



Yeshiva University

ChampionsGate III

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

ORLANDO, FLORIDA • JULY 20-22, 2008

Pre-marital Sexuality: From Adolescence to the Chuppah

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∞ BREAKOUT SESSION ∞

Monday, July 21, 2008



Rabbi Isaac Elchanan
Theological Seminary

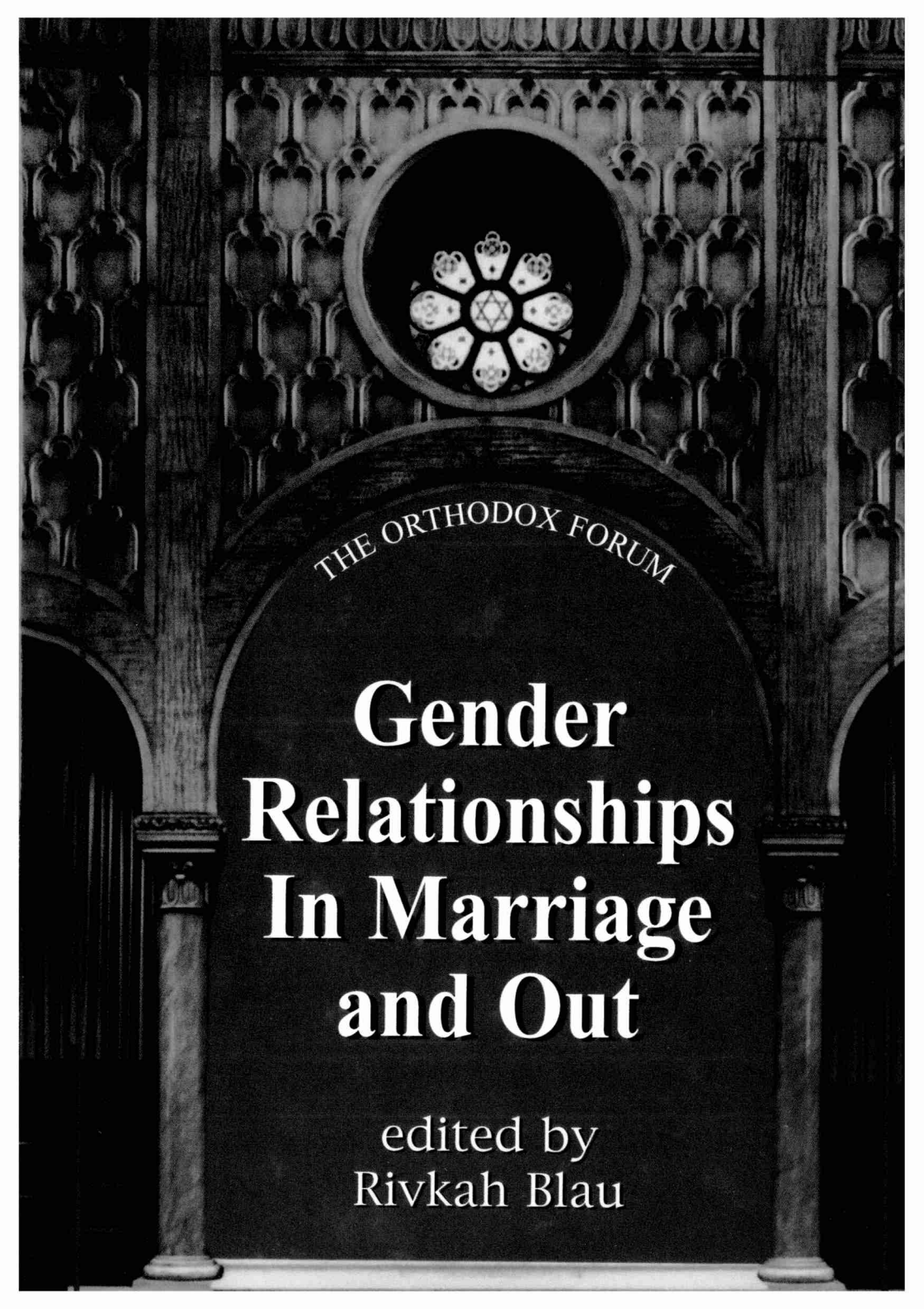
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THE ORTHODOX FORUM

**Gender
Relationships
In Marriage
and Out**

edited by
Rivkah Blau

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Excerpts from Interviews with Orthodox Singles

Koby Frances and Jennie Rosenfeld

The lives of unmarried Orthodox men and women are largely characterized by strivings for religious and professional growth amid struggles to find fulfilling relationships and intimacy. At times these efforts can coexist with emotional currents of loneliness, religious fragmentation, sadness and confusion particularly regarding how to incorporate and express desire within a halakhic framework.

Many seriously committed religious singles are discussing their thoughts and feelings about the conflict between their sexual and religious behavior and identity. They find themselves in halakhic, psychological and existential quandaries as they wrestle to reconcile feelings and behaviors with their Jewish observance. Lacking the religious structure found in marriage, family and community life, many Orthodox singles are seeking some form of expression, and perhaps some kind of reconciliation, with this struggle that may not have a solution in consonance with halakhah. Their voices, colored

by the unique background and personality of each individual, deserve our attention.

With this in mind we share the reflections of some thoughtful, articulate single men and women who were interviewed during the past year. The interview process was designed to allow the individuals to express their personal narratives in a way that felt comfortable, and with our strict commitment to complete confidentiality. The interviewees said that they were willing to share their private stories, ones which they hardly felt safe disclosing to anyone directly, in order to contribute to the greater purpose of addressing this problem in a serious and sensitive religious venue. While an honest discussion of an issue impacting a significant segment of the community is crucial, we are committed to conducting it with a sense of *tzniut* and awareness that these matters are personal.

We interviewed nine women and seven men ranging from ages twenty-one through forty, all of whom self-identified as Orthodox. For the most part our questions were open-ended. The one to two-hour interview began with one question: *Can you tell me about your religious and sexual life and how the two intersect, if at all.* As the interview progressed, we occasionally requested examples that would better illustrate a more abstract opinion.

The interviews were qualitative in nature and designed for the purpose of hearing people tell how they mediate between their religious identity and sexual identity. This was not a scientific sample, nor did it intend to be. We believe, however, that the results of these interviews are meaningful and have ramifications for our community as a whole.

Most of the interviewees grew up with strong religious Orthodox backgrounds. Those who grew up in less observant homes became more observant in their later teens. In terms of their occupations, they were Jewish educators and leaders, rabbis, corporate professionals and students of various disciplines. While the lives and personalities of these individuals varied greatly, similar themes became apparent.

When describing their experiences in intimate relationships, many expressed having felt an extraordinary amount of internal con-

flict and frustration. On the one hand stands halakhic observance, and on the other hand stand modern notions of what it means to be in a relationship and people's physical and emotional needs in such a relationship. Individuals often felt trapped in this dilemma, knowing that both sides brought rewards and consequences. Over and over again relationships were described as burdened by the decision of what to do. Sometimes the relationship would unravel because of this.

Interviewees often laid down the facts quite bluntly: single men and women are fully developed sexual beings who interact with a world saturated in sex. They have no halakhically permitted sexual outlet. Our community's value system is strikingly different from the secular one, posing a very real challenge to single men and women. As one twenty-two year old woman said, "I've thought a lot about this and I really believe that our generation is different and unique in the challenges that these laws pose to us – but then what? Should we get rid of the halakhot? I feel like that would be the easier answer, but it's not what I think should happen."

A thirty-two year old man who struggled to reconcile his sexual feelings and religious identity, described how hard it was for him to sing *d'rakheha d'arkhei noam* each Shabbat in shul. He believed that our community needed to better address the conflict between the values of modernity and our tradition. "Every resource should be used to communicate, internalize and protect our value system so it remains relevant to everyone who interacts with the modern world." He thought that if this did not happen, we would be allowing ourselves, our youth, and our single men and women in particular, to be exposed to – and perhaps swept away by – a tidal wave of alienation.

Another important theme discussed by the interviewees is that with the sexual lives of single people in particular, there are few venues for socially legitimate discussion and guidance. Unmarried couples who are in a conflicted quagmire about their intimacy and shared physical or sexual experiences, are often uncomfortable and ashamed discussing together the meaning of their relationship, the limits or discomfort in their intimacy, or their need to seek help and

talk about their feelings with others. The fact that the struggle of premarital sexuality is not addressed in any religious or communal context only exacerbates the pain, secrecy, fragmentation and denial that singles often experience.

When people internalize the message that this is not to be spoken of, it is not a far jump to believe that it also cannot be thought about. The result is that many single adults lack a language in which to internally process and outwardly discuss their sexual feelings and experiences. Pretending it's not there and that it never happened is sometimes perceived as the best, albeit least effective, option.

Silence on this issue was often accompanied by deep feelings of guilt and confusion, not only for actual physical contact, but even for experiencing the desire for such contact. The guilt was mostly unproductive in that it did not lead to any form of *teshuvah*, but only to increased feelings of shame and self-loathing. Feelings of guilt also led to decreased levels of religious observance in general, in order to avoid increasing conflict and hypocrisy. As one woman said, "After a while the split existence of night and day stops making sense and when you wake up six months later you're no longer the *frum* girl who is close to *Hashem*, has 2 weekly *havrusas*, and is very spiritually connected." Since singles often experience their sexuality in the context of sin, it becomes especially hard to integrate their striving for religious growth and stability when such an important aspect of their personality trails behind, weighing the rest of them down. The challenge of integrating their religious and sexual identity can prove almost insurmountable at times.

If we are to empathize with people who are going through what is perhaps the most difficult period of their lives, we need to normalize these issues for our community and for the individuals experiencing them. Despite the lack of any formal solution, the Rav's concept of "*adabra v'yanuah li*" – the redemptive quality of speech – is quite applicable to this situation. Interviewees, who were previously unable to discuss their feelings with anyone, felt a catharsis in finally being able to speak about their pain and conflict, often for the first time. By offering an ear, by giving voice to conflict and by empathizing with the serious challenges posed to single men

and women, however they were experienced and lived, this part of their identity was able to become both speakable and hearable. As the topic was discussed, and therefore made more available to consciousness, these individuals could start to believe that their actions did not ruin them as Jews or as people.

"Thank you for listening," one man remarked, "I've never told anyone about this before, not even myself." People we did not even know approached us and said thank you for listening to "our voices." By simply listening to several individuals without commenting, judging, grimacing or squirming, a powerful result had taken effect.

The importance of being able to listen sends a message of care – that as a community we will not hide under the veil of *tzniut* from people's real frustration and anguish or even conflicted pleasure. When we as a community engage actively and consciously in tough issues, we give permission for individuals to think in creative and complex ways about their own conditions. Our silence about this might be inadvertently creating the ideal social conditions for people to give up struggling in this area, which would be the real tragedy.

Note: The following vignette is a fictionalized sketch which represents a synthesis of actual interviews with several individuals. All identifying data have been changed and resemblance to any individual is incidental.

When I started dating there were a few relationships, some more serious than others, where we might have sat close to each other or stared into one another's eyes, but there was never really a dilemma of wanting to touch and not being able to. The conflict of sexuality, which of course I was always dealing with internally, was separate from dating.

As I got older and moved to the City, maybe because of my mood or surroundings or just my natural development, or a combination, I started to become more aware of sexuality in my real life and not just in my private thoughts. I might meet attractive women at work or in the supermarket and instead of just noting to myself

that they were pretty, I would strategize how I can introduce myself to them and where we might go from there. My immediate desire for a physical relationship, for that kind of intimacy, seemed to override my needs for an emotional connection.

My dating life also changed. I found myself looking at dates differently, noticing their bodies, how they walked... conversation was often tinged with all kinds of innuendo – the question of life-long partner was irrelevant when there was so much sexual tension. I always struggled with sexual feelings and hirhurim, but I hadn't encountered these things in my real life quite this way before. I have to admit it was enticing but also scary; it didn't feel like this was me. It was hard to figure out who I was religiously when this was on my mind so much. How was this in line with the rest of my religious observance? In davening or learning I became a little apathetic – it wasn't where my heart was. I wished that these thoughts would go away.

