



## Mission

*Aletheia* (ah-LAY-thee-uh), which means “truth” in Greek, is a student outreach publication that strives to provide a voice for all students at Lynbrook High School. Inspired by Los Gatos High’s *Reality Check* and Monta Vista’s *Verdadeira* was created to facilitate communication and overcome stigmas concerning prevalent and taboo issues within the Lynbrook community.

## About

At the beginning of the school year, the *Aletheia* staff designates a list of monthly topics pertaining to the realities of high school. Each issue comprises of firsthand experiences submitted anonymously by Lynbrook students and alumni, professional articles relating to that month’s theme, and resources compiled by the student staff. Finalized newsletters are uploaded online and emailed to Lynbrook families who have requested to be on the mailing list. Back issues can be found on our website, [www.lhsaletheia.org](http://www.lhsaletheia.org), under Archives.

The content in *Aletheia* is composed by the students of Lynbrook High School in San Jose, California. Ideas and opinions expressed within the publication are not necessarily reflected by members of the school administration or faculty.

This is the fourth issue of *Aletheia* for the 2013-14 school year.

## Submissions

All Lynbrook students and alumni are eligible to submit stories. We publish all submissions that adhere to our guidelines, which are posted on the website. The Aletheia staff is committed to preserving the integrity of your content and will not make any changes, with exception to certain profanity (which are asterisked-out) and basic spelling errors. We do not edit stories for grammar or syntax.

Our March topic is Academic Dishonesty; stories are due by March 8th. If you are interested in contributing, a submission box and a suggestion form for future topics are both available online.

*Expressing what  
remains unspoken.*

**Student Staff:** Adam Zhang, Aishwarya Nene, Alyssa Zhang, Divyya Munshi, Esther Kao, John Park, Kasuri Pantvaidya, Nishna Kommoju, Renee Cai, Sabrina Jen, Stephanie Li, Steven Chao

**Advisers:** Cindy Wen & Miko Otoshi

People call me a 'slut' and a 'whore' because of what I did. It was the summer after Freshman year, and I was really into this one guy from Lynbrook. He was going into Senior year, and really showed attention towards me that no one else did. He was on the football team, had a nice smile, and a hilarious sense of humor. Now in all honesty, I really really liked this guy. I wanted to keep him around and would pretty much say anything to do just that. When the provocative snapchats happened, I threw out the thoughts of doubt and went ahead. We ended up snapchatting all the time, every day, sexual and normal conversations galore. No one else knew because in the back of my mind, I knew it was wrong.

One day we were up late at night, and he suggested that I come over to his house. He lived a good hour walk from my place, but it seemed like he really wanted to hang out with me, right? So I snuck out and walked all the way over to his house in the dark. When I got there and safely into his room, he immediately grabbed me and started making out with me. We flopped on the bed and he started ripping off his clothes. I told him that I didn't want to have sex, but that anything else was "alright I guess."

After I left I felt feelings of regret, but also satisfaction. This guy was really really into me! But I was taught to keep my body to myself until I found someone that I loved, and I started to feel really bad, so I didn't tell a soul. Even worse, the next day a good friend of mine overheard him and his other football buddies talking about it and calling me horrible names. I felt utterly embarrassed, ugly, and really heartbroken by this guy. I started to believe the names they called me behind my back and became very withdrawn. I have trust issues, my self confidence is barely above 0, and I'm sensitive around words like "bitch, skank, whore" and "slut", but I hold onto the fact that I didn't let this terrible guy take my virginity.

*"Sex without love is as hollow and ridiculous as love without sex."*

*-Hunter S. Thompson*

I used to think that Lynbrook was an exception, as it is in many cases. But I realize that I'm just being sheltered myself within a "sheltered" school. My close friends have had sex and months have passed before I found out. Now I just wonder how many other people have as well, and if I'm just an innocent exception.

~ ~ ~

If I were to be completely honest with myself (which is something I like to do fairly often, at least when compared to the amount of times I am honest with others) then I would say that my first relationship - which ended a few months ago - was totally driven by physical desire.

