

Online Edition 2016

SEX

truthfully
Verdadera

Editor in Chief's Note

EIC Note

Dear readers,

How do you get a population of teenagers to pay attention to your promotional messages, write for you, and read a publication? Sex, Sex, Sex. Sex. This turned out to be a topic with which parents were concerned as well, and we received far more parent submissions than we usually do.

You'll find that this issue will have more of a survey-like structure than our other issues. Of course, the questions we asked had to be less open-ended - we didn't think a simple "tell us your experiences with sex" would suffice this time around. This issue will be structured by question, which we thought was more appropriate for the way we had structured the survey.

We have included statistics for the scaling and yes/no questions at the very end of the issue, for those who are curious. We do not want these numbers to be a gauge of what is "accepted" or "correct" so please do not let it affect how you read the written submissions.

We found that students' and parents' responses were often radically different. One thing in common was the absence of communication with their parent/child about sex, but the belief that it was an important conversation to have. We highly encourage readers (parents especially) to read the article found at the end of this issue, "Talking to your teen about sex," written by a school psychologist. A huge thank you to Kimberly Lowenthal for her expertise and for writing this article. One of Verdadera's objectives is to facilitate communication about topics such as sex between students and parents, so we hope this issue will help open up conversations, no matter how different students' and parents' views may be.

Thank you,
Gloria Zhao & May Cui

Further Resources

courtesy of Kimberly Lowenthal

Facts

Office of Adolescent Health

<http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/info/parents/just-facts>

Planned Parenthood

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn>

Tools for Parents

Office of Adolescent Health

<http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/info/parents/conversation-tools/>

Palo Alto Medical Foundation

<http://www.pamf.org/parenting-teens/sexuality/talking-about-sex/sex-talk.html#factVSbelief>

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/parent-guardian-resources/index.htm>

Planned Parenthood

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/parents>

Cover photo courtesy of David Torcivia

submissions

How do you define sex?

Parent, F

Sex in humans is a form of pleasure - a union between a man and a woman at a physical level when they are intellectually and emotionally one with each other and are committed into a long term relationship (that is marriage). Sex is the celebration of intellectual and emotional bonding in a committed relationship (married life), when that bonding is not there, sex is a mere animal instincts.

Student, F

the stuff they teach you about in sex ed (oral, vaginal, etc)

Student, F

I think sex is an act of love and physical intimacy; I don't approve of casual sex.

Student, F

Sex is when at least two people, of any gender, and in consent, perform sexual activities that include any genitals. This includes whether or not they are attempting to bear a child. This however does not include rape.

If you are a student, do your parents influence your sex life? If you are a parent, what do you tell your children about having sex?

Student, M

Nope. No influence from parents as it is a taboo topic.

Student, F

Be careful. But explore.

Student, M

My parents are highly against having sex in high school and have only ever mentioned it when I told them we were learning about it at school. They are also highly against having sex before marriage.

Student, M

Depends on gender pairing, if Male and Female, then penis in vagina, if Male and Male or Female and Female or anything else, it more or less depends on how the couples feel.

Student, O

Supposed to be a show of love but now its more involved with lust. IF you are looking for a more straight forward answer, then it can go many ways.

Student, F

In my mind, sex has a completely different definition than "making love." Because to me, sex is just a compulsive and animalistic action that people feel for the purpose of reproduction, since it is hardwired in animals' heads to continue the living of their species. But making love includes much more of an emotional aspect. It's when people really love each other and are completely comfortable with each others bodies. It's an action that means two people are dedicated to each other and are serious about staying together.

submissions

Student, F

in a way yes; they instilled values in me when i was young so i dont start doing it too early

Student, F

Definitely; parents have always told me to avoid being one on one with guys, because they could always

Student, F

I don't talk about sex with my parents. So if they influence it at all, it's just to make it more taboo.

Student, F

No, they don't. My parents don't ever talk about sex, and if it ever comes up, they try to change the subject or go around the topic without ever saying the word sex. They never gave me "the talk" and act as if sex doesn't exist.

Parent, F

We've had very open conversations. First when they were young they knew body parts and how babies were made. In middle school we spoke of new feelings and such as they went thru puberty. Spoke of sex and responsibilities, of diseases and protection. I said if they get someone pregnant they will b morally responsible

Parent, F

We tell them to be responsible and ask them to abstain when they are in school. They need to focus only on education and avoid distractions. There is a time and place for everything in life.

