

SEX

EDUCATION:

*Exploring sex, abstinence,
consent, and relationships.*

SU

COUNSELING

AND

HEALTH

PURPOSE OF SEX EDUCATION

This booklet is designed to inform students about topics related to sex education. While some students may be familiar with these topics, a lot of students come into college with questions about sex, sex education, abstinence, and relationships. Even though a large majority of students have these questions, they don't always ask questions due to fear, embarrassment or both. We get it, this topic can be difficult to talk about! That's why we created this booklet to help you sort through this information on your own time, and in private.

Do you want more detailed information about topics while you are reading? Hover over topics and click to be lead to websites we trust and recommend.

Still have questions after? Set up an appointment at the HEALTH CENTER to ask your questions to a physician, nurse practitioner, or nurse.

Are you worried that your relationship or sexual experience isn't healthy? Set up an appointment with the COUNSELING CENTER to talk to a licensed counselor.

512.863.1252

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A person's decision to have sex or to abstain from having sex is a personal decision and should be respected. While there can be pressure to either be abstinent or sexually active, you should always make the best decision for yourself.

Abstinence is when a person abstains from sex. However, boundaries can be set to abstain from all types of sexual experiences (vaginal, oral, anal), or can sometimes only limit abstinence to sexual intercourse (vaginal). While there can be a lot of pressure from peers or partners to have sex, a person's decision to abstain from sex can be due to personal reasons (values, religion, fear of STI's/STD's, etc.), and should always be respected. Abstaining from sex does not mean that a person cannot be in a close or intimate relationship. If staying abstinent throughout college is important to you, then there are important steps that you can take to remain that way.

If you are in a relationship, then communicating your boundaries to your partner is an important step. Communication is the foundation of healthy relationships, and it is important to communicate what is off limits to your partner. Make sure that your partner understands why you want to remain abstinent, and make sure that your partner respects your boundaries.

Much like abstaining from alcohol or drugs, abstaining from sex is a personal decision. In fact, abstinence is not a permanent decision, and abstinence of all types of sexual acts is the most effective way of preventing sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy. Whether you want to remain abstinent or have sex, don't let the reason be because of peer pressure. Make the decision that is best for you.

CHOOSING SEX

If you are still deciding on whether you are ready for sex, or if you have already had sex before, then there are numerous steps that you can take to protect yourself.

Number 1: Become familiar with types of protection and contraceptives to prevent pregnancy. One of the most successful methods to preventing pregnancy is using the “Dual Protection Method.” The dual protection method encourages you to use 2 types of protection, with one of them always being a condom during sex. Additionally, women can take birth control in the form of the pill, patch, ring, implant, injection, or IUD. Using a condom plus one of the other forms of birth control can reduce your risk of pregnancy, and can even prevent your risk for certain STD's.

Number 2: Have a conversation with your partner about Sexually Transmitted Infections and Diseases (STI/STD). If you or your partner have had sex before, then there is the possibility of passing STI's to one another. Many STI's have no symptoms, and you or your partner may have something without knowing it.

Number 3: Are you emotionally ready to have sex? Communicate with your partner about your expectations for your relationship and how sex fits in. Having sex can change relationships and their dynamics. It is important that you and your partner are on the same page emotionally and regarding sexual boundaries.

Number 4: Not all relationships last, which is why it is important to reflect on your boundaries for sex in each of your relationships. Does every relationship you are in need sex? If your relationship fails, will you regret having sex with that person? Every relationship can have different boundaries depending on how comfortable you are with your partner. These are important questions to reflect on to help you make the best decision for each relationship you are in.

CHOOSING SEX

Sexually transmitted infections (STI's) and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's) can affect both men and women, and are passed from one person to another through sexual contact and/or bodily fluids. The following are the most common STI's and STD's found in the college population. Having unprotected sex and/or having multiple sex partners can raise your risk for STD's and STI's.

Chlamydia- Chlamydia is a very common STI, and in most cases does not have symptoms. If left untreated, chlamydia can cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), which causes damage to a women's reproductive system. Anyone who has sex can get chlamydia through vaginal, anal, or oral sex, but having unprotected sex and multiple partners puts you at a higher risk.

Gonorrhea - Gonorrhea is an STD that can infect both men and women, and can cause infections in the genitals, rectum, and throat. This is a very common infection amongst 15-24 year olds. Gonorrhea is treatable with medication, but without it, can cause serious complications (PID in women and prostatitis in men).

Genital Herpes - Genital Herpes affects one out of every six people aged 14-49 in the United States. Herpes is a common STD spread through skin to skin contact, and most people don't have symptoms, but can spread the disease to sexual partners. In most cases, there is mild skin irritation, which many people mistake for another skin condition. There is no cure for genital herpes, but there are medicines that can prevent or shorten outbreaks.