Eventually I just got bored with this back and forth, seeing no way out of it – thinking about sex and feeling bad about it. The guilt just wasn't productive. Maybe if I lived in Williamsburg this standard would be reasonable and to some degree I think they have the right idea – not their world-view, but with sexuality, I don't know if they are challenged the way Modern Orthodoxy is. We are taught that it's okay to see movies and plays, go to college, hang out with secular people, read literature, socialize with women and date them for a few months if you have to – but don't even lay a finger on them, don't say sexual words, don't have sexual thoughts and don't tell anyone about them if you do. Can one get rid of sexual urges? Can you just cut off a natural experience that in every other context of our lives is normal, permissible and healthy? What – take a cold shower? Sit on my hands? Say shima? Everyone knows the more you try to get it out the more it comes in.

Soon enough I met someone who I really connected with and liked. Her name was Leora. And when we met, the possibility of touching was constantly in the back of my mind, and it was confusing. Part of me wanted a physical relationship yet now I was scared to pursue it. I didn't want that kind of relationship with a person I respected, admired and saw as a marriage potential. This

wasn't a fling, a way to relieve sexual tension, but a real person with whom I wanted to do the right thing. I wanted to be shomer negiah because I didn't want the physicality to be a distraction or a source of contamination. So for a few weeks all we did was sit in my car and stare at each other in silence – it was extremely intense. I kept hearing in her head and in my own, "Nu already – are you gonna do something?" But this dilemma had me frozen, both in my words and in my actions.

And soon I realized that the only thing more distracting than touching was not touching. You know, I regret not talking this out with her, maybe we could have been stronger, because eventually we did start to be physical, but somehow it seemed like we needed to be silent about this – I don't know, maybe we were scared to speak about it because then we'd for sure succumb. In the end, I just wanted to get the touching over with so we could move on and continue with our relationship. One day, when I reached out for her hand, of course it was nice but I knew it was out of a sense of defeat. The question of 'to touch or not to touch' was too heavy for us.

Once that happened I figured that the question of touching would be less pressing, that our tensions would be relieved. But that's just not the case. Because stuff comes up all the time with this, like how far we are comfortable going, how we talk to each other about it if at all... And my relationship with G-d also feels strained. In every other way I feel myself to be a devoted Jew, willing to make certain sacrifices. But in this one area... it's very different.

Sexuality still brings us more pain than pleasure. And the worst part of it is that I can't help feeling like once I've decided to not be shomer negiah, I don't even deserve to have a place to figure out all these issues whether they are religious, psychological or about the relationship. In a way maybe this is my punishment for violating something so big. I'm still not really sure...

Note: The following vignette is a fictionalized sketch which represents a synthesis of actual interviews with several individuals. All identifying data have been changed and resemblance to any individual is incidental.

After dating Yitz for a while, not touching became a struggle – you reach a certain point in the relationship, a certain amount of emotional intimacy, and the physical seems to be the natural next step – though it took me a long time to admit to myself that that's what I was feeling. But we were strong or at least trying to be. We even spoke to a rabbi at one point... But after being in the relationship for four months, and after many such episodes where we almost touched, even while taking every necessary precaution to avoid *yichud*, there was one night where the precautions just weren't enough...

After Yitz left my apartment that night, it was unbearable for me: the pain, the shame, the guilt, but also the pleasure and sense of relief I had felt in finally touching Yitz, but which I tried to ignore. I was always the good girl, the one who didn't need to change in Israel. But suddenly my past virtues were meaningless. I am now my students, I am now my campers. That line which appeared to me then, became a mantra over the next weeks and months – I am now my students, I am now my campers. I was now able to empathize with students in a new way, but it wasn't worth the price; I was not fit to be a role model, to teach Torah or to learn Torah. I was overcome with self-loathing – I literally could not look at my own face in the mirror – isn't the girl supposed to be the strong one? – what's wrong with me? I remember my journal entry that night as if it were yesterday. 'I will fast today to punish myself... Please G-d help me, please G-d help me...'

Afterwards we'd analyze and overanalyze and swear things would never happen again. The issue of touching or not touching took over the relationship; it became our obsession. But even though I couldn't live up to *shomer negiah* in my actions, I still carried the worst type of *shomer negiah* baggage with me; like how we'd only be physical when completely overcome with desire, and then we'd end up going much further than either of us would ever have imagined – after all, wasn't the distinction between holding hands and anything else halakhically artificial? Ironically, it was our strong commitment to laws we physically couldn't keep that stopped us from assessing and setting realistic boundaries. You see setting those boundaries was like giving up and admitting that we weren't *shomer*

negiah, when we were still fighting that reality. At the time I thought, "As long as I get upset or think about the *halakhah* every time we touch, at least I'm keeping some *halakhah*..." As long as I was still struggling it was okay...

After the breakup, I was a mess. I felt afraid of myself, of my own capacity for sexuality. Daily life was so difficult, feeling like I was living a contradiction, because those same actions which plagued me and tore me apart had simultaneously fulfilled my deepest need. And, there was no one I could talk to, no one I could trust. My family, friends, and teachers all had a certain image of me and I alone knew how false to that image I had been. I couldn't bear to open up to them and face their inevitable disappointment. And then there were my students – sometimes while teaching I'd have flashbacks – what right do I have to speak words of Torah? What right do I have to stand here as a role model? I placed my hope in *teshuvah*, but somehow felt it didn't go deep enough...

Years later, after several more relationships like Yitz, I just stopped struggling with *shomer negiah*. I was battle-worn from too many relationships that were characterized by constant struggle, and I was lonely... I felt I needed a sexual outlet, and at the same time I realized that touch was not only about sexual desire, it was also just a human need for closeness. Around that time, I met Shai, and we clearly connected on many different levels. It was the first relationship that I entered with the intention of just being "normal" and letting things take their natural course. Shai was from a different world, with none of my past and none of my hang-ups – he was the opposite of Yitz – I can't really describe it – he had this infinite depth and ability to make me feel like I was the only one in the world when he listened to me. One night, a month into the relationship, we were sitting silently in his apartment, when I asked what he was thinking. He was thinking of how much he wanted to dance with me at that moment, so I just stood up and said we should dance. It was a moment... I can still feel the reverence in his hands and body as he drew me to him to dance. There were moments in which we were apart, each moving on different sides of the room, only our eyes still connected, and there were moments when he held me

close. I don't remember how long it went on or when the music stopped, but I felt exhilarated afterwards as we sat talking. Nothing more happened at the time, but I felt deeply fulfilled. And that too was a unique feeling; because *shomer negiah* had trained me to be hypersexual, not to understand the beauty and basic humanity of just hugging or holding another person.

There was a period following that night in which I reveled in my normalcy; my ability to hug and to hold hands, to reach out and feel someone's face – basically, my ability to find a space for the physical expression I craved, which wasn't a sexual space. Touch and physical contact in a caring way was a need for me – I couldn't bear the loneliness, and the feelings of not having felt a hand reach out to me in months... By the time I reached those decisions, there was no guilt left for me to feel – it was so untenable for me to live without love and touch in my life, that I no longer was in a position to struggle.

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Life Values and Intimacy Education: Methods and Messages

Yocheved Debow and Anna C. Woloski-Wruble

THE NEED

The yeshiva day school community in the United States strives to transmit its religious values to the next generation. Living in the twenty-first century in a society saturated by sexuality and sexual imagery, yeshiva day school youth receive endless messages from the images around them, messages that are inconsistent with their traditional values. This exposure places our youth in the position that their access to information about sexuality and sexual behaviors precedes their possession of knowledge and understanding (Hyde & Delamater, 2003). This phenomenon puts children at a high risk for conflict as they struggle to bridge their own traditional value system with that of the secular culture. In the absence of a comprehensive sexuality education from within the system, children are

left on their own to process the cultural messages they are exposed to, and often by default these messages become the only "education" they receive about this topic. This lacuna is reflected in the fact that although there are no studies or statistics available in these areas presently, seasoned educators report a rise in anecdotally reported high risk behavior and sexual experimentation among our day school students.

The yeshiva day school curriculum focuses considerable attention on details of *halakhah* and *hashkafah* connected to *Shabbat*, *hagim*, *kashrut*, and a full array of *mitzvot* *bein adam l'haveiro*. However, in the area about which most adolescents show curiosity and interest and about which the *halakhah* has clear opinions, the school chooses to be silent. This silence itself communicates an educational message. Our refusal to talk about sexuality gives an implicit message that Judaism is at the very least uncomfortable about sexuality or worse, has nothing positive to say on the subject. Certainly then, our students do not come to be cognizant of the respect and sense of *kedushah* which characterize our rabbis' approach to sexuality in its appropriate context (Brown 1994).

In response to the argument that these matters are best addressed by the home exclusively, it is important to note that the above mentioned areas of *halakhah* are also addressed at home and yet we deem them important enough to merit formal study time in school. Moreover, the literature among the general population indicates that parents hesitate to talk about sexuality and intimacy with their children (Santrok, 1998). The need to address these areas within the school framework, as well as to help parents become partners in this endeavor, becomes of utmost importance (Rodriguez, 2000).

Though many acknowledge the importance of education in intimacy and sexuality from a *halakhic* perspective, most of our schools have not yet risen to the challenge. There may be a number of reasons for this. Firstly, there is the fear that increased learning about sexuality leads to increased sexual activity. Studies indicate that the opposite is true, with sexual activity delayed among those who receive school-based educational programs. Sexual activity is further delayed in the general population, and safer practices

are reported as being used when parents also communicate with their children about these topics (Kirby, 1999). In addition there is a certain hesitation on the part of schools to take on a topic with which there is much discomfort, both on the part of teachers and on the part of parents as to the school's role in educating in these very personal areas. Teachers have not been trained to teach these topics and therefore do not feel competent to address them appropriately. Informal surveys across a number of yeshiva day schools confirm that the current situation is such that at best, students receive a few lessons about human development which tend to focus on the biological facts in middle school, and a few lessons, or perhaps even a semester course, about family purity and related issues towards the end of their high school education. Clearly this is not sufficient. Research indicates that sexuality education is most effective when it is comprehensive, beginning when children are young and continuing throughout their years of formal education (Hyde & Delamater, 2003). Educators who recognize the need to provide education in areas of sexuality and intimacy face an additional challenge. The lack of educational materials uniquely designed to address the particular approaches and understandings necessary for the yeshiva day school community in these areas stymies implementation.

It is our belief that day school communities need to provide comprehensive Life Values and Intimacy Education. Students need to learn developmentally appropriate, traditional Jewish concepts of personal, social, and sexual development from an early stage in their own development, and during the dramatic course of changes which occur throughout school (Levin, 1994). Students require a safe learning environment which provides opportunity for discussions and questions, so that these Torah values become their own. We present our curriculum and lesson guides "Life Values and Intimacy Education for the Yeshiva Day School" as a response to this need. This title reflects the content of the educational materials which incorporate Life Values education (Values and Personal Skills, Human Development, Society and Culture) as well as Intimacy education (Relationships, Sexual Behavior and Sexual Health). Intimacy education was chosen over sexuality education because it reflects the

broader spectrum of topics in relationships which reach beyond, but include issues of, sexuality. In addition, we considered intimacy to be a less provocative term than sexuality, particularly for the Modern Orthodox community.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Educating for Life Values and Intimacy raises a complex set of issues. The following discussion addresses these issues from both within an educational theoretical framework and a Torah/*Halakhtic* framework. We address questions associated with morality based education, as well as the need for formal sexuality education. In addition, we consider the role parents and educators should be playing with regard to these topics.

MORALITY BASED EDUCATION

A provocative and compelling approach to the development of moral reasoning is presented by Thomas Green in his book, *Voices: The Educational Formation of Conscience* (1999). He presents his ideas as being particularly applicable to communities of text and liturgy. Defining conscience as “reflexive judgment about things that matter,” Green presents five different “voices” of conscience, the conscience of craft, of membership, of sacrifice, of memory and of imagination. These voices do not develop sequentially, but rather simultaneously, and argue with each other in the process of forming a mature conscience. Drawing insight and inspiration from these five voices of conscience, a person is invited through the interactions of these different voices to author his own moral life (Schwartz, 2000). Midrashic literature expresses these ideas in a language of its own. It teaches that when Yosef was tempted by Potiphar’s wife and, struggling internally with his desire on the one hand, and his innate sense of what God wanted of him on the other hand, the image of his father’s face appeared to him (*Rashti on Bereishit* 39:11). This image protects him from doing that which would be against his conscience – an internal “voice” in Green’s terminology, established early in his life, which could be evoked to serve as an internal moral compass in a moment of moral conflict.