I never actually emotionally connected with the guy; nor did I have any real reason or wish to do so. All I wanted from him was physical stimuli and, to a lesser extent, amusement. When he failed to provide the latter for too long, I ended the relationship. It wasn't as harsh as I make it sound - literally every single time we were together I did all the talking. Emotionally I was doing all the giving, and eventually the physical intimacy couldn't make up for the emotional drain the relationship was putting on me.

Hell, we didn't even get to first base, but for a while the sheer novelty of physical contact was enough to keep the relationship going. But a relationship like that can't last forever, I think, because eventually the physical spark fades, doesn't it?

*"We waste time looking for the perfect lover, instead of creating the perfect love."*

*-Tom Robbins*

I'm too afraid to have sex. Something about it sounds painful and scary. I think it's the fear that my first time won't be "special" or that I'll do something stupid and ruin it. Something about girls just drives me crazy, and yet every time I date one and try to broach the subject, my throat closes up and I weakly ask her if she wants to cuddle. I don't really know why I feel like this. I'm not a macho "alpha male" with rippling muscles, a snapback, and a bro-tank with some funny saying on it. I'm not one of those nerdy, stereotypical betas with sweatpants, ill-fitting hoodies, and no female friends.

I'm a guy with needs, what can I say? I'm programmed by nature to want to get with every girl I see! It's frustrating to know that something is preventing me from being able to talk about it to girls, but at the same time I'm kind of glad. I don't have to deal with the rejection, or her telling all her friends that I wanted sex and that she refused me. That would make me feel like an idiot. One of my close female friends is always complaining about the guys who want to casually have sex with her. She tells me that she would never do any of them and how desperate and sleazy they seem. What if I look like that to girls? What if they all see me how my friend sees the creeps who try to hook up with her? What if they laugh at me for trying to get some? Too many questions, and not enough answers. I'll just have to settle for not having sex until I figure myself out first.

~ ~ ~

When I had sex, it both ruined and changed my life. I felt amazing that I had gone far enough in my relationship in order for me to have sex with my SO, but it also alienated me from some of my more religious friend. I was now a "slut" and a "whore" for having sex out of wedlock, and they wouldn't talk to me anymore. They treated me differently, as if I was dirty in some way that only "god" could see. I wanted to scream at them "Your parents had sex and to make you, so why isn't it ok for me to have sex for fun!?" People at school looked at me funny, and they acted like I had changed. I didn't feel the same after I lost those friends. I had to make new friends and leave my old ones behind because our views clashed so much. They couldn't accept me for what I had done. Having sex with my SO was my personal choice, and while we were both fine by our choice, our so-called friends were mad about it. Personally, I think they were so enraged because they were taught that sex outside of marriage is sinful and since they never had that experience with another person. They got swept up with the social stigma that sex at this age leads to a role on "16 and Pregnant" or "Teen Mom." People need to understand that sex is something that should be kept between the people doing it, and stop shaming those of us who are lucky enough to do it.

*"The natural thing, my lord, men and women joined."*

*-Homer*

Okay, let me start this off by saying I'm a virgin, so I'm not exactly qualified to write about this topic. But everyone thinks about physical relationships and desire. From a young age my parents told me not to get involved with anyone until after college. And I believed them. At the time I didn't see the point of having someone to call your lover anyway.

Well puberty came along and I guess you can say I have realized why people have physical relationships now. And to be completely honest, if a good opportunity presented itself, I don't know what I would do. I'm not in a relationship but other people have expressed interest in me but I wasn't interested in them. I was hanging out in class once and someone just came up to me and started flirting on me and it made me rather uncomfortable, It was kind of hilarious actually. His hand was on the edge of my chair next to my butt and he kept on leaning in pretty close. And it kind of made me nervous. Like, "What does he want from me?" So as of right now, I'd say I would prevent from getting into a physical relationship with someone, even if someone I did like liked me back. The whole package seems rather complicated and everyone always says they wish they waited. I am not totally against the idea of pursuing a physical relationship though. For a lack of a better term they also seem rather fun. And of course, I do have a desire for some people, People just are cute or are just nice to me in class I tend to start crushing on. But it doesn't mean I want to start having sex with them. That's a line I don't want to cross just yet. Maybe in a year, maybe in five years. Or maybe it's a line that you won't be ready to cross until you've actually crossed it. I guess what I'm to say is... Stay away from sex until you're sure you're ready, kids!