CHOOSING SEX

HIV - Human Immunodeficiency virus weakens a person's immune system and can lead to AIDS. In the U.S., HIV is primarily spread through anal and vaginal sex, along with the sharing of needles or syringes for drug use. There is no cure for HIV, however there is treatment to control HIV and prolong lives.

HPV - Human Papilloma Virus is the most sexually transmitted infection. In fact, almost all sexually active men and women get it at some point throughout their lives. There are numerous types of HPV, and in most cases HPV goes away on its own. However, when it doesn't, it can cause serious harm if left untreated.

Some types of HPV can cause cervical cancer in women, and other cancers of the vulva, vagina, penis, or anus. HPV can also cause cancer in the back of the throat, including the base of the tongue and tonsils (oropharyngeal cancer). In many cases, HPV can go undetected and can be spread from partner to partner without anyone knowing it. While HPV can be scary to think about, the majority of serious consequences can be prevented or avoided all together with proper screening.

There are things that you can do to lower your chances of getting HPV. You can ask for the HPV vaccination (up to age 26), which covers certain strains of HPV, but not all. Women can schedule routine screenings like a pap smear to monitor HPV or check for HPV. Additionally, you can use latex condoms the right way (every time), and you can limit your number of sexual partners to lower your risk of HPV.

WHAT IS CONSENT?

Consent is necessary for a healthy sexual experience and relationship. However, consent isn't always communicated clearly, leaving some partners on different pages.

Consent is an agreement between participants to engage in sexual activity. As mentioned, it revolves around communication, and it should happen every step of the way. Consent is respecting your partner's boundaries, and consent can be taken away at any time. The best way to give consent is by verbally saying that you are comfortable with each sexual experience, but we know that things don't always happen that way. Having a conversation with your partner about your boundaries is the best way to understand what each person is comfortable with.

Here are some ways to communicate consent:

Are you comfortable?

Is this okay?

Do you want to slow down?

Do you want to go any further?

Even in the heat of the moment, communication is key. During a hookup, don't just assume your partner is comfortable with every action. Remember that when a person doesn't say "no," it doesn't mean "yes." Confirm with your partner that you are comfortable or uncomfortable, and respect each other's boundaries.

WHAT ISN'T CONSENT?

With consent being necessary for a healthy sexual experience, there are certain situations where a person CANNOT consent to something. For instance, if a person is impaired because of alcohol or drugs, they CANNOT give consent. If a person is asleep, then they CANNOT give consent. Situations where consent is not communicated clearly or given can quickly cross the line into an action that is considered a sexual assault.

Sexual Assault refers to sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent of the victim. Sexual assaults are happening on college campuses, and in many cases, alcohol is involved. Drunken hookups have become more of the norm for college students because alcohol is often times available at parties and other social events. However, there is a fine line between a consensual hookup and a sexual assault. Alcohol safety should be practiced to protect yourself and your friends. You should always keep an eye out for your friends, watch your drinks, know exactly what you are drinking, and know your limits. Drunken hookups can turn into sexual assault if you and your partner are not on the same page, and they should be avoided all together if you or your partner have had too much to drink.

Alcohol and drugs can impair you, which is why it is important to know that consent cannot be given when a person is too drunk. Taking proper precautions for yourself can help to avoid situations where a person might try to take advantage of you.

If you think that you have been sexually assaulted, you can report it to the SUPD, or you can talk about it **confidentially** with someone in the Counseling and Health Center, or SU Chaplain.

IS YOUR REALTIONSHIP HEALTHY?

INTIMACY

Felling of closeness.
Kindness, consideration, appreciation and support.
Takes time to build.

RESPECT

Acknowledge our own and our partner's inherent value.
Hold others in high esteem.
Act in a manner that contributes to the well-being of everyone.

SELF-DETERMINATION

Ability to control one's decisions without interference.
Ability to make sexual decisions without pressure or influence.

COMMUNICATION

Open to exchange of information between individuals.
Two-way-street: involves listening and responding.
Open to communication that increases connection.

CONSENT

Willing participation
Free from intimidation, manipulation, or fear.
Active process that involves choice.

HONESTY

Being truthful about past sexual experiences and current relationship status.
Informing partner of sexuality transmitted infections.
Being truthful about relationship intentions.

TRUST

Knowing that your partner is being honest.
Knowing that you can be honest with your partner.
Feeling safe and confident that your partner will respect your decisions.

MUTUALITY

Shared experience of commitment and intimacy.
Inclusive decision-making process.
Reciprocal and reciprocated.

IS YOUR REALTIONSHIP HEALTHY?

