

Why Wait?

I'm 19, and saving sex for marriage. I saw my friends do things they ended up regretting.

By waiting, I've saved myself from emotional and physical damage. Along with all the STDs I've avoided, I haven't had to deal with the burden of breaking up with someone I've had sex with or becoming a father before I'm ready for that. Having sex before marriage would cheat me and cheat my future wife. She deserves not to have to share me with anyone in the past.

Right now it can be tough to wait, but the payoff will come when my wife and I can enjoy the gift of sex that we've saved for each other.

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I didn't care about other people. I didn't even understand that other people existed or mattered." In 2012, he told a *Forbes* interviewer:

There's an emptiness to hooking up so much. When you're below a certain age, or a narcissist, you don't notice it or care. But once you develop empathy, once you develop a soul, the loneliness and the emptiness become too much.

6. SHARE YOUR FAITH. Faith provides moral clarity. Many parents today feel overwhelmed by a powerful and ever more toxic popular culture. A strong, shared faith between parents and children can level the playing field.

7. EXPRESS DISAPPROVAL OF TEEN SEX. In *Your Child at Risk*, pediatrician and family counselor Dr. Meg Meeker says parents must clearly communicate disapproval of teen sex. She cites the National Study of Adolescent Health, which found that teens "who perceive that their mother disapproves of their engaging in sex are more likely to delay sexual activity." But the study also found that "if mothers recommend birth control, teens are less likely to perceive strong maternal disapproval of premarital sex."

8. KEEP THE HOME SECURE. Today our daughters are pressured by their boyfriends to send them indecent photos and by their girlfriends to do all manner of improper things. Boys are steered by their friends to visit an appalling variety of indecent websites. Parents must therefore monitor their

children's cell phone and Internet activity. TextGuard enables parents to log onto a website and monitor the content of their child's texting, e-mailing, and browsing. iWonder Surf allows parents to monitor and control the websites their child is visiting.

9. ENCOURAGE AMBITION. The great actress Helen Hayes once observed:

My mother drew a distinction between achievement and success. She said that achievement is the knowledge that you worked hard and did your best. Success is being praised by others. Always aim for achievement and forget about success.

10. ENCOURAGE MARRIAGE. We can teach our children the beauty and blessings of marriage by showing in our own lives the everyday rewards of marriage and family. In *Best Friends and Best Men*, we proudly promote the value of married life. We help young people see what a good marriage looks like through married role model speakers. We help them prepare themselves for a successful marriage. We catalog the benefits of saving sex until marriage. In our survey of *Best Friends and Best Men* participants, 92% of girls and 95% of boys said that they hoped to be married someday.

Despite the growing threats they face, we can help our daughters survive and thrive in today's high-risk culture. We must give them boundaries and enforce them. We must tell them to treasure their future and not waste it on behaviors that will fill them with shame the next morning and regret for many mornings to come. We must teach them not to get involved with men who don't treat them with the highest level of respect.

We must encourage them to find a passion and pursue it. We must urge them to focus on the things that will help them be happy over the long haul—such as honor, truth, decency, faith, and family. We must remind them how complex life is but how simple are its basic truths.

We can, we must, do better for our daughters. ■

Adapted from *Daughters in Danger: Helping Our Girls Thrive in Today's Culture* (2014) by Elayne Bennett, President and Founder, Best Friends Foundation. Email:

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SEX FACTS

- According to the Centers for Disease Control, 1 out of 4 American women is the victim of rape (attempted or completed) during her lifetime. Most rapes are not reported.
- Dating violence is 5 times more likely in teen relationships that involve sex. Young women 16-24 experience the highest rates of violence at the hands of someone they know.
- Three out of 10 teenage girls get pregnant at least once. About a third get abortions. 20% of teen couples using condoms as birth control become pregnant after one year.
- About 50% of sexually active youth get an STD by age 25. About 80% of people who have an STD don't know it.
- You can get an STD such as herpes or HPV even if you use a condom because such infections are transmitted by skin-to-skin contact.
- Oral sex can spread herpes and other STDs to the face, mouth, and throat. Herpes can be transmitted to a baby during birth, causing brain damage or even death.
- *Pediatrics* (87) reported that the attempted suicide rate for sexually experienced girls (12 to 16) is 6 times higher than for virgins.
- 12- to 17-year-olds are among the largest consumers of online pornography.
- 58% of girls and 53% of boys ages 15 to 17 have never participated in any form of sex (oral, anal, or vaginal).
- 67% of teen girls and 53% of boys who have had sex say they wished they had waited.
- The percent of black high school students who have "ever had sexual intercourse" fell from 82% percent in 1991 to 60% in 2011.
- Abstinent youth get better grades in school and are less likely to drop out. Teen sex raises the likelihood of other risk-taking such as drug and alcohol abuse and crime.
- More than 40% of children are now born to unwed mothers (vs. 6% in 1960). Children of unmarried mothers are more likely to grow up in poverty, have social-emotional problems, drop out of school, engage in teen sex, and have a child outside of marriage.
- Children living with their mother and her boyfriend are 11 times more likely to be sexually, physically, or emotionally abused than those living with married, biological parents.
- Couples who do not cohabit before marriage experience lower rates of marital conflict, infidelity, and divorce.
- Adults who delay sex until marriage report the highest levels of sexual satisfaction.

Sources: *Rape and Sexual Assault* (White House, 2014); Centers for Disease Control; *Pediatrics*, 87 and 114; NCI Ctr for Health Statistics; NCI Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy; *Lost in Transition*; Guttmacher Institute; Medical Institute for Sexual Health; *A Scientific Review of Abstinence and Abstinence Programs*; ChildTrends; *Why Marriage Matters: Thirty Conclusions from the Social Sciences*.