*"Sex is more exciting on the screen and between the pages than between the sheets."*

*-Andy Warhol*

I'm a senior, and I haven't had sex, and it kind of bothers me. I used to be really immature about sex (early freshman year), then just kind of scared (early sophomore year), then gradually became calmer about it but still was pretty sure I wouldn't want to until college. I only dated someone once, and that was while sex still felt like something that...I knew other people my age were doing, but it seemed so strange, like I couldn't imagine any non-adults doing it (which didn't

even make sense, since I thought I'd start in college, and college freshmen don't exactly look grown yet). So that relationship was sex-free, and by the time I realized that I might actually want to have sex while still in high school, it kind of seemed too late. Because I wasn't about to start a relationship with anybody - I don't really get asked out a lot, and I'm too paranoid to make the first move myself - and casual sex seems to be something that's only easy to find/actually have when you've already had sex with someone. I found myself envying the numerous people who'd had relationships in sophomore/junior year that had included sex, but later ended. As much as I know that a lot of them were really upsetting experiences in the end, and as much as I don't envy the breakups, I feel like they were able to gain sexual experience with someone equally inexperienced and now have, if not, like, prowess, then at least they don't have an endless amount of stupid embarrassing questions about it that can be resolved by literally just doing it once. Some of these people have gone on to date other people, and just be more confident about their sex lives, and others have been able to just find friends with benefits and be happy with it. I'm a second semester senior now, and I want to be single in college, so any relationship I have now would be very short-lived, and I'm not sure I'd find someone who would be okay with that. Even if I did, I don't know how soon they'd want to have sex, or if it would feel to weird for me to be just rushing through it for the sake of that. And it's not really realistic for me to find a friend with benefits now, because despite hypothetically knowing a lot, I still have all of my stupid embarrassing questions that I can't bring myself to ask even the closest of my sexually active friends. I guess at this point I'm stuck waiting until college even though I don't necessarily want to. I'm sure it'll be easy to start having sex in college, but six months of wanting to and not being able to have left me with a fear that even in college, I won't be able to do what I want. I don't know why, it's not a rational fear. I just wish I'd found the opportunity to have sex sometime in high school.

*"Sex without love is a meaningless experience, but as far as meaningless experiences go it's pretty damn good."*

-Woody Allen

I don't want to get into a relationship because I think if I did, I would be too physically dependent on my significant other. I've never shown much physical love to my parents or friends (like hugs), but to be honest, sometimes I really feel the need to be physical with someone else. It kinda builds up over time. I always see how some of my friends change when they get into relationships...one day they're talking to you like normal, the next day they're surgically attached to their boyfriend/girlfriend. I'm not saying that that's true for all relationships, but I think it would probably happen to me, even though I hate it when people do that. At this point, I've held in too much and I think I would take things pretty far. Usually I can think objectively, but I think having a relationship would strip all sense of logic down...which is not good because I made a decision to keep my virginity until marriage (plus I'm a Christian so yeah). I just don't want to give everything away before my husband. And I think I would be an emotional wreck if I broke up with someone after getting physical. I guess I'm just not ready. But what if I'm never ready? I can't imagine my whole life without sex (that sounded really weird, but it's true). I can't imagine never letting everything go and feeling completely vulnerable to someone, because I've not been able to do that yet. I guess for now I'll have to stick to my imagination.

~ ~ ~

I like watching chick flicks and romantic comedies and stuff and the relationships are so cute in those movies. So, I guess I used to want a physical relationship because of those type of movies. But now, I guess I don't really care. I mean being hugged and stuff is nice but I rather just talk to someone. I feel that physical relationships and friendships are a plus but they probably won't make me the happiest I can be. I rather just have a nice, emotional relationship or friendship. Having a warm nice conversation is equivalent to a hug and with a million nice conversations a day, I'd probably be happier than with any physical relationship or friendship.

~ ~ ~



Personally, I have never understood why people would have sexual relationships in high school. It seems like a huge waste of time. I'd rather spend my time doing more productive things, like homework or studying for tests. A few of my friends have made out and/or had sex before, and I really don't get why, because in a matter of months, weeks, or even days, the guy they made out or had sex with isn't their boyfriend anymore, and they seem to regret having an intimate relationship with them in the first place.

