

# Learning to trust makes for safer sex



By Jen Boyd

Scenario: Two women are sitting around discussing sex. The first mentions that she and her significant other had sexual intercourse for the first time. The second woman asks if they used a condom. The first woman hems and haws and finally admits that "we probably should have, but the topic didn't come up and I didn't want to make an issue about it." How many situations are there where two people engage in sexual activity, knowing next to nothing about the other person's history in relation to sex and drug use? A lot more than any of us care to admit.

Communication is hard. Posters and slogans say "just say no" and "tell him to go get a condom," but it simply isn't that easy. The prevention message we should be trying to get across is a lot more complex: we should spend several months (Crooks and Baur in *Human Sexuality* suggest at least six) getting to know prospective sexual partners before engaging in high-risk sexual behaviors.

One way to bring up the subject is to talk to your partner or the person you are dating about your concerns, not only concerns about HIV and AIDS, but also sexually transmitted diseases.

You may be surprised; our society places such an emphasis on sex that people feel as though they are expected to engage in sexual activities, when in reality, many people are not ready to do so. When you start sharing your feelings and aspects of your sexual history, encourage your partner to do the same.

Trust is a big factor. If you're taking the time to get to know a person, you always have time to back away. And if your gut instinct is telling you "NO," listen to it.

Even if the person does have a sexual history that worries you, tests for most sexually transmitted diseases show up quickly. However, the test for the antibodies that indicate HIV infection will usually show results between three and six months. This means that if either one of you has engaged in any high risk activities, getting the test right away won't solve the problem because it will be

too soon to tell. The test is fairly quick and simple; there is pre- and post-testing with an HIV counselor, and a small amount of blood is taken by the lab to be tested. This test is available at the Student Health Center for a small fee if you are a student, or also at some area health departments such as Whitebird Clinic (free) and Lane County Health (small fee).

If partners get tested after the three to six months, and they both test negative, they are going to feel a lot better about sexual relations and the relationship as a whole.

A test for the HIV antibodies does not test for other sexually transmitted diseases. If there is any doubt in either partners' mind about other possible STDs, get tested.

Some tips about talking about safer sex from *Human Sexuality* include:

1. Start by discussing a safer subject; for exam-

ple, why it is hard for people to talk about sex and HIV, etc. As you discuss experiences that affected you in dealing with sexual issues, it may make you both more comfortable going further in depth on those topics and other, more personal topics.

2. Have a booklet or pamphlet about your concern (HIV, condoms, etc.) that you can ask your partner to read and then discuss with you. You can also put it somewhere that you are sure your partner will see it (on their pillow, in the refrigerator, taped to a mirror).



3. Ask for a favor. People are sometimes more willing to discuss a topic if it is phrased as a request, such as, "Could you do something for me? I'd really like to talk about this with you because I'm concerned and it's impor-

tant to me."

Last, but not least, if you do decide to have sex without talking about sexual histories and risks, use a latex condom and if possible, a spermicide with nonoxynol-9, which helps disable HIV. A condom and nonoxynol-9 together are more effective than a condom alone.

Be assertive. Sometimes you don't ask, you tell. "For your safety and mine, we need to use a condom." Remember, this could be your life you are trusting this person with. If you got in a car with someone whose driving habits and risks you didn't know, would you wear a seatbelt...or maybe not even get in the car at all? Trust your instincts.

If you would like more information about places in town to get tested, please call the Health Education office in the Student Health Center at 346-4456, or just drop by. We're next to the pharmacy.

## Taking precautions necessary to avoid AIDS



By Michelle Franceschi

Experts from the Center for Disease Control predicts that AIDS will be the number one killer on college campuses across the United States. This means the U of O is not excluded from these statistics, and we, as students, must take the responsibility for learning about this disease to prevent the rampant spreading of AIDS.

Think about how many students are there on this campus who not only come from Oregon but also from California, Washington, Idaho, the East Coast, Japan, China, Norway, Germany and all over the globe.

Studying isn't the only pastime students practice. Sexual activity is very common among many college students regardless of where they are from, and unprotected sex is the

way the HIV virus spreads.

If you're sexually active with someone while you're at the U of O, and you don't use anything to protect yourself, you are at risk of infection. Think about how many people you know who may be sexually active with someone here at the U of O.

When vacation comes, those same people go back to their hometowns and may engage in unprotected sex with a past partner or even with a new partner.

After vacation these same people come back to school and continue the relationship again with their partners at the U of O. If during any of their sexual contacts back home, one of their partners had the HIV virus, these people have now brought this virus back with them.

Consequently, they run the risk of infecting many more people at the U of O if they engage in unprotected sex.

Presently there is no cure for AIDS, and there is no vaccine to protect yourself from the HIV virus. The safest protection against the virus is to abstain from sex and refuse to share needles if you do drugs.

If you do have sex, make sure neither you nor your partner are infected with the virus. Use a latex condom and spermicide and don't be afraid to talk to your partner about using protection.