The essential debate concerning moral education orbits two positions – the moral development approach represented most notably by Kohlberg, and the directive approach of Character Education. The first emphasizes an open-ended discussion in which students come to their own moral conclusions through a process of moral reasoning, in which the main focus is upon the process. Kohlberg assumes that children, given proper opportunity for moral discourse, will develop a mature moral sense from within (Kohlberg, 1976). This school of thought owes its philosophic roots to a vision of liberal education which emphasizes the innate abilities of a child and conceives education as the collection of experiences that best allows these innate potentialities to develop. Children learn and construct knowledge of their own accord and schools should allow them to grow unencumbered. The second approach of Character Education sharply criticizes the first by countering on both theoretical and empirical grounds that children need to be taught wrong from right and will not necessarily arrive at mature moral sensibilities without direct instruction (Lickona, 1993). This approach draws on more traditional views of education that conceive young minds as blank slates and educators as those charged with the task of filling them with knowledge and proper attitudes. Character education, while not reverting to absolute puritan school-house methods, does tend to align with more religious approaches and employs among its instructional methods the presentation of models of good character and narratives of virtuous action with unambiguous conclusions.

Looking to Jewish sources for insight on how to negotiate between these poles, we find that far from deciding the matter, Jewish sources seem to encourage both sides of the dialectic. Rav Wolbe’s book *Z’riah U’Binyan B’Hinukh*, (translated 1999) encourages a model of “Growing and Building.” These two approaches parallel the dialectic referred to above. Growing assumes the innate ability of the organic process to realize its own potential when provided with a healthy environment. The role of the educator is similar to that of a farmer who plants a tree. A farmer cannot directly make a tree grow higher but must water, plant, prune and weed. Likewise, the educator does not present answers but presents questions, removes

impediments to learning and generally protects the environment from pernicious effects. The building model assumes the opposite. The house does not rise up of its own accord. Instead, the harder the contractors work and the more they invest in high quality materials, the bigger and stronger the house will be. Similarly, children learn what they are taught. The more they are taught, the better the ideas and the clearer and more compelling the moral instructions, the better students will develop. The approach of our Life Values and Intimacy Curriculum similarly embraces both these approaches and therefore maintains a consciously multi-faceted approach, not by default but by design.

IMPORTANCE OF FORMAL, COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Many classic sources support the idea that effective education in general starts early. "When a child knows how to speak, his father should teach him Torah and the *Shema*. Which Torah? Rabbi Hamnunah specified 'Moshe commanded the Torah to us' (Sukkah 42b). Why is this particular verse chosen? As soon as a child has the capacity for language we instill in our youngster fundamental ideas of Judaism. We as parents and educators are instructed to teach our children that there is a commanding voice outside of ourselves that dictates our behavior. The idea of *hinuch lmitzvot* is a basic building block of *halakhtic* upbringing, and perhaps reflects the *halakhtic* way of developing conscience. Despite their not having a *halakhtic* obligation until bar and bat mitzvah, the gemara maintains that children need to prepare for fasting on Yom Kippur from an earlier age (Yoma 82b). The advantages of earlier education are further lauded by Elisha Ben Abuya who said:

"One who studies Torah as a child to what can he be likened? – to ink on fresh paper. And one who studies Torah as an old man to what can he be likened? – to ink written on smudged paper" (*Avot* 4:25).

We want our values and beliefs to rest on fresh paper, before they

enter a state of competition with society's conflicting values. The *Meiri* (quoted in Schwartz, 1982) expresses the idea that a child should be guided towards the correct ethical behaviors from an early age, so that these correct behaviors become a fixed quality in him, to the extent that they are so natural that even under pressure he does not consider alternative behaviors as an option. This notion is confirmed by policymakers, parents and educators who recognize that sexuality education should be provided during children's formative years, before they become adolescents (Landry et al, 2000).

There may be those who argue that sexuality and intimacy are topics that do not belong in our classrooms. They are matters which relate primarily to marriage and it would not be appropriate to address them until our students are ready for *hatan* and *kallah* classes. In addition they may say that the value of *tzniut* must preclude sexuality education insofar as it requires public discussion of intensely private matters. While *tzniut* is a core value and certainly applies to our topics of sexuality and intimacy, we must recognize that our children's environment is already saturated with sexuality at every turn. Billboards, advertisements, movies as well as songs and their lyrics all broadcast praise of sexual pleasure and sexual infidelity. Young people learn about sexuality from a multiplicity of sources including parents, friends, teachers, television, music, books, advertisements, toys and the Internet (SIECUS, 2001). Thwarting sexuality education in our yeshiva day schools will not advance the cause of *tzniut* but will succeed in promoting general culture and its anti-*tzniut* stance as their sole source of sexual values.

The primary goal of a school-based Life Values and Intimacy education is to help young people build a foundation of beliefs and values with regard to these topics as they mature into healthy adults. Bringing up our children in the current cultural climate necessitates that we become active partners in their sexuality education (Admonit, 2002; Brown, 1994). The religious Life Values and Intimacy educator must help students navigate the secular values they are exposed to so that they emerge with a deep understanding of and commitment to Jewish traditional values in these areas (Samet, 2005).

THE ROLE OF THE PARENT AND THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

The literature among the general population indicates that while children often rank their parents as one of their primary sources of information on sexuality issues, parents hesitate to talk about sexuality and intimacy with their children (Santrok, 1998; The Henry Kaiser Foundation, 2001). Parents often feel ill-equipped to help their children negotiate the new territories of sexuality and sexual behaviors which are so different from their own childhood experiences (King & Lorusso, 1997; Brown, 1994). It would be fair to assume that these findings reflect the attitudes of parents in our own yeshiva day school community.

Having had no formal education themselves in these areas, parents may often adopt one of two approaches. They may think that since they managed without guidance, so too will their children. Or alternatively, they may feel too uncomfortable, embarrassed or uneducated about these issues and therefore choose not to discuss them. Concomitantly, these same parents are conflicted about allowing their children to be educated in these areas in the school framework, wondering how much the yeshiva education will reflect their personal values in these areas. The need to address these areas within the school framework, as well as to help parents become partners in this endeavor, becomes all the more pressing. There is evidence that sexuality education classes lead to improved communication between parents and children specifically in areas of sexuality (Scales, 1991). This communication is markedly increased when a component of the program includes parents and assists them in developing strategies for open communication with their children about sexuality (Blake et al, 2001). In addition, school-based sexuality education helps children adjust to the different realities from those with which their parents grew up (King & Lorusso, 1997; Scales, 1991). While sexuality education should be a shared responsibility between parents and the school, the school is positioned to be a key partner in addressing these critical educational issues in a comprehensive, and therefore most effective, manner.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Sexuality Education

Since the beginning of the twentieth century sexuality education has been a debated topic in the United States. The approach to education in these areas has undergone tremendous changes since then, with perhaps the most dramatic shift of focus being during the 1960s. It was at this time that the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) was chartered, becoming an organization devoted to fostering research, curricular development, implementation, and evaluation in sexuality education. In 1991 SIECUS, seeing the lack of information available to schools and teachers in general in areas of sexuality, and in particular the lack of any gold standard curriculum (Donovan, 1989), developed "National Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education." This was developed by a National Guidelines Task Force composed of representatives from fifteen national organizations, schools, and universities. This Task Force developed the topics, values, life behaviors, and developmental messages that were included in the first edition of the Guidelines published in October 1991. They were updated in 1996 by the original members of the Task Force to reflect societal and technological changes that had occurred since 1991, and updated again in 2004.

SIECUS (2004) defines sexuality education as seeking to assist young people in understanding a positive view of sexuality, providing them with information and skills about taking care of their sexual health, and helping them make sound decisions now and in the future. They established four major goals for comprehensive sexuality education programs:

- To provide accurate, age-appropriate information about human sexuality.
- To provide a venue for young people to develop and understand their values, attitudes, and beliefs about sexuality.
- To help young people develop relationships and interpersonal skills.
- To help young people exercise responsibility regarding sexual

relationships, including addressing abstinence, pressures to become prematurely involved in sexual intercourse, and the use of contraception and other sexual health measures.

The SIECUS guidelines, as clearly stated in the introduction (2004) were not a text book, or a curriculum. They provided an organizational framework of the knowledge of human sexuality and family living within four developmental levels from kindergarten through high school. Written with values reflecting the beliefs of most communities in a pluralistic society, SIECUS recommended that the characteristics and values of each local community would need to determine the exact content of the specific curriculum for each particular population.

Life Values Curriculum Background

After SIECUS produced their first guidelines in 1991, a group of concerned community educators, including lay people, rabbis, counselors and a therapist affiliated with the Fuchs Mizrachi School in Cleveland, Ohio, spearheaded by Miki Wieder, a therapist at the Center for Marital and Sexual Health and a parent in the school, formed their own Task Force and developed what became the "Life Values Curriculum: Health Education For the Jewish Day School" (1999). This preliminary document followed the SIECUS guidelines, with comprehensive modifications to fit the needs of the yeshiva day school population. This first step was groundbreaking work, reflecting the commitment to a vision which recognized the necessity for comprehensive sexuality education within a Torah-based framework for our yeshiva day schools. The next step was to move from theory to practice. "The Life Values Curriculum: Health Education for the Jewish Day School" provided a framework which needed to be translated into classroom-ready units for teachers.

THE CURRICULUM

Underlying Assumptions

Our work has been to provide a scoped and sequenced, developmentally appropriate classroom-ready guide for teaching Life Values

and Intimacy Education in the Orthodox Jewish Day School. We define "Life Values and Intimacy Education" as much broader than issues related to sexuality. From a Torah perspective, Life Values and Intimacy education is multi-faceted. It is about the centrality of the family in relationship to God and to each other, about the relationship between parents and their influence on the development of their children. It is about Torah family values, about mutual respect and understanding, it is about communication, and it is about love. It includes attitudes concerning these issues as well as decision-making skills, in particular related to issues of interpersonal behavior. These monumental constructs which have extensive behavioral ramifications need to be introduced at the early stages of personality development, and continue to be addressed throughout our children's education to have a true impact on their development into young adults.

Our hope is that our curriculum will equip schools to prepare their students for these extremely important areas of development from within a Torah framework. It is to this end that we have developed the following underlying curricular assumptions:

- Man¹ was created *B'tzelem Elokim*. This phrase is the essential understanding underlying our whole curriculum. It captures the unique nature of man, the idea that as opposed to all other living creatures, man is a complex combination of both physical and spiritual. God granted man this unique position in the world and with it come concomitant obligations. Therefore, we strive to imbue all physical aspects of our lives with a spiritual element, and in so doing elevate all of our activities to a level of *kedushah*. Being created *B'tzelem Elokim* carries with it the challenge to recognize the other as also being created *B'tzelem Elokim*, inspiring respect, tolerance and acceptance. This is at the essence of our curriculum.
- In order for students to experience a Torah lifestyle as being relevant to them, they must experience Torah as addressing issues that concern them. Presenting a Jewish sexual ethic helps our students appreciate the wisdom and relevance of Judaism to those aspects of their lives which are most significant to them.

- Judaism views sexuality and intimacy as having innate *kedushah* in the appropriate context, that is within the context of marriage.
- The yeshiva day school community would benefit from children receiving a comprehensive, sexuality education based in a *Torani/halakhic* perspective, within the schools.
- This comprehensive sexuality education should be a partnership between parents, who are central figures in sexuality education, their children, and the schools.
- Life Values and Intimacy Education needs to be offered to our students from an early age in order that a Torah-based understanding of these concepts be their formative source of knowledge and understanding in these areas.
- The Life Values and Intimacy Education curriculum recognizes that a successful program is based in active participation, ideally through multiple teaching methods. Students are encouraged to personalize material by incorporating games, role-playing, brainstorming and small group discussions.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The program ideally has been designed from kindergarten through grade 12, with approximately 10 classes in each year of the elementary school, and 15–20 classes throughout each middle and high school grade. While the ideal model is to teach the curriculum across all grades, it can also be used starting in middle school or high school only. Educational objectives have been organized across six concepts, adapted from the original key concepts in the *SIECUS* guidelines. These key concepts define the necessary components of a comprehensive Torah-based sexuality education. The key concepts in our curriculum are:

1. **VALUES AND PERSONAL SKILLS:** Our curriculum is based in Torah values and in developing an understanding and commitment to these values. In addition, healthy interpersonal relationships require the development and use of personal and interpersonal skills.
2. **RELATIONSHIPS:** Relationships are a central part of our interac-

tions throughout our lives. Our relationships as young people help us to develop skills for our adult relationships.

