

Marian High School

A2

Indepth Newspaper Coverage

#1

“Let’s Talk About IT - Sex Talk”

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No such thing as ‘safe sex’

TaylorBenson

Most American teenagers, especially Catholic teenagers, have heard the plea from parents, teachers and adults to wait to have sex until marriage. Approximately 47.8 percent of high schoolers have had sex, according to the National Youth Survey by the Centers for Disease Control. Obviously, the pleas went in one ear and out the other.

Therefore, public schools have taken to teaching “safe” sex practices to lessen the risks associated with sex, while Catholic schools continue to stay strong on their teachings of chastity and abstinence. However, the emotional risks associated with having sex before marriage can be just as severe.

Sex in popular culture has often been viewed as an empty and meaningless experience, but in reality it is “an act infiltrated with emotion that has the greatest effect on the individual within the confines of marriage,” states the *Catholic Catechism*.

The Catholic Church views sex as a “sign and pledge of spiritual communion” among married persons.

“Sexuality ... is not something simply biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and woman commit themselves totally to one another until death,” states the *Catholic Catechism*.

Dr. Cynthia Topf, a psychologist specializing in adolescent issues in the Omaha area, often witnesses the effects of pre-marital sex on teenage girls.

“Since sex ties individuals closer together emotionally, girls are often left vulnerable to a deep recession when the relationship falls apart after sex. They aren’t able to handle the after effects of shame and guilt and they wish they had waited,” Topf said. “Waiting until in a stable relationship, such as marriage, ensures the girls will be with the right person for them. Girls are always happy that they waited to have the experience with their husband.”

“What makes marriages last is patience, self-control and sacrifice. An abstinent dating couple has to practice these same qualities. When pleasure is valued more than these qualities, couples miss the chance to build the virtues that make love last. Waiting until marriage ensures that a stable marriage will be built upon these virtues to make the connection last,” Topf said.

Religion teacher Mrs. Lori Spanbauer says that the goal of religion classes’ sexuality units is to teach the girls all of the potential harm that can come from pre-marital sex.

“I think that Marian religion classes are trying to teach that there are physical, spiritual and emotional reasons why the church and Marian’s mission is to encourage girls to wait until marriage,” Spanbauer said.

“In my church sexuality unit, I teach that sex is different for boys and girls because when the relationship ends after sex, scientifically, it is more emotionally devastating for the girl. I speak on behalf of Marian when I say that I don’t want girls to experience the pain associated with rushing into something they aren’t ready for,” Spanbauer said.

In addition to those psychological and emotional effects, science is also important when evaluating why pre-marital sex can be so harmful to teenagers.

According to the Canadian Institutes of Health and Research, an online research site recommended by psychology teacher Mr. Tom Baker, when a stimulus (caused by pleasurable activities such as a kiss) is received, the brain releases dopamine into the amygdala, a part of the brain where teens make their decisions. Dopamine produces a charge of excitement and makes adolescents feel good about taking both good and bad risks. This means that while teens are engaged in pleasurable activities, their ability to make logical decisions diminishes.

According to the book “Hooked: New Science on How Casual Sex Is Affecting Our Children,” by Doctors Joe McIlhaney and Freda McKissic Bush, oxytocin is another

chemical in the brain that helps females bond with males. When a boy and a girl touch each other, oxytocin is released in the girl’s brain. The chemical makes her want more of that pleasure and helps her to feel a bond with that partner. Sex leads to a release of even more of this chemical and may lead a girl to disregard the consequences.

“When sex becomes more of a casual thing for teenagers, it becomes more difficult for the brain to distinguish between a lifelong soul mate and a fleeting relationship. It can cause a girl to bond to a boy who might not be committed to that relationship. When that short relationship ends, the emotional fallout can be devastating for teenagers, especially girls, who believed that person was their soulmate,” Topf said.

Oxytocin also produces feelings of trust in a couple.

“Hormones in your body naturally bond married couples together and helps the marriage remain intact. However, this is a problem when an unmarried girl has sex because she is fooled by the feelings of warmth that come from sex,” Topf said.

Boys also have their own brain chemical related to physical bonding: vasopressin. It infiltrates the boy’s brain during sex, causing him to feel bonded to every girl with whom he has been intimate.

“If teenage boys, whose hormones are raging, have sex often, they risk not developing the ability to form a long-term emotional attachment,” Topf said.

“All in all, sex outside of a committed relationship can never be called safe sex. No contraceptive can eliminate the emotional, physical and other risks associated with sex,” Topf said.