If your partner doesn't believe in using condoms, then ask yourself whether you really want to be with someone who places such a low value on life.

To learn more about the disease call the toll-free NATIONAL AIDS HOTLINE 1-800-342-AIDS. Your identity remains anonymous, and the person will answer any questions you ask and will give you current information about the virus.

## Conflict management skills create new possibilities for confrontations



By Andrew Taylor

Are your roommates making your life a living hell? Do you have problems discussing things with your partner?

If you are having difficulty with these things, you are not alone. Conflicts and confrontations can be problematic and often difficult to discern for young adults.

Alan Filley, in his book *Interpersonal Conflict Resolution* says, "Conflict is a process which is neither good nor bad but which has elements and outcomes which may be judged favorably, or unfavorably by those participating in or evaluating it."

Conflicts may arise for many specific reasons, which stem from the dif-

ferent perceptions each person holds. As many people know, perception is not reality.

The main reason for the start and escalation of conflicts is the very perception of conflict. "This perception of conflict can be either an accurate or inaccurate perception," Filley explains.

The problem is that the perception is usually wrong. More than likely, one



person may be unsure where the other person stands or it may be unclear to him/her what the other person's point

is. Sometimes, however, the point may be all too clear. Often in our lives we come into different types of confrontations.

There are three distinct types of confrontations: win-win, win-lose and lose-

lose. The win-win situation is an agreement on territory or ideas which are neutral, such as deciding what time to meet. Win-Lose confrontations are characterized by one person winning and the other losing without there being any middle ground, i.e., a race between two people. Lose-lose battles are confrontations in which neither side can fully win.

The challenging part of a conflict is to state the purpose of the discussion in a clear and concise manner which is not offensive to the other party. When there is a breakdown in communication and unwillingness between the parties to resolve these differences, mediation may become a viable alternative.

There are places here on the University of Oregon campus which specialize in helping to resolve conflicts for students. Among these are ASUO mediation, Student Legal Services, Counseling at the Student Health Clinic, and the Housing Department for those who live in the Residence Halls and in Family Housing

## ABSTINENCE

untary or an involuntary decision. Though to some people sex is a must in relationships and routine, an evident part of everyday life, it is not for all people.

Lack of opportunity for intercourse, periods of fertility awareness, sexual dysfunction, aging, illness or injury can all force abstinence upon people because there are no alternatives, or because those alternatives are distasteful. Many healthy human beings are truly sexually free and adore abstinence. It's a lifestyle that Danny Weiss says, "works for me."

Abstinence involves making a conscious decision NOT to engage in sexual intercourse. For some people this may include sex without intercourse, mutual masturbation and oral sex. Abstinence requires balancing your cultural, personal and moral values and often demands much dedication and will power.

To maintain a healthy relationship, abstinence must be practiced from time to time by everyone. Part-

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ners in a sexual relationship cannot consistently be engaging in sex. If nothing more than physical activity holds the relationship together, it is bound to be doomed.

Choosing to refrain from sexual intercourse can bring renewed self-esteem, time for yourself, carefree pleasure and a loving state of existence. Having NO sex can provide opportunity to discover new aspects about yourself. Choosing abstinence will enable you to tidy life up so that you can do the things you really want to do and pour your whole energy into them.

Unfortunately, abstinence can possibly bring loneliness or a feeling of being an outsider.

Counseling services are available at the University's Student Health Center, the Counseling Center and other local counseling offices.

Even though it is not the easiest choice to make, choosing abstinence is the most responsible decision you'll ever make.



## Information and resources for well-being

- Conflict Resolution**
- University Counseling Center  
13th Street at Agate 346-3227
  - UO Crisis Center hotline  
346-4488 24 hours a day
  - Sexual Assault Support Services  
484-9795
  - U of O Mediation Program  
EMU Room 318  
346-4240
  - Office of Student Advocacy  
EMU 318 346-3722
  - Women's Resource and Referral Center  
Suite 3 EMU 346-3327

- Academic Concerns**
- Office of Academic Advising and Student Services  
164 Oregon Hall 346-3211
  - Career Planning and Placement  
244 Hendricks Hall 346-3235
  - Center for Academic Learning Services  
68 PLC 346-3226
- Harassment and Discrimination Concerns**
- Office of Affirmative Action  
474 Oregon Hall 346-3123
  - Office of Public Safety  
Straub Hall 346-5444
  - Student Conduct Coordinator

- 364 Oregon Hall 346-1141  
Coordinator Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Concerns 346-1142  
Lesbian Gay Bisexual Alliance 346-3360
- Financial Concerns**
- Office of Student Financial Aid  
260 Oregon Hall 346-3221
  - Student Employment Office  
12 Hendricks Hall 346-3214
- Physical Admitts**
- Student Health Center  
13th Street at Agate 346-4441
- Health Information**
- Health Education Program  
346-4456

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