3. **HUMAN DEVELOPMENT:** Human development includes the understanding of the interrelationship between physical, emotional, social and intellectual growth.
4. **SEXUAL BEHAVIOR:** Sexual behavior is a central part of being human and is natural and normal, but needs to be framed and guided by *halakhah*.
5. **SEXUAL HEALTH:** Sexual health has two components: the empowerment of the individual to pursue quality marital intimacy and in addition acquire information and develop attitudes to avoid risk-taking and to avoid non-*halakhic* behaviors.
6. **SOCIETY AND CULTURE:** We are heavily influenced by the society and culture in which we live. Learning to balance that which we identify with and that which is antithetical to our values becomes a pivotal part of our education.

Within each key concept are a number of specific topic areas. Each of these topics is described by what was defined as a sub-concept. Within each topic there are a number of developmental messages which define the important content appropriate at four different age levels for each sub-concept (see table below).

Key Concepts and Topics in the Life Values and Intimacy Education Curriculum

Based directly on Life Values Curriculum: Health Education for Jewish Day Schools (Wieder et al, 1999)

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| Key Concept 1: Values and Personal Skills | | Key Concept 4: Sexual Behavior | |
| TOPICS: Values Decision Making Communication Appropriate Assertiveness Negotiation Looking for Help | TOPICS: Sexuality throughout Life Masturbation Shared Sexual Behavior Abstinence Human Sexual Response Fantasy Sexual Dysfunction | | |
| Key Concept 2: Relationships | | Key Concept 5: Sexual Health | |
| TOPICS: Families Friendship Love Socializing Marriage Parenting | TOPICS: Reproduction, Contraception & the Family Abortion Sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV Infection Sexual Abuse Reproductive Health | | |
| Key Concept 3: Human Development | | Key Concept 6: Society & Culture | |
| TOPICS: Reproductive Anatomy & Physiology Reproduction Puberty Body Image Tzniut Sexual Identity & Orientation | TOPICS: Sexuality and Society Gender Roles Laws of Family Purity Sexuality & Religion Sexuality & the Arts Sexuality & the Media | | |

Key Concept across Grades

The process of developing our lesson guides necessitated a number of steps. In mapping out our lesson guides, we first looked at topics

and their sub-concepts within a key concept. We then looked at the developmental messages in that topic, formulated lesson objectives around the developmental messages, and incorporated them in the curriculum at the suggested age level. This enabled us to take a broad topic and arrange the information in a hierarchy so that it could be addressed on an elementary level and then revisited in a more complex manner at higher grade levels. An example of this can be seen in a development of lessons across grades. We chose to combine the topics of “Sexuality through Life,” “Shared Sexual Behavior” and “Abstinence,” all topics of Key Concept number 4, Sexual Behavior. In addition we incorporated the topic “Socializing” from Key Concept 2, Relationships. Together these formulate a progression of lessons on Judaism and Sexuality. Often individual lessons will merge developmental messages from a number of topics, sometimes also spanning more than one Key Concept, in order to fully address an issue from various angles.

In developing lessons on Judaism and Sexuality at the sixth grade level, students are introduced to the concept of pleasure and the idea that Judaism views pleasure positively, as long as it is not a primary focus of one’s life. The discussion extends to the purpose of *mitzvo*t being to refine us and elevate our mundane activities to include a spiritual dimension. The idea that man is created as both a physical and spiritual being enjoins each of us to recognize that physical fulfillment should always be in the context of spiritual development. We conclude with the idea that sexuality is viewed positively within a context of *kedushah*, the context of marriage. In seventh grade, multi-media triggers are used to encourage a discussion about differences between friendships and boyfriend/ girlfriend relationships. Students gain a deeper understanding of the concept of *kedushah*, and the idea that intimacy between sexes is saved for marriage. In eighth grade students learn about the *halakhot* commonly referred to as being *shomer negiah*. Within the learning of these *halakhot*, students are introduced to Hazal’s thinking reflected in these *halakhot*, including the respect Hazal had for the power of the *yetzer*. Students also have the opportunity to develop their own presentations on these topics.

In ninth grade students use multi-media triggers for discussing teenage relationships between the sexes, the complexities that ensue from these relationships particularly in a *halakhic* environment, and the boundaries *Hazal* have established in order to help us stay true to our religious commitments. Part of our rationale for this progression is that by laying the groundwork in previous grades before introducing the *halakhah*, students will come independently to the solutions presented by *halakhah*, not as a restrictive imposition from without, but rather as a sensible solution to an understood problem. In tenth grade students explore aspects of intimacy in a *halakhic* marriage as well as ways in which husbands and wives ought to treat each other. Sexuality is presented here as the highest form of intimacy between two people and the ultimate connection between man and woman. The difference between the Torah perspective and the modern permissive and unrestrained perspective on sexuality is emphasized, as is the notion that intimacy needs to be part of a relationship of commitment and *kiddushin*. In eleventh grade students discuss various *Gemara* describing the struggles of some of the greatest rabbis with the temptations presented by the opposite sex. The honesty with which these struggles are portrayed in the *Gemara* is noted and ramifications for our own lives discussed. In twelfth grade students explore other sources in the *Gemara* from which can be derived the essence of Jewish sexual ethics. (See table below)

An example of the process of developing Key Concepts across grades: Judaism and Sexuality

| | Key Concept 4: Topic: Sexuality through Life | Key Concept 4: Topic: Shared Sexual Behavior | Key Concept 4: Topic: Abstinence | Key Concept 2: Topic: Socializing |
|-----------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| 6 th | Sexual feelings are natural. Sexual behavior must be conducted with due regard for <i>tzniut</i> . | The Torah guides human behavior and expression of human feelings. | | |

| | Key Concept 4: Topic: Sexuality through Life | Key Concept 4: Topic: Shared Sexual Behavior | Key Concept 4: Topic: Abstinence | Key Concept 2: Topic: Socializing |
|-----------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| 7 th | Sexual feelings often cause impulses and tensions in one's body. The Torah has <i>halakhic</i> guidelines which relate to sexual behavior through life. Sexual behavior must be conducted with due regard for <i>tzniut</i> . | The Torah does not allow touching between boys and girls, because it can often have – or lead to – sexual implications. | | As children grow older they begin to feel and act differently towards friends. These feelings may be awkward & confusing, but are a normal part of growing up. Group activities provide opportunities to develop relationships with peers of both genders. |
| 8 th | Any discussion of sexuality should be done in accordance with Torah standards of <i>tzniut</i> . | Because of the ambiguity of the meaning of physical contact, the Torah significantly limits physical contact between members of the opposite sex not married to each other. The laws governing physical contact between men & women not married, popularly known as <i>negi'ah</i> . | | Sexual involvement includes any form of touching – <i>negi'ah</i> . <i>Halakhah</i> discourages physical contact between males and females unless they are married to each other. |

| | | | | |
|------------------|--|--|--|--|
| | Key Concept 4: Topic: Sexuality through Life | Key Concept 4: Topic: Shared Sexual Behavior | Key Concept 4: Topic: Abstinence | Key Concept 2: Topic: Socializing |
| 9 th | Sexual feelings, fantasies and desires are natural. They often cause impulses and tensions in one's body and for this reason the Torah has guidelines relating to sexual behavior throughout life. | The Torah does not allow touching between boys and girls, because it can often have – or lead to – sexual implications. | Most people are challenged by needing to be sexually abstinent. | Different & confusing feelings about others often develop as children mature. The prohibition <i>issur yichud</i> is because when a male & female spend a lot of time together in a closed room, they are more likely to become sexually involved. |
| 10 th | Healthy sexuality enhances total well-being and is a definitive part of married life. Sexuality is an integral, joyful & natural part of being human. | In a healthy marriage, husbands & wives share intimacy that is expressed verbally & behaviorally. One of the most beautiful parts of marriage is husband & wife encouraged to see intimacy as valuable part of marriage. Husbands & wives should communicate about most intimate parts of sexual relationship in order to enhance mutual pleasure & mutual intimacy. | Children are not ready for sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is not a way to achieve adulthood. | |

| | | | | |
|------------------|---|--|--|---|
| | Key Concept 4: Topic: Sexuality through Life | Key Concept 4: Topic: Shared Sexual Behavior | Key Concept 4: Topic: Abstinence | Key Concept 2: Topic: Socializing |
| 11 th | All people are sexual beings, who experience sexual feelings, fantasies & desires. The Torah has <i>halakhic</i> guidelines relating to sexual behaviors throughout life. | | Most people are challenged by needing to be abstinent. | When one experiences sexual feelings that cannot be ignored easily, may be helpful to talk to a trusted friend or adult, educate oneself by reading and/or talk with a professional who respects orthodox values. |
| 12 th | Sexuality is multifaceted; it has biological, social, psychological, spiritual, ethical & cultural dimensions. | For most people sharing sexual intimacy within the context of a marital relationship is the most satisfying expression of sexuality. | | People in romantic relationships can express their feelings without engaging in sexual activities. The difficulty of sexual abstinence cannot be overlooked. |

Curricular Context

The success of our curriculum is dependent on the cooperation of a number of stakeholders: the teachers, the students, the parents and the school. First and foremost is the importance of developing ownership by each of these parties and responding to each of their particular challenges in implementing the curriculum. Teachers' hesitations may stem from the fact that although they are

theoretically interested in teaching the topics, they have generally not been trained for teaching in these particular areas. In addition, there is concern about the development of lessons representative of a personal teaching style or *hashkafah*, and the need to develop lessons that suit their personal teaching style and that are not taken from a pre-packaged curriculum. These hesitations can best be addressed in finding a balance between an objective curriculum with successive, linear scoped and sequenced educational objectives, and a curriculum which can be tailored to the particular needs and comfort level of each school. The individual teaching strategies of the faculty can bring a welcome variety to the student experience and enhance the teachers' sense of ownership over the material. They can easily be part of an adaptation for a particular school's implementation of the curriculum. Teaching sexuality and intimacy is considerably different from other topics. The nature of the material is highly personal and requires a degree of comfort which must be developed through intensive training. Willingness on the part of students to participate and become fully engaged in the process is very much rooted in their perceptions of teacher knowledge, attitudes and comfort with these important, personal constructs. Teacher preparation, continuous support and supervision are imperative to the smooth transition from curriculum and lesson plans on paper, to presentation and education in the field.

Parents' concerns tend to focus on attitudes being nurtured in their children, as well as the actual content of materials being presented in a Life Values and Intimacy curriculum. These concerns can be mitigated through in-depth pre-program parent meetings, as well as ongoing parent education workshops throughout the program. These workshops would include a discussion of the content of the curriculum, as well as methods for developing effective strategies for communicating with their children about these topics.

A comprehensive program necessitates the involvement of school administration and faculty. This involvement enhances the integration of concepts and objectives across the curriculum. Our program seeks to engender interpersonal behaviors and behavior expectations which should be reinforced and encouraged through-

out the day at school. Therefore all faculty should be informed of the educational objectives of the program at the levels at which they teach. Ultimately, the best possible environment for the transmission of Life Values and Intimacy Education is when parents, students, teachers and school administrators work together to create the milieu in which effective learning can take place.

CONCLUSION

The curriculum "Life Values and Intimacy Education for the Yeshiva Day School" is a comprehensive and classroom-ready curriculum combining a theoretical framework that is *Torani* and *halakhically* based while incorporating the internationally accepted guidelines for sexuality education. It represents a vision of comprehensive school-based education towards healthy decision-making, lifestyles and relationships. It is structured to be delivered in totality as well as to be flexible and adaptable to the needs and educational objectives of any yeshiva day school community. It is our belief that the taking of theoretical frameworks and presenting them in workable, classroom-ready format is the necessary step to the presentation of these modules to our yeshiva day school youth and the ultimate application of these values. The yeshiva day school community needs to be able to educate its youth in these issues a priori, as well as in the face of the cultural messages which must be countered. We present the Life Values and Intimacy Education Curriculum and lesson guides as a response to this need.

