	\$300 Usually at least partially covered by Medicaid or insurance	99.7%	<b>NO</b>

Source of information: Planned Parenthood, 1994, "Your Contraceptive Choices."

## METHODS THAT DO **NOT** WORK

### **Occasional Abstinence**

If abstinence is not practiced continually, it loses its effectiveness in preventing pregnancy and STD's. Be realistic about yourself and your behaviors. If you think you are not able to abstain 100% for any reason, you should consider other birth control/STD prevention methods..

### **Withdrawal**

Withdrawal is not an effective method of birth control or STD protection.

### **Douching**

Douching immediately after sex is not a method which prevents STD's or pregnancy.

### **Natural Family Planning**

This highly complex system of monthly calendars and body temperature has a very high likelihood of failure and does not protect against STD's.

### **Chances, Wishing, and Hope**

Relying on chances, wishes, or hopes will not prevent pregnancy or STD's. If you are sexually active and use no means of birth control or STD prevention, you must be prepared for pregnancy and disease