Parent, F

I tell my son that it is a big decision to have sex because if his partner gets pregnant he will need to be responsible for the child (if she chooses to continue the pregnancy) and that he could get an STD. I tell him that I do not want him to get hurt emotionally so that it is best to wait- until he is in a committed relationship

Student, F

Well, my parents have made it very clear(without ever mentioning the subject) that premarital sex is a NONO

Student, M

Yes, they control how often and late I can go out and where I can go, limiting opportunities. They also tell me I should wait.

Student, F

Yes, although they are definitely much older than me they know that life comes with two things, work and fun. they teach me how to be safe but how to let yourself go from all the hard work sometimes. they do not judge but they definitely have a few expectations/rules they want me to respect.

submissions

Is the concept of virginity important to you? Why or why not?

Alumni, F

No. It's an outdated concept meant to put value on women. Besides, depending on how people define it it can exclude lesbians. Any way you define it, people should not be defined by their sexuality. I prefer the term "sexual debut".

Parent, M

Yes. Sex is both a physical and mental process and its important to share it with someone special at the right time.

Parent, F

The concept of virginity is not particularly important to me. In this age, people seem to be waiting until they are older to get married or enter into committed relationships. I think expecting to be a virgin until an older age is an outdated concept, but certainly an individual's choice.

Parent, M

As a parent, not really, but if it's important to my daughters, then it's important to me.

Parent, F

Yes. Virginity is important because you want to commit to one relationship only. You want to give enough thought to one relationship and stick to one. When you give 100% to one relationship, you will get 100% out of it and almost no chances of failed marriages. If you have not preserved your virginity, it means that you aren't ready to commit 100% to your married life. What you give is what you get. Delaying gratification has its own charm.

Student, F

No. I think, more often than not, virginity is used as a way to judge others (usually women) and as a weapon against them, both in being a virgin and not being a virgin. I don't think that virginity (or loosing it) is as big of a deal as everybody makes it out to be.

Student, F

NO! Virginity proposes that idea that when someone has sex, they're losing something, which I feel is out of place in modern society. I also think the idea of virginity is particularly harmful to women, since there are a lot of double standards relating to women being or not being virgins, and because in many societies (not as much in america) women are defined by the state of their virginity and often deemed impure or tainted if not a virgin.

Student, M

It's important to me personally because it represents obedience to God.

Student, O

yes, because it's like a part of you that you're giving to someone and you can never take it back.

submissions

What are your thoughts on sex in high school?

Student, F

I think it's fine as long as the participants use protection and ARE AWARE of their bodies and the consequences, and also understand consent and rape.

Student, M

Everyone talks about it, everyone's afraid to do it. It requires committment

Student, M

It's fine if it's between two consenting people who are being safe.

Student, F

I think it's fine as long as the participants use protection and ARE AWARE of their bodies and the consequences, and also understand consent and rape.

Student, M

Sex should not be allowed in high school as the level of maturity is not there, and because the prefrontal cortex is not fully developed, it could lead to rash decisions that students could later regret.

Student, F

It's not unexpected in today's modern age (unfortunately).

Student, F

To be honest, I disapprove of the idea of sex during high school. We're all too young and mistakes could ruin the futures we have dreamed about living.

Parent, F

It's an expression of love, so if you think you're really in love...make sure you have protection.

Parent, F

Not a good idea. You should focus on studies

Parent, F

I think that most kids doing this aren't ready emotionally for this and feel pressured by their partner for whatever reason they do it. I think they do it for the wrong reasons.

Parent, M

I know it happens, probably frequently. Parents cannot prevent kids from having sex only educate them about the risks and benefits.

submissions

How does the media, if at all, affect your views on sex?

Student, M

The media has exposed me to sex a lot more, so I'm more used to the idea

Student, M

It usually doesn't - often times sex is portrayed as this forbidden nasty thing, something I don't agree with.

Student, F

In one way, it has shown me the effects of rape and negative forms of sex on the news, but on social media and television I see sex as no big deal and something that everyone does.

Student, F

I think the media had a pretty substantial affect on my views of sex because that was one of the few contexts in which I was exposed to sex, since my family doesn't talk about sex, and because our society sexualizes almost everything, but growing up and learning more about normal, real sex, not just what the media shows us has definitely given me a more positively and in my opinion more healthy idea of sex.

