



Talking Points for Youth on Sex Education

TALKING POINTS:

1. The most important thing to realize is we've got to get real about teens and sex.
2. We've got to embrace a realistic, comprehensive approach that includes information about abstinence *and* condoms, because condoms can help prevent STDs.
3. Abstinence-only-until-marriage programs that censor and distort information about condoms and contraception fuel the STD epidemic by denying sexually active youth information they need to protect their health.
4. But even abstinence and condoms are not enough. Sex education needs to be relevant to our real lives and our lives are about more than abstinence and condoms. Our lives are about making decisions, setting goals, managing pressure and stress, building relationships and friendships, understanding who we are.
5. Abstinence is, of course, the only 100 percent effective prevention for all STDs, but since 70 percent of young people have had sex by the age of 18, we need more than just abstinence.
6. Sex education is not an either/or thing. Abstinence can discourage sexual activity particularly in the early teen years, and condoms can help protect when young people become sexually active.
7. Information is power. Education builds better decisions. Censorship promotes ignorance, and ignorance promotes disease.
8. STDs are not just a youth epidemic. U.S. adults have the highest rates of STDs in the Western World. In many ways, we're following in your footsteps, and STDs are an issue that society as a whole needs to come to grips with.
9. In this country, sex is everywhere – we see it on TV and hear it in the music we listen to – but we're afraid to talk honestly about sex in our schools?
10. Responsibility must go both ways. We need to protect our own sexual health and the health of our peers. But adults (parents, teachers, policy makers) are responsible for giving us the tools to protect ourselves – accurate information, confidential health services, and a voice in the decision-making process.