

# Teenage Sexuality

By Donita Lincoln

In an attempt to understand teenage sexual behavior, low self-esteem, peer pressure, and parental and marital status were reported as being the three main reasons why female adolescents have sex during their teenage years. As reported in *Psychology Today* and the *Journal of Marriage and The Family*, teenagers are faced with physical and emotional consequences of sex. Single-parent homes tend to have a higher rate of teenage sexuality than those of two-parent homes. In turn, lack of communication played a major role in the problem of teens having sex. It is very important to educate young girls about this problem earlier in life, before junior high. The more aware and the sooner girls are taught about sex the better understanding they will have. This will help teenagers to seriously consider the consequences of sex.

In *Sociology* fourth edition, chapter seven on Sexualities mentioned a very important issue regarding Adolescent Sexuality. In a study of junior high school students in Indianapolis, 55 percent had already had sexual intercourse-half the boys by age 13, and by age 15 for the girls(1991). Being sexually active for the girls was associated with low self-esteem.

First of all, let us look at a teenage girls self-esteem level. Young girls may feel insecure about their physical appearance a great deal. They may feel like the boys do not like them because of their outside appearance. Teenagers do not always focus in on what a person is like on the inside. Girls with low self-esteem may feel if they give into the boys sexual wants then they will be accepted and liked. The teen girls may then feel good about themselves because someone is paying attention to them, but it could cause a problem for the girl. She may realize that sex is all the boy wanted from the start. She will obviously feel taken and hurt. Being so young teen girls may not be able to deal with the outcome of their sexual behavior. In *Psychology Today* in an article called *Girls: Just say Not Now*, by Lynn Crawford Cook, sex educator Carol Castle stated I believe that teens under sixteen are simply too young to handle their emotional and physical consequences of sex(1989). This is a very good point because adolescents do not always stop and analyze the situation, and see what the best choice for them will be.

Teen pressure also has a lot to do with teen girls being sexually active. Girls may be told by their peers, everybody is doing it, you will be cool if you do it, or it feels good. These things could have a big influence on girls minds. Boys may even say to them, if you love me you will do it, like they really know what love is at twelve and fifteen years of age. At the ages of twelve and fifteen girls are naive; they do not realize the risks they may be



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facing. Losing their virginity to boys who do not care, becoming pregnant, and being labeled by their peers are some of the risks. At this day and time teenage sex is becoming the norm, the idea of not having sex until marriage is becoming a joke. When parents tell their teenage daughters not to sex and do not explain why, the teen may rebel and say yes to sex. The solution to this problem found in *Girls: Just say Not Now*, we owe it to young people to own up to the fact that sexual feelings are normal, and that desire can be very pleasurable(p.59). Parents today have this problem of painting a false picture to their children. This picture is one that tries to put fear in children about sex instead of understanding. They tell their children sex is wrong

and some emphasis on the Bible's teachings of sinfulness and punishment. Some parents are so afraid for their child that they try to put a mask on the issue of sex. This is where the mistake is made because kids will simply rebel. Cassel suggests, promoting 'Not Now' as a means of guilt and unsure feelings. This way the experience of sex may be postponed until she has a better understanding of sex and is old enough to handle the emotional and physical aspects of it, then it will be a more positive experience. If not positive, the teenage girl will be much wiser. If teenage girls decide not to wait until intercourse can be experienced with someone whom they love, trust, and whom they can talk to, then it may end in a frustrating and regretful experience. Promoting abstinence is just as good, but young girls need to be educated before anything else.

Parental marital status has an effect on adolescent sexual behavior. In the *Journal of Marriage and The Family*, 1987, Feb-Nov., an article by Susan Newcomer and Richard Udry talked about this issue. Data from a panel study of white virgin adolescents first interviewed in junior high was given in the article. This data stated, for girls, those who are with both original parents of both times have lower rates of transition to coitus than any other category. It also said that those girls who changed to single-mother households composition were significantly more likely to make transition to intercourse in the two year interval than girls in continuous both natural-parent households(1987). In two-parent homes, where there is a great amount of stability the teaching of strong morals, values, self-respect, early intercourse is not likely. When a home is disrupted with divorce or marital problems it cause adolescents to rebel. They may begin to feel that the problems within the home are their fault. Teens may turn to peers for emotional support that is lacking in the home at the time of the problems. They may become very intimate in the process.

Just having one parent to watch an adolescent is a difficult, supervision becomes a problem as well as the lack of communication. Teenage females tend to feel reluctant to discuss their sexuality and problems with sex when living in a single-male home. Another problem is the behavior of a single-parent; if a parent is showing him/herself as promiscuous the child will copy the behavior and think it is acceptable. To reiterate, parental/marital status as well as behavior has a great deal to do with the behavior of teenagers and their understanding of sex.

yes.

Another question is raised, do teens care enough about themselves to say no? Teens do care, but, from their perspective the question is not valid. They see the question from a different angle. To teens the question is, why should we say no when there isn't anything to say yes to? Many parents, teachers, and community leaders are trying to teach teens to just say no, but, again, with so many things to just say no to, teens wonder what can they say yes to that will be of equal pleasure as what teens should say no to. For example; teens are told a lot of times to get a job, and they receive rebukes when they do not. When they try to get a job they are rejected because they don't have experience. How are teens expected to get a job when everyone hiring wants them to have experience? Job rejections lead teens to return to the quick source of making Mo Money and selling Mo Drugs. Teens know they will not be rejected when they sell drugs. Making quick money keeps teens from hearing the message that what they are doing is dangerous.

For every problem there is a solution. Teens need an environment free of manipulation by friends as well as the media. Adolescents need to be guided and given alternatives after they say no. By having alternatives teens feel someone understands their need for being active and having fun. Teens inwardly desire to be accepted by peers, parents, teachers and community leaders.

Teens feel they need a way to be different. Unfortunately a lot of them live dangerously to be different. If their role models prove there is a better way to be unique then a lot of the troubles and problems faced today will change for the better.

## Digging Down Deep

By Sherrelle Penn



In today's society alcohol, drugs, teen pregnancy, and gang violence are popular problems among adolescents. Society portrays these problems as affecting teens mainly in the Black Community. On the contrary, these are major problems affecting adolescents everywhere.

The decision of whether to say yes or no to these problems is becoming a part of teens everyday lives. Unfortunately more and more teens are saying yes instead of no. Why don't teens just say no? A simple answer is peer pressure. However, the main problem is the reasoning behind the teens decision to say yes. Through television and friends teens minds are manipulated. Subliminally these adolescent minds are told it is alright to say yes. They are taught that just saying yes will lead to Mo Money, and quick pleasure. Unfortunately, these manipulated minds are not shown the end disaster in just saying