Parent, F

I don't like the media focus on sex and it is "in your face". The media uses sex to sell everything and that shows cultural and moral degradation and influences kids in a negative way.

Parent, F

none now but As a teen or someone just starting a sexual relationship o think it must have a large impact. There are so many ways to find images or videos and think "this must be what sex is" or this fact must be true. It's just a whole lot of info and not all accurate. And body image w media influence and Snapchat or other for sharing of images and texts and how this adds to the complexities of bullying or shaming or spreading gossip . I do t l ow how are kids navigate this worlds challenges:/

Student, M

Not much, besides making me more open to other people's sexualities

Student, F

Relationships are highly sexualized. They need to consummate in order to be "real".

Student, F

The media nowadays is more open about sex, so it makes it a bit more comfortable to talk about

Student, M

Compared to last couple years, current media less "flashy" with the topic of sex. The glorification has been toned down, and it is more understood that there is a variety of expectations and I feel that media is coming to accept and respect that.

Parent, F

When I was a teenager I thought sex should be loveless, quick and often. I now think that the emotional aspects are an important component. Also, I want to put a plug in for the excellent Unitarian Universalist sex ed philosophy. In particular boys can say no! And everything but a solid yes is a no. Also, I think if you don't feel comfortable talking about sex wth your partner, you probably don't know and trust each other enough to be having sex.

Parent, F

I think women and young girls are sexualized in the media and gives men and boys the wrong ideas about how women should dress, act and feel.

Parent, F

I think there is too much sex - or suggestiveness, in the media and it trickles down to ages that really don't need exposure to it.

Talking to Your Teen About Sex

by Kimberly Lowenthal

Talking to your teenager about sex can be very intimidating and uncomfortable. Some parents may worry what the impact of having this conversation could be ('will it encourage my teenager to have sex sooner?'), or may feel unsure about how to start the conversation and what to say. However, research conducted by the CDC has indicated that teens who talk with their parents about sex, relationships, birth control and pregnancy begin to have sex at a later age, use condoms and birth control more often if they do have sex, and have better communication with romantic partners.

As a high school psychologist, I often work with students who are beginning to explore their sexuality, many of whom are confused, misinformed, and feel too embarrassed to ask important questions that could keep them safe. Sexual education in public high school is very minimal, and a lack of knowledge combined with the many pressures teenagers face from peers and the media can leave our students vulnerable. As parents and educators, it is our job to educate our children and provide a safe, nonjudgmental space where they can come to us with questions and concerns.

Below is a brief guideline on opening an ongoing conversation about sex with your teenager, including: steps to take before the conversation, how to get a conversation going, and what to do after you've had the conversation.

Before the conversation...

Check in with yourself--Be honest with yourself so you can be honest with your teen.

- How do you feel about the conversation?

Does it make you uncomfortable? Nervous? It's completely natural to feel this way, but it is helpful to be aware of your feelings going into the conversation so you can try to regulate your own emotions to best support your child.

- What are your values?

Do your personal values or religion contribute to your opinions and views about sex?

It is great to be open about your values regarding sex with your teen, but accept that your teen may not share these values. Try to present your values as just that, personal values, without imposing them on your teen.

- How much do you know about the topic?

Educate yourself! Brush up on the facts about STIs and different types of birth control and STI protection so that you can help provide accurate information to your teen. See resources below for more information. But remember-You don't need to be an expert, you just need to open a dialogue!

Having "The Talk"

Choosing the right moment.

- As with any important conversation, try to pick a time when your teen is not already stressed, emotional, or pre-occupied—they will be more likely to be present and really hear the conversation.
- Try to keep the mood natural and comfortable.

submissions

One idea is to use a current event or TV show to help broach the subject, by asking your teen how they feel about a situation ex: “what do you think about _____”, or “do you know anyone who has experienced _____”? If your teen is unresponsive or replies with something like: “I don’t know”, you can still offer your thoughts ex: “Well, I think...” as a jumping off point.

Some parents find it’s easier to have this conversation while driving. Sitting side-by-side can help make your teen feel more comfortable by minimizing eye contact and making the situation feel less confrontational.

Conversation Tips:

- Remain calm.

If you appear angry, anxious, or judgmental, your teen will pick up on this and may not feel comfortable sharing with you.

- Be empathetic.