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NOTES

1. We have opted to use gender specific language in this statement in order to be consistent with the language of the Bible. We are of course talking here about males and females.

SAMPLE LESSONS FROM THE LIFE VALUES AND INTIMACY EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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With The Generous Support of A Grant From The Mount Sinai
Foundation, Cleveland, Ohio

APPENDIX

Curricular overview and three sample lessons

Three points merit review before we introduce this overview and sample lessons from the Life Values and Intimacy Education Curriculum.

1. The curricular design is spiral such that it addresses similar topics at numerous junctures in order to allow for students to revisit topics as they mature.
2. Students have gradually built up to dealing with the difficult and sensitive topics addressed in the following lessons. Seeing them in a vacuum may give a false sense of our curricular approach.
3. While the seven year overview is carefully scoped and sequenced it will still bear adjustments in order to tailor it to the specific needs of a particular school setting.

Life Values and Intimacy Education Class Titles Grades 6 through 12

6TH GRADE COURSE

- Lesson 1: Setting the Stage
- Lesson 2: Learning to Listen
- Lesson 3: On Becoming a Bar/ Bat Mitzvah
- Lesson 4: Puberty I
- Lesson 5: Asking for Help: When and How
- Lesson 6: Communication 101
- Lesson 7: Odd Girl Out
- Lesson 8: What is True Friendship?
- Lesson 9: What are “Jewish Values”?
- Lesson 10: On Decision Making
- Lesson 11: What is Tzniut?
- Lesson 12: Approaching Sexuality
- Lesson 13: Learning about Abuse
- Lesson 14: Who Am I?
- Lesson 15: Conclusions

7TH GRADE COURSE

- Lesson 1: Getting Comfortable
- Lesson 2: Puberty II
- Lesson 3: Human Reproduction
- Lesson 4: Eating Disorders
- Lesson 5: Mentioning the Unmentionable – *Hotzaat Zera Levatalah* (for boys)
- Lesson 6: Living in the “In Between”: no longer a child but not yet an adult!
- Lesson 7: Saying what I mean and meaning what I say.
- Lesson 8: Appreciating Individual Differences
- Lesson 9: The Power of Peer Pressure
- Lesson 10: Appropriate Assertiveness
- Lesson 11: Knowing when and how to ask for help II
- Lesson 12: *Tzniut*: An approach to Life
- Lesson 13: Having a Boyfriend/ Girlfriend: Pros and Cons

- Lesson 14: Free to be you and me!
 Lesson 15: A very narrow bridge
 Lesson 16: Conclusions
- 8TH GRADE COURSE**
- Lesson 1: Introduction: Setting Goals
 Lesson 2: Knowing Myself
 Lesson 3: Loyalties Divided: what do I do?
 Lesson 4: What are my values?
 Lesson 5: Decision Making: Values Clarification
 Lesson 6: On Being “*Shomer Negi'ah*”
 Lesson 7: On Homosexuality
 Lesson 8: What is *Kedushah*?
 Lesson 9: Exercising your mind to strengthen your values
 Lesson 10: Exercising your mind to strengthen your values
 Lessons 11–15: Group Presentations:
 Lesson 11: A fashion show reflecting our enduring understanding: We are created *B'tzelem Elokim*
 Lesson 12: Taking and Leaving: Decisions regarding life in a secular world.
 Lesson 13: On Being Cool
 Lesson 14: How, and when to say NO!
 Lesson 15: Pushed and Pulled: Navigating relationships as a teenager
 Lesson 16: Conclusions

9TH GRADE COURSE

- Lesson 1: Introduction
 Lesson 2: “*B'Tzelem Elokim*”: What does that mean for me?
 Lesson 3: Using my words appropriately
 Lesson 4: What is love?
 Lesson 5: Improving Self-Esteem
 Lesson 6: Assertiveness: when is it appropriate?
 Lesson 7: Seeking help as a sign of strength
 Lesson 8: Creating boundaries – to see and not to see
 Lesson 9: *Tzniut* – respecting myself and others

- Lesson 10: Marriage – who needs it and why?
 Lesson 11: Holding ourselves back – why?
 Lesson 12: Males and Females – The Jewish version of Mars and Venus?
 Lesson 13: Struggling with “The Yetzer”
 Lesson 14: Being a Torah True Jew – how?
 Lesson 15: Conclusions

10TH GRADE COURSE

- Lesson 1: Decisions, decisions, decisions....
 Lesson 2: Negotiating Solutions
 Lesson 3: Managing Anger
 Lesson 4: What is “Sexuality”?
 Lesson 5: I am more than my body
 Lesson 6: Intimacy now and later
 Lesson 7: Intimacy later
 Lesson 8: Family – The key to Jewish continuity
 Lesson 9: On becoming a parent
 Lesson 10: Contraception and *Halakhah*
 Lesson 11: Abortion and *Halakhah*
 Lesson 12: STD's: What are they I
 Lesson 13: STD's: What are they II
 Lesson 14: Homosexuality
 Lesson 15: Sexual Abuse: Being Wary
 Lesson 16: Conclusions

11TH GRADE COURSE

- Lesson 1: Jewish Survival: How?
 Lesson 2: What's wrong with Inter-marriage?
 Lesson 3: Controlling “The Yetzer”
 Lesson 4: Judaism and Sexuality
 Lesson 5: Balancing Family and Career: A high wire performance?
 Lesson 6: Balancing family and Career: Possible models
 Lesson 7: Being created “*B'Tzelem Elokim*”: What does that mean for me?
 Lesson 8: Improving Communication

- Lesson 9: Improving Communication II
- Lesson 10: Personal Space – why?
- Lesson 11: Like, Love, Lust – what’s what?
- Lesson 12: The Dating Game
- Lesson 13: Finding “The Perfect Partner”
- Lesson 14: Finding the Right Partner
- Lesson 15: Feeding a Relationship
- Lesson 16: Sexual ethics: a rabbinic perspective
- Lesson 17: Conclusions

12TH GRADE COURSE

- Lesson 1: *Tzniut* – The concept and the *Halakhah*
- Lesson 2: *Kisui Rosh* – why do married women cover their hair?
- Lesson 3: Understanding *Taharat Hamishpahah* – the underlying themes.
- Lesson 4: *Taharat Hamishpahah* – some important *Halakhah*
- Lesson 5: Birth Control – what does the *Halakhah* have to say?
- Lesson 6: STD’s – some important facts
- Lesson 7: Sexual Abuse, even in our community???
- Lesson 8: Sexuality – knowing when to ask for help
- Lesson 9: Capturing Fantasy
- Lesson 10: The objectification of people
- Lesson 11: Differentiating between Art, Erotica and Pornography
- Lesson 12: Understanding erotic imagery in *Tanakh*
- Lesson 13: Perpetuating the myth – the media and sexuality
- Lesson 14: Judaism and Sexuality
- Lesson 15: Being “*B’Tzelem Elokim*”
- Lesson 16: Conclusions

LESSON 12: APPROACHING SEXUALITY

(This lesson is influenced by ideas found in A.P. Friedman’s *Marital Intimacy*)

Meta Goal: *Values Education*

GOALS

1. Students will be introduced to a definition of sexuality.

2. Students will learn that Judaism’s overall approach to sexuality is positive, as long as it is expressed in the right context.
3. Students will consider why Judaism sets a standard so different from that of the modern Western world.

METHOD

- Introduction
- What is sexuality?
- Activity
- Discussion plus sources

1. INTRODUCTION

This is a suggested introduction for the teacher to give to the students as an opening to this lesson:

We have covered many different important topics up until now, some more focused on giving information, and some focused on participation and active listening. Today we come to a topic about which there is much secrecy and many misconceptions, so we must ask you to concentrate and use all those well developed listening skills. We are going to talk about how Judaism views sexuality in general. We are going to discuss important ideas and we would not want you to leave the room with any kind of misunderstandings. Therefore please listen carefully and try not to be shy about asking questions if you are not sure you caught what we discussed. It is often true that a passing, misunderstood comment, particularly in these very private topics of sexuality which are not talked about so much, can mean that a person retains wrong ideas about Judaism and its attitudes to sexuality for many years. I would also like to introduce the question box today. After half an hour I will pass this box around and everyone must put a piece of paper in it with a comment or question; in this way no one knows who is really asking a question and who is not. It can be anonymous or signed, with a question you would like to have addressed privately or in the class framework. I will look over these questions and respond to them in the next class. We will do this every so often to enable people who have questions but feel shy about them to ask in a private manner.

2. WHAT IS SEXUALITY?

The following is a suggestion of how to present this idea to students:

Sexuality is a word which is mentioned often, but you may not know exactly what it is referring to. We are usually shy to ask others to define words like “sexuality” because we are afraid of what people will think about us if they know that we are wondering about these private (sometimes people think they are secret) matters. Therefore we need to open this conversation by defining sexuality. Sexuality has many different aspects to it, and therefore it is hard to find one definition. We are going to define it here together today in a manner that includes the aspects with which you are familiar. It could be that as you develop an understanding of adult human sexuality, your definition will broaden and shift somewhat.

Teacher should write the word “Sexuality” on the board and invite the students to suggest what it means. Once they have made their suggestions, try to unite them into the various categories provided below: gender, anatomy, physiology, emotions and desires.

Definition of sexuality

- Sexuality is characterized and defined by being male or female, which relates to our anatomy.
- Sexuality has to do with the feelings we have about being male or female ourselves, and the feelings we have towards the opposite sex.
- Sexuality has to do with the functioning of our bodies in general, and our sexual responses in particular, known as our physiology.
- Sexuality has to do with all the various factors which influence our physiology which include our physical, mental and emotional states as well as our experiences of pleasure.

3. ACTIVITY: TWO APPROACHES TO SEXUALITY

Two possible approaches to living are presented below. These two

approaches should be prepared on a handout given to all students, or alternatively attached to the board on large paper (they are reproduced at the end of this lesson plan Handout 6.121). They should be read aloud and students should then have a moment to respond on an index card. The reason we are talking about pleasure is that before we talk about sexuality, we need to talk about the Jewish attitude to pleasure. This is because sexuality is a form of human pleasure, probably the most intense form of human pleasure, and thinking about Judaism’s attitude to pleasure will help us to come to an understanding of attitudes to sexuality.

Which of these approaches reflect the Jewish view? Why or why not?

Living by the Pleasure Principle

Pleasure is a central part of our existence. Man has come a long way into the 21st century. So many amazing developments have changed the world and we can now allow ourselves to focus our attention on the pursuit of pleasure. Our world is full of limitless ways to indulge ourselves in physical and sexual pleasure and as physical beings we should allow ourselves to experience as much pleasure as possible. Pleasure is an end to itself and finding ways to maximize our pleasure, whether sexual, gastronomical, sensational or other is all good.

Pleasure is bad

Although we are physical beings, our struggle in life is to overcome the physical, animalistic part of ourselves. We are spiritual beings and should not allow our physical selves to bring us down into the world of the physical. The way we conquer our physical desires is by working to deny the physical sides of ourselves. We should not indulge in any physical pleasures, and rather quite the opposite, we should constantly train our bodies to be free of the need for any kind of physical pleasure. Pleasure is intrinsically bad and we should dedicate ourselves to developing ourselves spiritually so that we do not need anything physical.

4. DISCUSSION PLUS SOURCES

Allow some students to present their answers.

Actually, Judaism does not agree with either of the views presented above.

There is a source sheet at the end of this lesson plan (Handout 6.122) which provides a text for discussion. The teacher can decide whether to explore together with students, give them *hevruta* time or simply summarize the various texts.

The points which should be made by the teacher include:

Pleasure is a good thing as long as it is not an end in and of itself. Modern Western society encourages us to see pleasure as a central focus of our lives. This is against Judaism. Looking at the verses in Bereishit, Adam is instructed to eat from all the fruits of Gan Eden and to take pleasure in all that God created. But it is not unlimited, and the commandment not to eat represents the need to hold back, to not think only about our physical selves or our own pleasure.

The *Mishnah* in *Avot* is somewhat surprising considering that enjoying the world does seem to be a Jewish value. In truth, we do hear of great and pious Jews separating themselves from the pleasures of this world. Jewish thinkers, however, view this as a stepping stone to overcome the shackles of physical lust in order to devote oneself entirely to God. Ultimately, when they do enjoy the pleasures of this world it will not be a slavish yielding to their passions – further removing them from God, but an act of Divine service – enhancing their love and admiration for the God who has granted them so much.

