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Am I Ready For Sex?

How do you know if you're ready to have sex?

Sex seems glamorous, especially the way it's shown in the media, where people hop into bed with each other with no talk of consequences. Things go perfectly and they wake up snuggling the next morning, all warm and happy.

But that's not reality. Sometimes sex is awkward and doesn't go quite as planned. And partners need to have some pretty thoughtful discussions beforehand.

In this post, we're going to try to answer the "am I ready?" question with a series of other questions – for both you and your partner. Discussing these issues is a great way to get started.

Why do you want to have sex?

That question sounds easy, doesn't it? Doesn't everyone want to have sex? Isn't everyone having sex already?

You might think so, especially if you watch a lot of movies and TV. You also might overhear conversations. It seems like everyone is doing it except you.

That's not true though. Sometimes people embellish or lie about their sexual experiences.

Think about why you want to have sex. Is it because you love your partner and want to take those feelings to a physical level? Do you want to have the emotional closeness with that person that sex can bring? Sex can be wonderful when both partners feel this way.

Or do you feel pressured to do it – either by your peers or your partner? Is your partner saying things like "if you loved me, you would"? Is sex something you feel you need to get over with? Do you feel like having sex will bring you closer to adulthood?

If this is the case, think twice about having sex.

Lots of people wait. Some don't want to worry about pregnancy or sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs). Others feel that sex right now goes against their religious or cultural beliefs.

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And some just don't feel ready. If you feel you should wait until you're more comfortable with the responsibilities of having sex or in a more committed relationship, that's perfectly fine. Congratulate yourself on having the maturity to know what is right for you.

Do you know how sex “works”?

Sex can be mysterious, especially in an anatomical sense. Before you have sex, it helps to understand your own body – and that of your partner.

It's easy to assume that your partner “knows it all” and will know exactly what to do. But your partner might be just as inexperienced as you are.

You might decide to take it slow and learn more about each other's bodies. Or you might decide to wait until you're clearer about what you're doing.

Can You Talk to Your Partner?

Sex can be tough to talk about. Almost everyone has trouble opening up about it at times. But before you have sex, you and your partner need to have a heart-to-heart talk. And you both need to be honest. Here are some questions to get you started:

Reasons and Feelings

- Is sex something we want to do? Or do we feel pressured to do it?
- What is our relationship like now? What kind of future might we have?
- Do we love each other?
- Do we trust and respect each other?
- Are there any aspects of sex that make us nervous or frighten us?
- How do we feel about seeing each other naked or touching each other in an intimate way?
- Can we handle the emotional aspects of sex?

Preparing

- What method of birth control will we use?

- How we will get this birth control?
- Do we know how to use it properly?
- If a partner has had sex before, what is his/her STD status?
- How will we lower the risk of STDs?
- What will we do if one of us wants to stop having sex, even if we're in the middle of it?
- Where will we have sex?

Consequences

- What will we do if there's a pregnancy?
- Are we mature enough to make decisions about keeping a baby, giving it up for adoption, or terminating a pregnancy?
- How would we manage to care for a baby? Can we afford it?
- Are we willing to change our future plans dramatically if there is a pregnancy?
- What if one of us gets an STD? What will we do about treatment?

The relationship

- Will we have sex only with each other?
- What if one partner "cheats"?
- What happens if we break up?
- If we break up, will we be able to handle the emotional aspects?

Can you talk to a trusted and experienced confidant?

All these questions can make your head spin. Sometimes, it helps to talk to a trusted person who knows you well. It may also help to talk with a professional, such as a mental health counselor, a member of the clergy, or your healthcare provider.

Are you ready for sex?

Here we are, back to the main question. Are you ready to start having sex?

The answer is up to you.

Resources***Planned Parenthood***

“Am I Ready?”

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/teens/sex/am-i-ready>

Sutter Health/Palo Alto Medical Foundation

“Am I Ready?”

(Last reviewed: October 2013)

<http://www.pamf.org/teen/sex/virginity/readyornot.html>