As seen on the left, Intimacy, Respect, Self-Determination, Communication, Consent, Honesty, Trust, and Mutuality all contribute to building a healthy relationship. Dating and being in relationships serve as a great way for you to find out what type of partner is right for you. It's also important to remember that relationships can be close and intimate with or without sex. College can be a time for dating and relationships, and you can practice these skills early on to maintain a healthy relationship. Identifying these skills as the foundation for a healthy relationship can also help you to see if there is anything wrong in your current relationship, or if there is anything that you or your partner needs to work on.

Healthy relationships should always be a mutual partnership, where both parties involved feel respected and serve as equals. The relationship should be a reciprocal relationship where both partners feel valued. As mentioned previously, consent and communication go hand in hand in building a healthy relationship and a healthy sexual relationship. Don't be afraid to be open and honest with your partner about your boundaries, past, and your feelings. Lastly, you should never feel that you are unable to control your own life out of fear or worry. You should have feelings of trust with your partner and you should be able to pursue what is important to you without feeling pressured to change.

If you are missing some of these qualities then it isn't necessarily a red flag, but could just mean that your relationship needs work in certain areas to strengthen the foundation. The following pages will detail qualities of an unhealthy relationship, which can help you to better determine where your relationship stands.

IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP UNHEALTHY?

Using Coercion and Threats

- Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her/him.
- Threatening to leave him/her, to commit suicide.
- Making him/her drop charges.

Using Intimidation

- Making her/him afraid by using looks, actions, gestures.
- Destroying his/her property.
- Displaying weapons.

Using Economic Abuse

- Preventing her/him from getting or keeping a job.
- Making him/her ask for money.
- Not letting him/her have access to family income.
- Making him/her ask for money.
- Giving him/her an allowance.

Minimizing, Denying, Blaming

- Making light of the abuse and not taking concerns about it seriously.
- Saying the abuse didn't happen.
- Shifting responsibility for abusive behavior.
- Saying she/he cause it.

Using Isolation

- Controlling what she/he does, who she/he sees and talks to.
- Controlling where he/she goes.
- Limiting her/his outside involvement.
- Using jealousy to justify actions.

Using Emotional Abuse

- Putting her/him down.
- Making him/her feel bad about himself/herself.
- Calling him/her names.
- Making him/her think he/she is crazy; playing mind games.
- Humiliating her/him.
- Making him/her feel guilty.

IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP UNHEALTHY?

Unhealthy relationships are built on power and control. Dating can be a new experience for college students, which can lead to struggles in relationships. While most students will experience some struggles in relationships, there are key qualities of unhealthy relationships that can lead to an escalation of problems.

The use of coercion and threats for one partner to get what they want out of a relationship (sex, drop charges of abuse, etc.) is never healthy. In **domestic violence** situations, coercion, threats, and intimidation are used to keep a partner from leaving a relationship. In many cases, emotional abuse and control are used to destroy a partner's self-confidence. If you have a partner who is constantly putting you down or humiliating you, then it could be a red flag for behavior to escalate further in the future.

While emotional abuse is common, abuse that escalates to physical violence (Domestic Violence) can be very dangerous or even deadly. Abusers may seem like they are perfect early on, but become more aggressive and controlling as time goes on. On the surface it may appear to be easy for a partner to leave, but it can be very challenging and dangerous.

As relationships end, there can be times where there is unhealthy behavior to follow. **Stalking** is a pattern of repeated and unwanted attention, harassment, contact, or any other conduct that is directed at a person that would cause fear. With more technological advances there can also be cyber stalking and/or tracking of computer activity, excessive texting or calling, or threatening to post personal information about a person without their consent.

If you feel that you might be in an unhealthy relationship, you can reach out to the counseling center to talk about your options for the future.

SUMMARY

We hope that you were able to learn more about sex, abstinence, consent, and relationships through this online booklet. No matter what you choose to do, we hope that you always make decisions that are best for you, without pressure from peers.

This booklet did not go into detail about sexually transmitted diseases/infections or contraceptives and protection. If you want to learn more about sexually transmitted diseases and infections, the signs and symptoms, and ways of getting tested, then there is an online PowerPoint on the [SU Health Education website](#). If you want to learn more about different forms of protection, how to use them, and contraceptives, then there is a separate online PowerPoint presentation that you can view on the [SU Health Education website](#). Both are equipped with audio for more detailed learning.

We know that sex can be difficult to talk about, which is why we are doing everything we can to give you more online options to learn about sex education and all that comes along with it.

Health Center 512.863.1252

REFERENCES

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<http://www.southwestern.edu/offices/counseling/>

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<http://www.southwestern.edu/titleix/yellowbook.php>

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