*"To burn with desire and keep quiet about it is the greatest punishment we can bring on ourselves."*

*-Frederico Garcia Lorca*

I feel like people prematurely go into relationships. The two parties involved lack the know-how and commitment to keep their relationship going, and inevitably break up. Along the way, they may do some stupid things. Among the stupid things, is investing in a physical relationship rather than an emotional one. For this reason, I keep away from these relationships. Not only would it affect me personally, it would also affect the other party.

~ ~ ~

I think I'd have a stress overload without my friend with benefits.

*"The difference between sex and love is that sex relieves tension and love causes it."*

*-Woody Allen*

Relationships are great, but many tend to get sexual. Many people tend to look at a relationship and wonder "are we ever going to have sex?" It seems common now to have sex in relationship. I have never been in a sexual relationships but my friends have. I have somewhat desired it every so often but my girlfriend never wanted to, so I backed down. Sexual relationships make

one tend to seem more close to another, so it could fortify the bond between the two. My desire for sexual relationships is due to the fact that I have been too exposed to girls and the image that they are great for sex, even though they are not.

~ ~ ~

I know physical/sexual relationships have gained much greater acceptance over the last few years. Heck, we see people engaging in pda all the time on campus. Yet, as someone who's gay, I still feel so restricted. As in, yes, male, because I feel like lesbians/females in general have it easier sometimes... I don't know, society just seems to accept affection among females more than affection among males? Sometimes I wish I were female. I see girls holding each other all the time. Who could tell if they were friends or something more? Plus, if I were female and had the same desires... none of this would be an issue. (I know guys are "allowed" to hug each other too, but I feel like others would scrutinize me especially.) Yeah, I want to hold the hand of the guy I'm crushing on as we walk across campus, maybe even share a few kisses like the other couples I see. Yet, I can't get past the feeling that others would look at us with disgust. In fact, I can't even get past the disgust I have for myself to ask him to consider a relationship. I'll probably ruin even any chance of a friendship if I ask him for anything more. I mean, though he seems to have some "gay mannerisms" (wow I can't believe I'm saying this kind of s\*\*\*) and people joke with him about coming out, I'm pretty sure he's straight... I think another part of it has to do with how others perceive me. In general, Asian culture just does not tolerate homosexuality very well. I'm relatively masculine and basically defy all the gay stereotypes. I mean, I know straight guys who probably fit the stereotypes better than I do. I'm around quite a few female friends as well, and I've taken them to dances, but they don't know a thing, and I've never felt a thing. Something about it all just feels so physical, like I can't be satisfied unless I can physically touch him and feel him against me--his chest pressed against mine, his toned arms wrapped around me. But I can't, and it's driving me crazy. I've actually seen him get really physical with other guys--touching them, wrapping

his arms around them, side kissing them, doing things I'm probably not allowed to mention--all of which makes me feel envious but kind of gives me hope that he would consider having a physical relationship with me. Dammit. My only source of release ends up being porn and masturbation, but I've been cutting back on porn lately since I got scared I'd get addicted. I feel so frustrated. How did I manage to have a class that talks about the human body while only being able to look at him? Yes, unfortunately we're not quite friends yet... I'm trying to change that though. The thoughts keep coming. I look at him and sexual fantasies start racing through my head. I don't think it's all sexual though. I really like his laugh and think that he's a pretty hard worker and overall a solid person. So as much as I am pro-sex, I can't help but feel dirty. I guess the topic of sex has always been an issue for me. The beliefs and traditions I come from look down upon sexual activities in general, especially between "young kids" like us who aren't married. Is it really that wrong though? I don't even know. On top of it all, I feel like if my parents found out about any of this, they'd punish me and call me a deviant instead of trying to help. Other than that, I value my culture and am otherwise reasonably intellectual, so dealing with all these physical urges has been extremely difficult. I don't know what to do. I can't tell anyone in person. That would ruin everything. I hope this is just a phase, so I can be "normal."