“Sex involves a lot more than your body, and there’s no condom for your heart. In addition, those who abstain from sex until marriage significantly add to their chance for avoiding instability problems in relationships,” Topf said.

Junior Emily Reynolds said she believes that pre-marital sex is a choice, and that it

What it means to be a virgin, senior speaks out

KaterinaMarcotte

I remember when I didn’t know what sex was. I remember when I thought sex was two people lying in bed naked together, kissing. Because, you know, if you really love a person, you want to lie naked in a bed with them. I also remember not being interested in the least of doing so with another person myself.

For many of us, sex ed in middle school was a memorable yet probably ineffective experience.

I often wonder about the sex ed lady that came for those after-dinner talks before sixth-grade. I wonder what she felt like being the first adult to officially come out and say, “Hey, this is what sex is.”

I remember those two 7 p.m. meetings in Miss Smith’s math room; the first one was only girls and we talked about periods and zits and stuff.

I also remember being more concerned with whether my intake of chocolate milk was going to affect my “growing body.”

I remember the second meeting, too. Oh, boy do I remember the second one.

I remember sitting in the chair, knowing this was the “co-ed” meeting, and being handed lemonade gum from Amelia Ambrose. I remember the gum being incredibly sour as I turned

women’s sexuality in a bad light. I remember when the boys came in, and she picked up those stupid presents. I remember regretting my front row desk as she slammed the presents down

in seventh-grade to be a virgin because that’s what everyone else in the youth group was doing.

Looking back on my confused self, I’m glad I made the decision, but I know now why I’m still a virgin today.

I’m disappointed they did not teach it to us in those meetings, and if they did, not bothering to make it as memorable as the traumatic experience with the presents. In all honesty, I’m

a virgin not because of what the Church teaches on abstinence. I’m a virgin not because I don’t want to be on MTV’s “16 and Pregnant” or on MTV’s “True-Life: I Have Herpes.”

The only way to explain why I’m a virgin is through song.

*What you want
Baby, I got it
What you need*

Chastity Rings

Chastity rings (also known as purity rings or abstinence rings) originated in the 1990s in the U.S. A chastity ring is usually worn with the intent that the wearer will remain abstinent until it is replaced with a wedding ring. 60 percent of Marian students who have a chastity ring received it from their parents, while 40 percent got it for themselves. Celebrities such as Jordin Sparks and the Jonas Brothers don such a ring. 41 percent of students believe a chastity ring is an effective way to wait for sex. There is even a purity ring application for the iPhone.

9% of Marian girls have a chastity ring



Graphic by JacquelineAlvine Photo by EmilyReznicek
Source: 225 students surveyed in homerooms on Nov. 12 and Akron Beacon Journal

around to see the lady with what appeared to be wrapped Christmas presents on the table behind her.

I remember hearing her say that “Your Body Is A Wonderland” by John Mayer is “such a good song,” and agreeing fervently with her only to be shot down and explained that that said song is terrible and portrays

(symbolizing a classmate’s sex life) for the thousandth or so time, and me screaming in terror each time she did so.

I remember sitting in that chair not being a “changed person,” only a frightened one, by any of this.

I also remember the near future for my sixth-grade self, as I joined youth group and pledged

More than a little white pill

LauraBolamperti

It's that familiar time of the month once again. Stock up on tampons and Advil, because you're going to need it. Take a deep breath and try to hold in your stomach because those cramps are slowly killing you. "This can't be normal," you think. And according to the Federal Food and Drug Administration, for about 15 percent of women, as young as 11, it's not normal.

The reality of the way women treat their bodies' natural cycles is changing. What used to be a simple dose of Tylenol or Midol has taken a turn. Medicine has become so advanced that with the right amount of hormones, doctors can now treat even the most severe symptoms of the menstrual cycle. But sometimes young women don't want to trifle with those pesky cramps.

Dr. Michael Woods, M.D. FACOG, father of junior Anna Woods, explains that there are many ways to help menstrual cycle symptoms. "I always recommend to women that have bad menstrual cramps that they should exercise daily as there are several studies that show that this helps. Blood loss can be lessened by using nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines (Motrin, Aleve, Aspirin, to mention a few)

starting with the period or a few days beforehand," Woods said.

As Woods went on to say, the pill has been around for almost 50 years and has evolved greatly in that time. Studies do not show a negative impact on women's lives and there is evidence that indicates that it may be beneficial in a positive way for many women. The risks of the pill are small but real. "I believe that it is very safe for a 17/18 year old to be on the pill," Woods said.