This can also be understood from the Gemara in the Yerushalmi on the source sheet.

It says at the end of Masechet Kiddushin in the Talmud Yerushalmi:

רבי חזקיה ר' כהן בשם רב עתיך אדם ליתן דין וחשבון על כל שראת עיניו ולא אכל.

“We will be judged for all permissible enjoyments that one’s eyes behold and one does not partake of.”

The *Korban Eidah* who comments here explains that the reason he will be punished is that he sinned against his soul and afflicted it for no reason by withholding these delights. Judaism teaches that only someone who has learned to experience and enjoy pleasure, and has come to appreciate that all of the wonderful pleasurable aspects of this world are from *Hashem*, will be fully capable of praising *HaKadosh Barukh Hu’s* greatness. Therefore enjoying pleasure is part of developing a deeper relationship with *Hashem*. But the pleasure has to be in the context of developing ourselves spiritually and coming closer to *Hashem*. Pleasure is a good by-product of living life in a Torah way, but it is not an end unto itself. Part of living in a Torah way, and part of making the physical become spiritual is learning to overcome our desires by developing our self-control, a spiritual part of ourselves. We don’t eat until we make a *brakiah*; we don’t start our day until we *daven*; we don’t eat milk after meat. These are all ways in which we develop self-control, which ultimately helps to make us more spiritual beings. We are more spiritual beings in the sense that rather than being controlled by our physical selves, our desires, we are in control of our desires. We indulge them, but we are not controlled by them.

Can you think of something in *Parshat Bereishit* which could prove this?

BEREISHIT 2:7-24

Hashem creates animals and then he creates man. Man has no partner among the animals, and for this reason *Hashem* creates a woman to be a partner for man. When *Hashem* creates man we are told something that is different from the creation of all other beings.

Hashem breathes into man’s nostrils “*Nishmat Hayim*.” What is this “*Nishmat Hayim*”?

Says *Rashi*, “*Helek Elo-ah Mimaal*.”

Hashem breathes a small piece of Himself into *Adam HaRishon*, which we usually refer to nowadays as our “*Neshamah*.”

- What does this mean for humankind?

This *Neshamah* makes humans different from all other creatures on earth. We become the only creation who combines within ourselves both a physical and a spiritual side.

- How are humans different from angels on the one hand, and animals on the other hand?

Angels are purely spiritual beings following *Hashem's* command because they were created without the capacity for choice.

Animals are purely physical beings that follow their instincts, behaving according to their nature.

Humans on the other hand are a unique mixture of both physical and spiritual.

- Why do you think *Hashem* made us unique?

Let's come back to our pleasure principle. Judaism does not see the purpose of life as being the pursuit of pleasure. Judaism sees the purpose of life as working on being close to *Hashem*, fulfilling His *mitzvot* and serving Him and bringing Him honor through using our abilities to do good in this world. It is this mixture of physical and spiritual which enables us to be in the unique position of elevating all of our physical activities, everything we do, and giving them a spiritual component too. Pleasure is a good thing as long as it is not an end in and of itself. Modern Western society encourages us to see pleasure, and especially sexuality, as a central focus of our lives. Sexuality is something Judaism believes is beautiful and good, but only in the context of marriage. Just as everything about us is both physical and spiritual, so too we see sexuality as being part of a relationship which represents the ultimate connection of physical and spiritual – which is the relationship of a male and female in the context of marriage.

The class can be concluded here. For those who are interested, there is a further discussion of the purpose of *mitzvot* which can be added.

- How do we do this?
Judaism is a religion based on actions; we have 613 *mitzvot*.
- Why do you think we have *mitzvot*? What is the point of them?

Two answers (see attached source sheet at the end of this lesson plan 6.122):

1. *Sefer HaHinukh* – אורי המעשים נמשכים הלכות – אורי

Hazal understood that we are much more influenced by our actions than by anything else. We can learn many different ideas, but we are most strongly influenced by the things we actually do.

2. *Ramban* – כדי לצרף בן את הבריית – כדי

Ramban says the *mitzvot* were given to us in order to give us opportunities to improve ourselves. The *Ramban* uses the image of a silversmith who keeps on working the silver in order to make it smoother. So too, the more we do *mitzvot*, the more we develop ourselves and “smooth” our souls and improve ourselves as human beings.

- What does all this have to do with pleasure and sexuality?

We come back to the question; how does pleasure fit into this equation?

Hakadosh Barukh Hu created us both physical and spiritual, and each of these aspects of ourselves is important. Neither part should be denied. Our physical, more animalistic side is not bad or evil and the idea of wanting and enjoying pleasure is an important and legitimate part of being human. That being said, the fact that we are both physical and spiritual means that we need to infuse our physical experiences with a spiritual dimension and in so doing make the physical also spiritual.

- Can you give examples of ways we do this in Judaism?
– *Brakhah* before we eat.
– *Daven* before we start the day.
– *Shabbat* with all of the special physical pleasures (foods) associated with it.

There are many more examples for so many of our *mitzvot* are essentially for this purpose.

Pleasure is a good thing as long as it is not an end in and of itself. Modern Western society encourages us to see pleasure, and

especially sexuality, as a central focus of our lives. Sexuality is something Judaism believes is beautiful and good, but only in the context of marriage. Because just as everything about us is both physical and spiritual, so too we see sexuality and a sexual relationship as being part of a relationship which represents the ultimate connection of physical and spiritual – which is the relationship of a male and female in the context of marriage.

HANDOUT 6.121 TWO APPROACHES TO LIFE

Living by the Pleasure Principle

Pleasure is a central part of our existence. Man has come a long way into the 21st century. So many amazing developments have changed the world and we can now allow ourselves to focus our attention on the pursuit of pleasure. Our world is full of limitless ways to indulge ourselves in physical and sexual pleasure and as physical beings we should allow ourselves to experience as much pleasure as possible. Pleasure is an end to itself and finding ways to maximize our pleasure, whether sexual, gastronomical, sensational or other is all good.

Pleasure is bad

Although we are physical beings, our struggle in life is to overcome the physical, animalistic part of ourselves. We are spiritual beings and should not allow our physical selves to bring us down into the world of the physical. The way we conquer our physical desires is by working to deny the physical sides of ourselves. We should not indulge in any physical pleasures, and rather quite the opposite, we should constantly train our bodies to be free of the need for any kind of physical pleasure. Pleasure is intrinsically bad and we should dedicate ourselves to developing ourselves spiritually so that we do not need anything physical.

HANDOUT 6.122 JUDAISM'S ATTITUDE TO PLEASURE

בראשית ב:טו

טו ויקח ה' אלקים את האדם וינחהו בגן-עדן לעבדה ולשמרה. טז ויצו ה' אלקים על-יהואדם לאמר מכל עץ-הגן אכל תאכל: יז ומעץ הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל ממנו כי ביום אכלך ממנו מות תמות:

Hashem God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, to work it and to guard it. And Hashem God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad, you must not eat of it; for on the day you eat of it, you shall surely die."

- What instructions is man given here? (Look carefully – there is more than one)
- What can we learn from these multiple instructions?

פרקי אבות ו:ז

כך היא דרכה של תורה: פת במלח תאכל, ומים במשורה תשתה, ועל הארץ תישן, וחיי צער תחיה ובתורה אתה עמל; ואם אתה ערשה כן, "אשריך וטוב לך" (תהלים קכח, ב) אשריך בעולם הזה, וטוב לך לעולם הבא.

This is the way of the Torah: Bread and salt will you eat, measured water will you drink, on the ground will you sleep, a life of suffering will you live, and in the Torah will you labor. If you do this, 'You are fortunate and it is good for you' (Psalms 128:2). 'You are fortunate' – in this world; 'and it is good for you' – in the World to Come.

- What is the approach of this Mishnah to pleasure?

ירושלמי קידושין ד:יב

רבי חזקיה ר' כהן בשם רב עתידי אדם ליתן דין וחשבון על כל שראת עינו ולא אכל.

We will be judged for all permissible enjoyments that one's eyes behold and one does not partake of.

- What expectations does this Yerushalmi set?
- Why?

HANDOUT 6.123

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MITZVOT??

1. Sefer Hahinukh: Mitzvah 16

ועתה בני, אם בינה שמעה זאת, והטת אונן ושמת, אלמדך להועיל בתורה ובמצות. דע, כי האדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו, ולבו וכל מחשבותיו תמיד אחר מעשיו שהוא עוסק בהם אם טוב ואם רע. ואפילו רשע גמור בלבבו וכל יצר מחשבות לבו רק רע כל היום, אם יערה רוחו וישים השתדלותו ועסקו בהתמדה בתורה ובמצות, ואפילו שלא לשם שמים, מיד ינטה אל הטוב, מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה. וכח מעשיו ימית היצר הרע, כי אחרי הפי' עלות נמשכים הלבבות.

2. Ramban D'varim 22:6

דברים כ"ו:
 כי יקרא קן צפור לפניך. גם זו מצוה מבוראת מן אותו ואת בנו לא תשחטו ביום אחד (ויקרא כב כח). כי הטעם בשניהם לבלתי היות לנו לב אכזר....
 וכתב הרב כמורה הנבוכים (ג מח) כי טעם שלוח הקן ושעם אותו ואת בנו לא תשחטו ביום אחד, כדי להזהיר שלא ישחוט הבן בעיני האם כי יש להמרות דאגה גדולה בזה, ואין הפרש בין דאגת האדם לדאגת הבהמות על בניהם, כי אהבת האם ותנוותו לבני כטנה אינו נמשך אחרי השכל והדבור אלא הוא מפעולת כח המחשבה המצויה בבהמות כאשר היא מצויה באדם.
 ...ויותר נכון, בעבור שלא נתאכזר.....
 ..הא לא נתנו המצות אלא לצרף בהם את הבריות שנאמר (משלי ל ה) כל אמרת אלוה צדופה:

11TH GRADE

LESSON 11: THE LIKE, LOVE, LUST GAME.

Goals

1. Students will comprehend the differences between like, love and lust in a relationship.
2. Students will identify and assess reasons for ending relationships.

Method

Thinking about relationships

Wrong reasons for staying in a relationship

The like/love/lust game

Conclusion

Lesson Plan

1. THINKING ABOUT WHAT IS RIGHT/WRONG IN A RELATIONSHIP

Advise students to think about a recent or a current relationship (if they have not had a boyfriend or girlfriend, perhaps they can think about a friend's relationship; some of the questions can be addressed towards a friendship). It is a helpful exercise in thinking about our motivations for some relationships.

Hunt (1975) suggests asking these revealing questions:

1. Do I treat the other person as a person or a thing? If you go out with him/her because he/she is good looking (a "prize" to be with) or a way out (a ticket to the movies), that isn't love.
2. Would you choose to spend the evening alone with him/her if there were no kissing, no touching, and no sex? If not, it isn't love.
3. Are the two of you at ease and as happy alone as you are with friends? If you need other friends around to have a good time, it isn't love.
4. Do you get along? If you fight and make up a lot, get hurt and jealous, tease and criticize one another, better be careful, it may not be love.

5. Are you still interested in dating or secretly “messaging around” with others? If so, you aren’t in love.
6. Can you be totally honest and open? If either or both of you are selfish, insincere, feel confined, or unable to express feelings, be cautious.
7. Are you realistic? You should be able to admit possible future problems. If others (besides a parent) offend you by saying they are surprised you are still together, that you two seem so different, that they have doubts about your choice, better take a good look at this relationship.
8. Is either of you much more of a taker than a giver? If so, no matter how well you like that situation now, it may not last.
9. Do you think of the partner as being a part of your whole life? If so, and these dreams seem good, that is an indication of love.

2. GROUP BRAINSTORMING: WRONG REASONS

PEOPLE STAY IN A RELATIONSHIP

Below are a number of possible reasons we can suggest for you, but allow all students’ ideas to be included in the list if there is any basis for them.

- I’m afraid of being alone.
- I’ll be able to help her.
- So he does get really angry – I’ll be able to help him change.
- He’s the first person I kissed – I have to marry him!
- She’ll be so angry with me if I leave her – I’m afraid.
- He’s threatening me – I don’t know what to do.
- I can’t hurt him by leaving him.
- I really want to get married.
- I love the way I feel when she touches me.
- I love the way I make him feel.
- I need to escape from my family.
- It’s cool to have a girlfriend/boyfriend.