*"Men go to far greater lengths to avoid what they fear than to obtain what they desire."*

*-Dan Brown*

Well lets go back to when you hit puberty and things feel funny sometimes and you see this girl and you get these vibrations and your spidey senses are tingling but you approach her and few days later your dating which is new for a pubescent teen. physical attraction or the feeling of doing something that was taboo at the time like being special friends with a girl was kinda fun. Well fast forward to now several years later thinking back at it sometimes my relationships do

affect my friendships in ways i cant help and don't even recognize. For example my most recent relationship left me with confusion on who friends are and who did i hang out with before the significant little whore came into my life. My most previous relationship i got over very quickly in a matter of days but however i dont think anyone truly gets over someone as long as their is a good memory or time perhaps where you would like to revisit in the past. Furthermore most relationships are good in the beginning but sour in the end just like a jelly doughnut where its good when you eat it but you realized you just finished it and now you feel like crap. Its a given when two people are dating and things get more and more serious too get intimate in general for example, sex being the most common intimacy. Physical relationships are very shallow because the other person is just using you for their own needs and it is good at times but sometimes its terrible...wait what am i saying being f\*\*\*ed literally by girl is never bad but soon if it goes on too long people get attached like the saying "no strings attached" is fake because one or both get emotionally connected in the end. I know from past "adventures" and present that these things even dating never works out for more than 3 months anyways for me. AAANNNNDDDD conclusion!!!!!!

~ ~ ~

I have a foot fetish. This use to make me sad, but I've matured. All the girls, and even guys think that foot fetishes are disgusting, but I feel like a foot fetish is like being gay. It is something people just aren't used to. So they think it's gross. I use to feel like a gross retard since I had the fetish. I tried convincing myself that I don't like feet, but I just found feet too sexy for me to not be attracted to. Maybe for a week at most I think I actually have no attraction to feet, but after that, I'd just find myself jacking off to them again. Just like a gay person has to realize that they will always be gay, I had to understand that you can't change your fetishes. Craving feet isn't something everyone does, or thinks is ok, but it's me. I've always had a foot fetish, and I always will. Its been fun. Guys that like boobs can only get turned on when girls are naked. But I can jack off to almost anyone at Lynbrook. I'm kind of into blondes, and ALL blondes wear flip flops at some point. It's fun as hell to watch them. But I get annoyed as f\*\*\* when girls wear boots and stuff.

Besides the fact that having sexual relationships at my age goes against my beliefs, I also think it's kind of scary. I mean, the physical motion of having sexual intercourse, like, doesn't it feel uncomfortable? But then again, I wouldn't know. I've only read about what happens in books. And we all know books can't tell us what it would be like for us personally; they can only describe what happens according to the authors' predictions or life experiences. I feel like the reason sexual relations can be complicated is because it involves our emotions. And if we allow ourselves to be vulnerable in this intimacy with just anyone or with multiple people, it might just possibly leave us feeling a little confused, empty, broken, or sad. Again, I don't have any experience whatsoever, and so I feel like I've restrained from sexual desires and relationships because it would take away a lot of my time, energy, focus, thought, while I have other and more important things to pour myself into right now, like my family, my friends, music and other hobbies, and God. I know there are so many other fulfilling things in my life now, that God has promised me and shown me, and I don't feel like I need to indulge myself in physical pleasures. Maybe people in sexual relations are involved for other reasons than pleasure or fulfillment, but I honestly can't say. I only know myself and I can only choose what happens in my life. Of course, this doesn't mean that I don't want to experience sex and desire eventually. I do. It's part of life, and I think it's how God made us. Let's admit it, we're sexual human beings. For me, I just want to make sure that it's at the right time and with the right person. As of now, I don't think I've found either. But it's ok. There's plenty of time for all this down the road.

~ ~ ~

To many people, sex is a taboo act. They act like it's a bad thing, or even immoral. I remember telling some of my friends before I had sex for the first time. At first, they were shocked. They thought I was "giving" away the most important part of me: my virginity. I thought I was sharing an intimate moment with the one I loved. Gradually, my friends grew to accept the idea that I was going to have sex with another person, and wished me luck. I chose to have sex with my boyfriend for two major reasons. One, I thought it would make me feel closer emotionally to my boyfriend. Most physical touches people share can be done between anyone and don't always mean a whole lot.