"Very few things

are available that provide such cycle control that are this safe. I believe that the pill for most women is safer than taking aspirin from a pure risk perspective," Woods said.

According to the FDA nearly one in 10 women suffer from Polycystic Ovary Syndrome or PCOS. PCOS causes irregular periods, acne, ovarian cysts and, in the most severe cases, infertility. But before you go running to your doctor, know that in most cases, PCOS is treated by balancing chemicals your body produces naturally. These hormones, can come in the form of birth control pills.

The Catholic Church teaches that birth control, the pill, is wrong in any form. But the matter of taking the pill for medical reasons could be two-fold.

Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae* explains that a contraceptive effect is usually morally permissible as a side effect for treating a medical condition when the user's intention is not to use the drug as an "impediment to procreation." So, basically, the Church is saying that if you use the pill to treat a medical condition, it is not wrong as long as the intention of the user is not to prevent life.

According to Sr. Renee Mirkes, OSF, PhD, Ethics Director at the Center of NaPro Ethics, a division of Pope Paul VI Institute, the therapeutic use of the pill is morally acceptable, but is not endorsed because it is "bad medicine" to the fragile gynecological system in young women.

"It is complicated in our time," Mirkes said. "*Humane Vitae* says that using the pill for a therapeutic aim, not to prevent pregnancy, is theologically and ethically correct."

However, the Church goes on to say that treating the underlying causes of these diseases through proven medical methods is the more responsible choice when addressing women's health issues. Many doctors will suggest taking the pill, but if you ask for an alternative they can discuss the options with you. According to the FDA, these alternatives are healthier because they do not affect the chemical balances of the body. However, they are sometimes not

as effective as the medical treatments.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church offers this advice: "The object, the intention, and the circumstances make up the 'sources,' or constitutive elements, of the morality of human acts"(1750). In simpler terms, the intention of the user and the way the product is used determines whether or not it is considered wrong.

So, the Church teaches that the pill and any other form of birth control is wrong when the intention is to prevent life. The Church asks young women to look for other ways of treating the symptoms that sometimes follow the menstrual cycle. The intention and the way the drug is used make the situation a question of faith.

For one Marian senior, it was a choice affecting her faith.

"At first I was really scared to take the pill because of the risks. I know what the Church says about birth control but there was nothing else I could do," senior Katie Clavin said. "My cramps were terrible and I could hardly get through the day."

Clavin went on to say that although her faith explicitly says that using the pill is wrong, she feels that using it for her medical condition is helping her live a normal life. "I feel comfortable about my choice."

The choices can greatly affect parents and others involved in the decision-making process. It isn't always an easy choice.

The fact of the matter is that there are medical conditions like PCOS, ovarian cysts and damage from radiation or chemotherapy in which the simplest way to treat them is by taking the pill. Before accepting a hastily written prescription from your doctor consider treating the underlying causes of the problem. Mirkes urges young women and their families to seek resources and alternatives at the Pope Paul VI Institute in Omaha.

But, when the underlying problem seems to be alleviated by using the hormones estrogen and progestin, both found in the pill, the morality of intent can become the central issue.

• Pressure to have sex by a certain age has a larger influence on boys

• Boys are twice as likely to say that sex is expected in a relationship

You know I got it
All I'm asking is for a little respect when you come home (just a little bit)

Aretha knew what she was talking about, even though there's some controversy over the actual meaning of the song, but that's beside the point.

Take another look at those lyrics. That string of words is what each girl goes through. Girls know they have what guys want; it's a fact.

Pledging to be a virgin until marriage is showing the males that the girl wants respect (yeah, baby!), and if these dudes can't deliver, they're not worth her time.

Demanding respect from guys in turn teaches girls to respect themselves. This gives birth to confidence, one of the most attractive things to guys. This sparks a relationship, a genuine relationship, instead of one based on how short her short shorts are.

Making the decision about virginity is still something that one must make on their own.

I'm a virgin because I respect myself and I want a guy who is going to respect me for me.

• Girls are more influenced by friends, family and religion regarding sexual activities and relationships

Source: 2005 Kaiser Family Foundation Teen Survey
Graphic by AndreaAlonso



fun dating ideas

-volunteer

-walk the dog

-have a picnic

-watch the stars

-go to the zoo

-buy a pet fish

-go antiquing

-plant a tree

-go thrift shopping

-go to a concert

-go cosmic bowling

-paint a picture

-make a snowman

-cook dinner together

-have a double date

Graphic by JordannWilson