Remember—being a teenager is not easy! It’s likely your teen is already struggling with managing changing hormones, peer pressure, developing self-identity, parental expectations, etc.; try to be compassionate.

- Own up to your feelings!

It is okay to admit “This makes me feel uncomfortable to talk about, and it’s okay if it makes you feel uncomfortable too, but I think it’s very important that we have these conversations and feel safe talking about sex with each other”

- Stress safety.

Regardless of your values, the important thing to communicate to your teenager is how to have safe sex if and when they choose to do so.

Be specific. Simply saying, “just be safe” is not enough. Tell your teenager what safer sex means (ex: always using birth control and/or condoms, getting checked for STIs, etc.), and HOW to access this. Many teenagers are unsure about how to get access to condoms or birth control but could be too embarrassed to ask.

- Present the facts-Try to be objective.

Separate your values from the facts: You can share your personal values as well, but it is very important to present objective facts so your teenager is making informed choices.

- Remember, it should be a conversation, not a lecture!

Don’t be discouraged if the conversation is short or your teenager doesn’t engage with you—remember you are just opening a dialogue and trying to convey the message that it is an okay topic for them to talk with you about.

After the conversation...

Keep the conversation going!

- Instead of having “the talk”, think of it as opening a dialogue and creating a safe space for your teenager to come to you with questions. Your teen needs to feel that they won’t be punished or shamed for coming to you with questions or concerns about sex.

You can provide age appropriate articles or books, or links to websites. Some resources are linked at the end of this article.

Continue to provide your child with unconditional love, even if you don’t agree with the choices they are making, or it makes you uncomfortable. You can say something like; “I hope we can continue to talk about sex, even if it makes us both a little uncomfortable. I want you to know that you can come to me with any questions or concerns and I will do my best to help you figure it out. I love you and support you no matter what.” Be kind to yourself! This is a very difficult subject and it is okay if it feels awkward or uncomfortable, or if your teenager does not want to talk with you about it. The important thing is that you are conveying a message of love and acceptance, and educating your teenager so they can make informed healthy decisions.

Numbers

from our survey

Total Respondents: 171

59.1% Female	56.1% Students	4.1% Alumni
36.8% Male	29.2% Parents	1.8% Other
4.1% Other	8.8% Students (non-MV)	

On a scale of 1-5 how pressure do you feel to have sex?

1: 68/113 or 60.2%

2: 27 or 23.9%

3: 5 or 4.4%

4: 6 or 5.3%

5: 7 or 6.2%

Is the concept of virginity important to you?

Yes: 55

No: 112

Does it matter if your future spouse is a virgin?

Yes: 18.1%

No: 81.9%

Is sex essential to a good relationship?

1 (*not essential*): 15

6: 11

2: 8

7: 18

3: 8

8: 28

4: 6

9: 11

5: 23

10 (*absolutely essential*): 21

About Verdadera

Verdadera, meaning “truthfully” in Spanish, is a student-run publication at Monta Vista High School which was initiated by Hung Wei, a Monta Vista parent herself. She envisioned a place where students, alumni, counselors, teachers, administrators, and even parents could freely express their thoughts on the controversial and challenging issues within the Monta Vista community.

The goal of Verdadera is to initiate an honest conversation between parents, students, and everyone overall. It can be hard to come in terms with feelings that students may not directly vocalize or even understand to begin vocalizing; therefore Verdadera serves as a platform to provoke opinions, thinking, and understand the change we all wish to implement.

We collect submissions from students, interview alumni, talk to parents and counselors, professionals, and much more. Verdadera strives to provide a 360 degree view of our reality and we hope you can help us achieve this.

Enjoy reading!

*Please note, while we do shorten and abridge submissions occasionally, we do not edit them to maintain the integrity of the original voice. This means grammar mistakes are left alone.

Staff Members

Advisor: Hung Wei

Editors-In-Chief: May Cui, Gloria Zhao

Head Editor: Gayathri Kalla

Website Team: Saagar Godithi, Akhil Palla

Design Team: Nupoor Gandhi, Cheri Zhou

Social Media Team: Adriana Getman, Maddie Park

Email: mvhsverdadera@gmail.com

Instagram: [@mvhsverdadera](https://www.instagram.com/mvhsverdadera)

Facebook: [Monta Vista Verdadera](https://www.facebook.com/MontaVistaVerdadera)