You can hold hands, hug, or even kiss almost anybody. Those physical actions are not special, and can be enacted in public, in private, or with many people over the course of the day. Sex however, is generally carried out between only two people and in private. I felt happy knowing that only my boyfriend and I were sharing a special moment together that no one else in our lives could replicate with us. The exclusivity of the action made it much more meaningful than holding hands in a public park, or something else of that nature. Two, I wanted to know what it felt like. It's not something that's always talked about in school. One of my friends who had sex earlier than most people was criticized and humiliated. People wouldn't stop spreading rumors about her. At the same time, she confided in me that it was one of the best things she had ever done. I also wanted to experience this mysterious feeling and experience that I was missing out on. Besides, my boyfriend was a dedicated athlete. He was physically attractive, which in a way, made me want to try having sex even more. Although the boyfriend I speak of and I have broken up and moved on, I realized that I really like having sex. I think it's a special way for people to show that they love one another by focusing all their attention on each other in a private moment. As much as I want to continue having sex for my personal pleasure, I am currently abstaining from it. I don't think I could have sex with someone I didn't love, or at least like very much. I guess it's because I associate sex with love and emotion. I can't have sex with someone I'm not emotionally close to because then I would be sharing my body and my heart with someone who doesn't care for me. I'm not condemning casual sex though; I'm saying why I can't do it even though I'd like to try it. Before I started having sex, I was too self conscious about my body. I hid it under baggy clothes and tried to avoid looking at myself in the mirror when changing. The first time my boyfriend and I were unclothed around each other, I realized that he wasn't focusing on my love handles or flabby stomach. He was focusing on how to make me feel special and loved in a way that no one else could. Not only did that do wonders for my self-esteem, but it also helped me learn something. I think at the heart of it, sex is the physical manifestation of emotion. It's hard to bare yourself to another person and lay out all your insecurities and still ask them to take you as you are, but when you have sex, that's essentially what you have to do. Maybe we all just need to find the right person.

## MAUREEN R. JOHNSTON

Marriage & Family Therapist

[www.MaureenJohnston.com](http://www.MaureenJohnston.com)

Maureen Johnston, MFT is a licensed psychotherapist with a private practice in San Jose. She has been working with children, teens, and adults for over 20 years. For the last few years, more and more of her practice has been with individuals dealing with gender identity issues and the process of transitioning from one gender to the other. Since she is the mother of a graduate, and the wife of a teacher, from one of the FUHSD high schools, she is familiar with many of the issues and pressures the Lynbrook community face. You can find more information about her at [www.MaureenJohnston.com](http://www.MaureenJohnston.com)

**One day when my son was 8 years old** and we were driving home, he asked, "Mom, what does an orgasm feel like?" The best I could manage at the moment was to say we'd talk about it when we got home. I needed a couple of minutes to think and try to formulate an answer for him that was honest and age appropriate. I struggled with how to explain to someone so young what is not really possible for him to have a physical understanding of what this experience is like. As best I could, I told him the basic physiology, but what I thought was much more important for him to hear was that this, like all other human interactions should be rooted in respect. We had emphasized since he was very young that we need to treat other people with kindness and respect, and so I fell back on this central lesson.

During the Aletheia read through of the student submissions, I was reminded of this conversation with my son. In some ways, many of the stories came back to this same issue. However, now it is all much more complicated because the physiology has caught up with the curiosity. Adolescence is when all the real sexual urges and desires are coming online. Since these emotions, thoughts, and bodily reactions are all so new and can feel overpowering, it is sometimes very difficult to know how to manage them in way that feels good to everyone involved. It can be a huge challenge to learn how to satisfy these strong physical desires while still treating others, and oneself, with respect and decency at all times.

For example, a number of the submissions alluded to the power dynamics between boys and girls. Some of the girls described a feeling of being 'used' or the fear that they would be taken advantage of if they did become sexually active. Other kids reported a discomfort with the sense that they had 'used' another. This speaks to the difficulty in creating an environment that allows both individuals to feel safe and comfortable.

Another topic that came up in a couple of the submissions had to do with fears that their particular desires would be perceived in a negative light by their peers. While there is much greater acceptance for gays and lesbians now, there is still the likelihood that same sex couples will be treated differently if seen hugging and kissing on campus like their straight friends. Unfortunately, it is easy to condemn things that seem odd or different because it makes us uncomfortable, so it is imperative that we apply the same rules of respect and kindness when we are confronted with them. What is most important is that no one is hurt or injured, and that whatever is happening is occurring with full consent and awareness by the individuals involved. This is key. We need to make sure that there is no coercion or force involved at any level of a relationship.