3. THE LIKE/LOVE/LUST GAME

Differentiating between like, love and lust or infatuation can sometimes be difficult. Once our physical desires become activated, it is

often difficult to separate out whether I have strong feelings towards the other person, or am simply having a serious, strong attraction to that person.

In this activity, students should be presented with the three scenarios at the end of this lesson plan. They are parallel in form, but the content reflects different bases for Judy’s interest in Haim. Students need to fill in the blank at the end of the scenario as to whether the feeling is like, love or lust. Students should be able to identify what experiences led Judy to feel what she was feeling, and in this way to tease out differences between like, love and lust.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- Man was created “*B’tzelem Elokim*.” Man was also created with the same strong physical attractions and desires as animals, which we sometimes call “animal instincts.”
- Lust is when we are overwhelmed by those animal instinct desires which are focused only on what I want and think that I “need.”
- Judaism emphasizes the importance of overcoming “lustful” infatuations which are not based in a relationship of any kind, but generally in physical desire.
- Our *Tzelem Elokim* enjoins us to overcome lustful feelings of infatuation and make sure that our desires are based in a true, committed relationship. This is how we are *mekadesh* our physical selves.

Scenarios For the Like/Love/Lust Game.

Please fill in the blanks in the scenarios below.

They can be filled in with either like, love or lust.

Be prepared to explain your answers based on the text of the scenario.

SCENARIO 1

Judy is sitting on the bus when Shira tries to come and sit down next to her.

JUDY: Hey, don't sit there. Sit in that empty spot in front of me, and then all the seats ahead will be taken.

SHIRA: Why?

JUDY: I'm saving this seat here for someone.

SHIRA: Who?

JUDY: (voice lowers to a whisper) I'm saving it for Haim Davis.

SHIRA: Who is that and why would he sit next to you?

JUDY: Haven't you noticed him? Lately, we've been walking home together – he lives near me you know! He is such a kind and thoughtful kind of a guy. Last week he noticed some children fighting, and he just went over to them on the street and helped them sort out their problem. We've been talking about life and stuff, and he is just fun to be around. We've been thinking about starting to volunteer for Yachad together. He's very good with kids and just enjoys being with them. From what I've seen, they really love him too. He's just such a normal guy. I really _____ him.

SCENARIO 2

Judy is sitting on the bus when Shira tries to come and sit down next to her.

JUDY: Hey, don't sit there. Sit in that empty spot in front of me, and then all the seats ahead will be taken.

SHIRA: Why?

JUDY: I'm saving this seat here for someone.

SHIRA: Who?

JUDY: (voice lowers to a whisper) I'm saving it for Haim Davis.

SHIRA: Who is that and why would he sit next to you?

JUDY: Haven't you noticed him? Oh, my gosh, I have been watching him for weeks. He is drop dead gorgeous. Every time I see him I go weak at the knees. He is definitely the hottest guy around. I even had a dream about him last night. Never mind, I can't stop thinking about him all day. And the last few days I think he has noticed me too. I am soooooo excited; I can't wait to just be close to him. So I'm keeping this seat free, and

hopefully he'll have to sit here. I can't wait to just be near him. I totally _____ him.

SCENARIO 3

Judy is sitting on the bus when Shira tries to come and sit down next to her.

JUDY: Hey, don't sit there. Sit in that empty spot in front of me, and then all the seats ahead will be taken.

SHIRA: Why?

JUDY: I'm saving this seat here for someone.

SHIRA: Who?

JUDY: (voice lowers to a whisper) I'm saving it for Haim Davis.

SHIRA: Who is that and why would he sit next to you?

JUDY: Haven't you noticed him? He is sooooo cute. My heart skips a beat every time I see him. We have been co-counselors. He is smart and together and we have been co-counselors. He is smart and funny and kind and gorgeous, all rolled up into one. He has an amazing way with kids – they hang on his every word. And we've spent a lot of time talking lately. He really cares about people – he wants to be a psychologist because he thinks he could help people with their pain and sadness; isn't that nice? And he has been so kind to me. He is always caring and considerate. We went out after the Shabbaton, even though we were both exhausted. We stayed up till 2 A.M. talking. And then, of course, I was up the rest of the night, just thinking about him. I really think I _____ him.

11TH GRADE

LESSON 16: SEXUAL ETHICS: A RABBINIC PERSPECTIVE

(Based on the teachings of Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits)

Goals

Students will be exposed to a rabbinic understanding of the importance of abstinence.

Method

Independent *hevruta* learning and written response activity

Discussion

Conclusion

Lesson Plan

1. INDEPENDENT HEVRUTA LEARNING OF GEMARA AND WRITTEN RESPONSE

Allow students to learn *Gemara* independently in partners.

Gemara is at end of lesson and can be found in *Menahot* 44.

Students should list on an index card the items in the story they view as symbols.

They can also suggest an interpretation of these symbols.

2. DISCUSSION

Introduce topic of discussion. Set the tone in terms of the maturity of the students expected for a discussion on this topic.

Emphasize the fact that the rabbis are not shy to talk about anything, as long as it is treated with dignity.

Menahot 44:

Learn through *Gemara* source with students so that they have an understanding of the basic story.

Prepare them by asking them to be aware of various symbols in the story.

On completing the text give them a few minutes, perhaps in *hevruta*, to write down on an index card objects they saw as having symbolic meanings and what those meanings are.

Then, analyze the story together. Invite students to share their insights.

On the next page you will find a table explaining many of the symbols found in the *Gemara*.

Through the understanding of the symbols used by the *Gemara*, important lessons can be extracted.

Symbols for Discussion:

| Symbol | Suggested Meaning – Discussion Topics |
|---|---|
| 6 beds of silver and one bed of gold | Note that the beds are stacked one on top of the other. It creates an image of this silver and gold tower reaching for something. Use this image to discuss the promise that sexuality holds, especially in our society, as some lofty, transcendent ideal. The gold and silver also speak to something that has great external and material value – it is a commodity in great demand. It is worth suggesting that the tower is inherently unstable (seven bunk beds cannot be that sturdy) and that those who ascend such towers are destined to fall. |
| <i>Tzitzit</i> smacking the man in the face | The <i>Gemara</i> itself unpacks this symbol as the man testifies that the “ <i>Tzitzit</i> appear to him as four witnesses accusing him.” This can be expanded upon as the importance and function of <i>tzitzit</i> is explored (Addendum). In short, the <i>tzitzit</i> remind him of his spiritual self that has been lost in his bid for carnal gratification. |
| The man is “released – פְּרוּט” and then comes down to the ground from being on top of the beds | The word “released” is packed with meaning. It suggests that he was in the grip of something foreign and has now finally been released and allowed to come back to his true self. The act of coming down from the heights of this sexual fantasy to sit on the ground of reality is also significant. So many false promises and unhealthy myths are put forth by our society as to what sexual fulfillment is, how it is to be achieved and what happiness it brings in its wake. Being “grounded” – having a realistic sense of what sexuality is and how it enhances life – is an important goal of this lesson. |

| | |
|--|--|
| The note that he writes and puts in her hand | This is the first sign of any relationship between them. Finally they are connected as people – not objects – concerned about the person's background, where they come from and who has taught them. |
| The same sheets which were spread for the intended illicit relationship were also taken for their eventual marriage. | This is the punch line of the <i>Gemara</i> and of this session. It is simple and powerful. In the end, the man sacrifices nothing in terms of sexual fulfillment. Judaism embraces sexuality as a wonderful part of our existence as long as it exists in the proper context. Those same sheets that were part of a gilded sexual fantasy of some exotic prostitute found their way into a loving marriage. |

3. Present Conclusion

The conclusion clearly develops out of the discussion presented above.

- Tell your students directly – your sexual desires will find expression and fulfillment. The goal is to create the proper framework so that sexuality can be part of a loving, giving and eternal commitment and not a lustful experience of two people treating each other as objects for their own sexual gratification.
- Human beings are complex beings – half animal and half angel. Our bodies, instincts and desires are very similar to those of every creature in the animal world. The difference is that we believe that we are also composed of a *neshamah*, an angelic soul that takes its source from the Almighty.
- What part of our being is in the driver seat at any given time? Are we treating sexuality as a carnal pleasure or do we see it as fulfillment of our humanity, an expression of God's will: to be as one flesh? The difference in the same sexual act is significant.
- This difference is expressed when sexual fulfillment comes after and secondary to an eternal commitment between a man and

a woman to protect each other's interests and build a home together.

- One challenge for students to anticipate is the following: most students agree that sexuality should not be just an expression of lust between two people seeking mutual gratification, but still argue that they are capable of love and commitment. Why should the love they feel not be able to be expressed sexually? After all, they know each other and respect each other as people and want to express their love in an intimate way – sexually. Here, the argument must be made that the key element is a lifelong, eternal commitment to one's partner. While it is important to not deny teenagers the capacity to love, it is important to argue that sexual relations are that holy, that intense, that they require the eternal commitment of marriage in order to be properly realized.
 - A sexual relationship is an important component of a relationship when it is a relationship based on the commitment of marriage. Being "in love" is not enough. It is the commitment of marriage which raises sexuality to being a central part of a deep and meaningful committed relationship between two people.
 - One must not confuse lust, and its effect on man's imagination, with the beauty and dignity of a sexual relationship within the context of marriage.
 - The same sheets which were laid down for a potentially illicit relationship were used once the couple married. This reflects the idea that sexuality within marriage can be as passionate and fulfilling as the fantasy associated with a forbidden sexual relationship.
- מנחות מד':
 א"ר נתן אין לך כל מצוה קלה שכתובה בתורה שאין שוכרה בעה"ז
 ולעה"ב איני יודע כמה צא ולמד ממצות ציציית מעשה באדם אחד שהיה
 זוהר במצות ציציית שמע שיש זונה בכרכי הים שנוטלת ד' מאות זהובים
 בשכרה שיגר לה ארבע מאות זהובים וקבע לה זמן כשהגיע זמנו בא וישב
 על הפתח נכנסה שפחתה ואמרה לה אותו אדם ששיגר לך ד' מאות זהובים

בא וישב על הפתח אמרה היא יכנס נכנס הציעה לו ו' מוטות שש של כסף ואחת של זהב ובין כל אחת ואחת סולם של כסף ועליניה של זהב עלתה וישבה על גבי עליניה כשהיא ערומה ואף הוא עלה לישב ערום כנגדה באו ד' ציצייתיו ושפחו לו על פניו נשמת וישב לו ע"ג קרקע ואף היא נשמה וישבה ע"ג קרקע אמרה לו גפה של רומי שאיני מניחתך עד שתאמר לי מה מום ראית בי אמר לה העבודה שלא ראיתי אשה יפה כמותך אלא מצוה אחת ציינו ה' אלהינו וציצית שמה וכתוב בה אני ה' אלהיכם שתי פעמים אני הוא שעתיד ליפרע ואני הוא שעתיד לשלם שכר עכשיו נדמו עלי כד' עדים אמרה לו איני מניחך עד שתאמר לי מה שמך ומה שם עיך ומה שם רכך ומה שם מדרשך שאותה למד בו תורה כתב ונתן בידה עמדה וחילקה כל נכסיה שליש למלכות ושליש לעניים ושליש נטלה בידה הוי"ו מאותן מצעות ובאת לבית מדרשו של ר' חייא אמרה לו רבי צוה עלי ויעשוני גיורת אמר לה בתי שמא עיניך נתת באחד מן התלמידים הוציאה כתב מידה ונתנה לו אמר לה לכי וכי במקומו אותן מצעות שהציעה לו באיסור הציעה לו בביתך זה מתן שכרו בעה"ז."

