

Everybody's **NOT** doing it.  
Join the **real** majority.

## KNOW ABOUT IT: TIPS FOR PARENTS

### Who's In Control?

Statistics show that **parents have more power than they think**. A survey of teens by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (April 2001) asked:

***"When it comes to your sexual decision making, which of the following is most influential?"***

How did teens respond?

- Parents – 38.3%
- Religious organizations – 9.1%
- Brothers and sisters – 7.4%
- Teachers and sex educators – 6.8%
- The media – 3.6%
- Friends – 1.7%

### The Real Majority of Parents

- Nearly **80% of parents** want teens to be taught that they should not engage in sexual activity until they are married or at least in an adult relationship leading to marriage.
- **91% of parents** want teens to be taught:

***"The best choice is for sexual intercourse to be linked to love, intimacy and commitment. These qualities are most likely to occur in a faithful marriage."***

### Who Knew?

- Real-life experiences are not the same as those you see on television and in the movies.
- Sexual relationships are complex.
- Many teens say that once they become sexually active, thinking about sex can become obsessive and distracting.
- The teen relationship can change from:

***"What should we do tonight?" to "Where can we have sex tonight?"***

- Teens who abstain from risky behavior—such as sex, drugs, and drinking—are the least likely to get depressed. Both guys and girls who engage in high levels of risky behavior are the most likely to get depressed.<sup>1</sup> And for a girl, even experimenting *once* with sex or drugs significantly increases her risk of depression.<sup>2</sup>

***The attempted suicide rate for 12- to 16-year old girls who have had sex is six times higher than for peers who are virgins.***

- Social science data show that teens who abstain from sex do substantially better on a wide range of outcomes. They are less likely to:
  - Experience STDs
  - Have children out-of-wedlock
  - Live in poverty and be dependant on welfare
- Teen who abstain from sex during the high school years are substantially less likely to:
  - Drop out of school
  - Be expelled from school
- Abstinent teens are more likely to attend and graduate from college.

## **Be A Part of the Dream**

- Help your teen set long- and short-term goals. Discuss how sexual activity could keep him or her from achieving those goals.
- If your teen would like to be happily married someday, explain how being abstinent until marriage is a positive, healthy way to start and build a marriage.
- If your teen would like to have a family someday, discuss how having sexual intercourse before marriage puts them at risk for STDs.
  - some STDs can lead to infertility
- Talk with your teen about the benefits of remaining abstinent until marriage to help them make healthy decisions today that could affect their future.
- Believe that your child can remain abstinent until marriage.
  - Many parents think that having sex is simply part of growing up; or that sex, like drugs or alcohol, is part of adolescence. *It's not.*
  - More than half of all teens 17 and under are virgins.  
(Dr. Meg Meeker, Epidemic: How Teen Sex is Killing Our Kids).
- Encourage your teen to choose friends with similar values and beliefs.
- Discourage early dating and relationships.
- Explain that sex is not love and love is not sex.

**Abstaining from sex is not withholding love.  
You do not show love by having sex.**

- Get to know your teen's friends and whom they are dating. Stay involved.

## **References/Sources**

<sup>1</sup> *Archives of Women's Mental Health*, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2005.

*Comprehensive Sex Education Versus Authentic Abstinence: a Study in Competing Curricula*, The Heritage Foundation.