It is completely normal to have curiosity, questions, and concerns about sex and desire and relationships. It is part of being human; nature embedded this deep within our DNA. So yes, sexuality is an important part of many teen and adult relationships, but it is important to keep in mind that it is only one of many aspects within a relationship. While it may be hard or uncomfortable for teens to understand or accept, these desires and urges are something we live with until we are very old people. Hopefully, navigating them gets easier as we mature and gain more experience, both with our self and with our partners.

I know that I have covered this rich, fascinating topic in only the simplest of terms, but in the interest of brevity, I have kept this as short as I could. I have included resources that cover this in much more depth. I encourage you to look through them for ones that will most directly address your specific concerns.

Last year, my now twenty-year-old son worked as a camp counselor during his summer break. He lived for seven weeks with 11 thirteen-year-old boys. These young boys asked him a lot of questions about sexuality and relationships. He had to think carefully about responding in a manner that was appropriate for their age and understanding. While I don't know everything he said, I do know he emphasized the importance of respect and communication. I was very pleased to hear that when he was asked 'How do you know if it's ok to kiss a girl?' - he answered "You talk to her, ask her."



**Some interesting statistics**

- Teens who have plans for their future are more likely to delay becoming sexually active
- By the time they graduate, about half of high school students report having had sexual intercourse

**A few words for students**

- Everyone is curious, confused, eager, ambivalent, scared
- Not everyone is sexually active
- If you are going to be sexually active – practice “safe sex” and take precautions – use protection: condoms, oral contraceptives, every single time!
- Respect your partner and yourself
- Decide ahead of time how far you’re comfortable going with your partner – if you have made a decision with a clear head, you’re less likely to do something you’ll regret later
- Remember that using alcohol or other drugs will interfere with your ability to make clear, safe decisions
- Communicate with each other before, during, & after
- Pressuring is never ok – if you feel pressured to do something you’re not comfortable with, say so. If you’re pushing for something – stop it!
- Date/acquaintance rape is far too real and far too common – you need to get explicit agreement, not just lack of expressed “NO”

**A few tips for parents**

- Talk to your kids
- Explicitly share your values and beliefs with them – try to remember that while they may or may not hold them at this point of their lives, it is important for you to say what they are
- Listen as calmly as possible to their concerns, questions, fears
- It is ok if you don’t have all the answers, it is more important to be able to hear their questions without freaking out, stay calm
- Don’t put your head in the sand, but don’t be paranoid or accusatory either
- Breathe!

**Additional Resources****Websites**

Facts on American Teens’ Sexual and Reproductive Health - June 2013

<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/FB-ATSRH.html>

Sexual Risk Behavior: HIV, STD, & Teen Pregnancy Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/sexualbehaviors/>

Adolescent Sexual Behavior: Demographics

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/publications-a-z/413-adolescent-sexual-behavior-i-demographics>

Parents Sex Ed Center

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/parents-sex-ed-center-home>

Raising Healthy Kids: Families Talk about Sexual Health

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/parents/180-parents>

Adolescent Sexual Behavior

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

Sexual Health of Adolescents and Young Adults in the United States - Mar 28, 2013

<http://kff.org/womens-health-policy/fact-sheet/sexual-health-of-adolescents-and-young-adults-in-the-united-states/>

Sexual Activity Among Adolescents

<http://www.cedu.niu.edu/~shumow/itt/doc/SexualActivityAmongAdolescents.pdf>

**Books**

How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish

Changing Bodies, Changing Lives: Expanded Third Edition: A Book for Teens on Sex and Relationships by Ruth Bell

Sex + Faith: Talking with Your Child from Birth to Adolescence by Kate Ott

Romance and Sex in Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: Risks and Opportunities by Ann C. Crouter & Alan Booth

Between Parent and Child: The Bestselling Classic That Revolutionized Parent-Child Communication Paperback by Dr. Haim G. Ginott, Alice Ginott, & H. Wallace Goddard