Menahot 44:

There was once a man who was very scrupulous about the principle of *tzitzit*, who heard of a certain harlot in one of the towns by the sea who accepted four hundred gold coins for her hire. He sent her four hundred gold coins and appointed a day with her. When the day arrived he came and waited at her door, and her maid came and told her, "That man who sent you four hundred gold coins is here and waiting at the door," to which she replied, "Let him come in." When he came in, she prepared seven beds, six of silver and one of gold, and between one bed and the other there were steps of silver; but the last were of gold. She then went up to the top of the bed and lay down upon it naked. He too went up after her in his desire to sit naked with her, when suddenly the four fringes [of his *tzitzit*] struck him across the face; whereupon he slipped off and sat upon the ground. She also slipped off and sat upon the ground and said, "By the Roman Capitol, I will not leave you alone until you tell me what blemish you saw in me." "By the Temple," he replied, "never have I seen a woman as beautiful as you are; but there is one precept

which the Lord our God has commanded us, it is called *tzitzit*, and with regard to it the expression *I am the Lord your God* is twice written, signifying I am He who will exact punishment in the future, and I am He who will give reward in the future. Now the *tzitzit* appeared to me as four witnesses [testifying against me]." She said, "I will not leave you until you tell me your name, the name of your teacher and the name of your school in which you study the Torah." He wrote all this down and handed it to her. Thereupon she arose and divided her estate into three parts: one third for the government, one third to be distributed among the poor, and one third she took with her in her hand; the bedclothes, however, she retained. She then came to the *Beit Midrash* of R. Hiyya and said to him, "Master, give instructions about me that they make me a proselyte." "My daughter," he replied, "perhaps you have set your eyes on one of the disciples?" She thereupon took out the script and handed it to him. "Go," said he "and enjoy your acquisition." Those very bed clothes which she had spread out for him for an illicit purpose she now spread out for him lawfully.

ADDENDUM

There are interesting sources to look at which explore the function of *tzitzit* as witnesses which guard us. The source of this approach seems to be in the juxtaposition in the Book of Numbers of the story of the ten spies in Chapter 13 and the Mitzvah of *tzitzit*, given in Chapter 15.

Both sections are introduced with the verb לִהְיוֹת – to scout, spy or wander. That was the function of the spies, and we are told in *Parshat Tzitzit* לא תהווּ סְפִיּוֹת – don't wander after your heart and your eyes. Apparently, *tzitzit* serve to guard against the unimpeded wandering of our hearts and minds, and remind us to continually view reality from the standpoint of a people with a unique and deeply committed relationship with *Hashem*.

Transmitting Values About Sexuality

Challenge for Educators and Parents

1

Need to be More Open in Addressing Sexual Values

Some Evidence from Recent Survey and what Adolescents are Sharing on the Internet

2

National Study of Youth And Religion

N=3,370

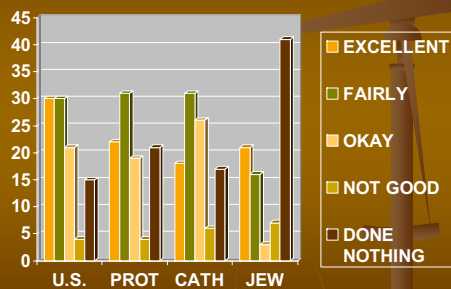
Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers, Smith & Denton, Oxford, 2005

3

- Across denominations, are Jews more or less likely to convey clear messages about sexuality?

4

Job Congregation has Done Helping Better Understand Own Sexuality and Sexual Morality



5

Public School vs Yeshiva

- **I came from a public school...** Once I got to yeshiva, it all changed. the guys were *** holes, until the comments. since our school has 100 kids, its impossible not to know everybody. pretty quickly **i was getting lots of attention in regards to my body- even though we dress sniutly and all of that. i've had guys ask me to flash them, do jumping jacks, they grab my butt... comments upon comments of "wow, you look really-"** **pause, stare at the chest "-good today".** **when i was in public school, i NEVER had to deal with any of this.** granted, i didn't look the same as i do now, but whenever i see my old guy friends i never get comments or anything, and **when i told my best guy friend who is still in public school about this, he flipped out and went all "sexual harassment" on me.** **that is what this is, after all.**

www.thelockers.net

6

if you are a very attractive girl do something about it, or just let it go cuz unfortunately its bound to happen.

- this does sound like a bunch of unnecessary crap that you are getting, but you cannot compare how your friends treat you to how guys who think you are hot (attractive) treat you. it sux that they do this, but, sorry to say, **if you are a very attractive girl do something about it, or just let it go cuz unfortunately its bound to happen.**

i recently dropped a ton of weight cuz of college tennis, and i got the sameso dont think anything of it. it sux, but it is part of the 14-19 culture.

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7

my parents yell at me alot and make me feel worthless, and he [my boyfriend]actually makes me feel loved and like im worthsomething to someone in the world.

- My point is, i love him and without him i would be sad all the time and like miserable **my parents yell at me alot [especially my dad] and make me feel worthless, and he [my boyfriend]actually makes me feel loved and like im worthsomething to someone in the world.**

now based on that, do you think i was wrong to go behind my parents back and go out with him anyway, when they say no?

he makes me happy when im sad makes me feel loved when i dont, makes me laugh when i frown.

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8

my bf left me after we had sex! omg! i feel so dumb..

- I dont get the whole 13 years old shouldnt be dating thing. I dated a guy at 14 and fell in love. So i get wat your saying... Prove your parents wrong, show them you're responsible enough to handle a relationship. Make them understand that you really do love him... ;) year later.. we see a post

my bf left me after we had sex! omg! i feel so dumb..

- THAT SUCKS!! But i no the feeling.. when the boy i lost my virginity to left me, i felt like ****, i couldnt believe i bought into his **** about the future.. ger.. i get mad thinking about it.. Like y do all the guys i seem to get with just want to get in my pants (well with the exception of one..) no wat i mean!?

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9

Virginity?

- I know in the Christian religion, your supposed to stay a virgin until you are married, but are their any laws in the Jewish religion like that? Lately I've been thinking a lot about waiting until I'm married, but on second thought, when im just a little bit older, i might be in love, and i might want to lose it to my first real love, even if we're not married. So i don't know whether to wait until I'm married, or just until im ready, and in love.

Is there something like this in the Torah? And what are you going to do?

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- I don't actually think there is anything in the torah about waiting until you're married to have sex (but don't qutoe me on that). In fact, sex is considered a mitzvah. On the flip side, I believe that contraceptives are prohibited because it says "Be fruitful and multiply" (this is why sex is a mitzvah).

Personally, I feel that if the time is right, you should just do it (and please use contraceptives if you do).

Sometimes you just shouldn't let religion get in the way of love. Just because it's prohibited to marry a gentile doesn't mean that you shouldn't do this if you love that person, and just because it may be prohibited to have pre-marital sex doesn't mean that you shouldn't if you really ARE in love.

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- A kallah teacher of large numbers of graduates of coed day schools reports that the young women she counsels seem turned off to sex because of a focus on the negative they get at school where sexuality is often presented primarily through the prism of what isn't allowed

12

An Absent Curriculum

- Girls seem to be confused and pressured in sexual areas
- A number of rabbis and educators in coed day schools have told me that girls complain that to the extent that the number one need of an adolescent is to "fit in"- they feel that they can't really be accepted by the boys in their school if they aren't sexually active

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As Bettelheim
(1984) commented,

"what cannot be talked about
can also not be put to rest"
Lighting up Broca's Area

14

Recent Changes in External Influences Shaping Sexual Values

Internet, Television and other Media

15

Impact of Pornography

- Average age of first exposure to pornography on the Internet is 11
 - This is often accidental exposure while child is doing homework
- Both violent and non violent pornography has been associated with violence against women
 - Increase in attitudes supporting sexual aggression towards women
- Adolescent female exposure towards pornography associated with a belief that women's actions and dress lead to rape

Fleming, 2006, Youth and Society,
38:135

16

Pornography Continued

- Incidence of unwanted exposure to pornography in ten to seventeen year olds has risen from 26% to 34% during period of 2000-2005
- The more adolescents seek out online porn the more likely they are to
 - have a recreational attitude towards sex
 - View sex as something that can take place outside of the context of a relationship
 - View women as sexual play things

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Pornography and Parenting Styles

- Authoritative parenting style in dealing with internet use is more likely to use in responsible attitude towards pornographic sites even when parents are not watchin

18

Impact of Changing Standards of What Children See on Television

- Changing standards in quantity and quality of exposure to sexual messages on television, particularly sitcoms
- 10% of shows depict or strongly imply sexual intercourse- this has been found to predict age of initiation of sexual activity in adolescents.
- 16% of such scenes involve couple who just met
- 95% of sitcoms do not make even a passing reference to the risks and responsibilities of sexual activity
- A study done in 2004 documented that heavy television sitcom watchers are more likely to engage in sexual activity at earlier ages and are more likely to regret their early sexual experimentation once they reach young adulthood.

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Adolescent Sexual Activity: General Considerations

- Poor family relationships predict premature sexual activity
- Early sexual activity among teens is associated with early use of alcohol, and drugs and poorer social adjustment several years later
- Grades fall significantly the year after the first sexual experience

20

Role of Parents and Educators

General Considerations

21

National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health
JAMA 278:10, 823-832 N=12,118

- Predictive of onset of risky sexual behavior
 - Perceived school connectedness
 - Study of top 20 vs lowest 20 schools
 - Parent-family connectedness
 - Parental expectations regarding school achievement
 - Parental disapproval of early sexual behavior

22

Key Predictors: Opportunity and Parental Values

- Time alone with member of opposite sex Adolescent personal values- in part shaped by parental values
- Parental monitoring in context of good relationship

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Dating

- As the amount of time invested in a particular relationship increases the expectation that sexual involvement will occur increases

24

Protective Factors

- Parent-child relationship characterized by ability to turn to parents first for any problem
- Belief that parents value abstinence
- Time: parental availability
- Peer group that supports abstinence

25

Some General Guideline Regarding Discussion with Adolescents

26

Discussing Sexuality

- Parents and teachers tend to consistently underestimate their children's concerns about sex as well as their child's desire to talk to them about these concerns
- Make your values clear and explicit
- Empathize but be clear about Do's and Don't's "while it can be hard to say no, I want you to say no. The longer you wait to have sex the better off you will be
- I will always want you to talk to me if you are tempted to have sex. I will not punish you for those feelings, but I will help you resist them because it is safer for you to resist them

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Caveat:
26 Randomized Clinical Trials of Primary Prevention Strategies Aimed at Delaying Sexual Intercourse

BMJ (2002) 324 (7351) 1426-1434

- Failed to delay initiation of sexual intercourse in young women
- Did not improve use of birth control
- Four abstinence programs and one school based sex education program were associated with an **increase** in the number of pregnancies among partners of male participants

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The "Talk"

- Is not an event but a process and a mode of interaction with adolescent
- If adolescent is restless and inattentive take this as a sign that they are not taking in your message- schedule another time
- Adolescents understand less than you think- main source of their information is often equally ill informed peers
- If uncomfortable discussing sex, say that up front: "my teachers didn't talk to me about sex so I'm a bit uncomfortable ; bear with me, I'd still rather discuss this than say nothing"

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The talk (continued)

- Embarrassment shouldn't paralyze it should act as a clue, helping detect what you are afraid of
- Ask adolescent for their opinions don't only share yours

30

The Talk

- Embarrassment shouldn't paralyze .. should act as a clue, helping detect what adult is afraid of
 - Metacommunication: can say "my parents didn't talk to me about this, or, "I'm nervous talking about this but it's important"
- Ask adolescent for their opinions don't only share yours

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Important Points for Discussion with Adolescents: Contextualizing from the Secular Literature

- A survey reported in JAMA found that a substantial percentage of young adults wish they had waited longer before becoming sexually active as adolescents

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General Considerations: Continued

- Normalize
- Sex out of commitment versus fun; pull of culture vs. individuality and meaning
- Early relationships and risks for premature foreclosure: power of early sex to distract you from who you really are

33

Adolescent Sexual Activity: General Considerations

- Poor family relationships predict premature sexual activity
- Early sexual activity among teens is associated with early use of alcohol, and drugs and poorer social adjustment several years later
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Questions to ask about Sexual Readiness

1. Are you doing this for yourself?
2. Do you feel rushed by your partner, the situation, or yourself?
3. Do you trust your partner, can you talk freely with him/her?
4. Do you only engage in sexual activity when drunk or high?
5. Would you be comfortable saying no even at the last minute?
6. Have you thought about the impact on your life and whether it matches your values
7. Sexuality can provoke larger questions about the nature of existence, the meaning of life

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Multiplicity of reasons behind Adolescent Sexual Activity

- To prove lovability
- Proof of adult status
- Physical pleasure
- Intimacy, expression of true love
- Status in peer group
- Relief from boredom, stress reducer

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