Mythbusters 101

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Agenda

- Myths and Trends: Teens
  - Teens still think WHAT?
  - How are professionals perpetuating myths/misinformation?

- Trends among YSPs
  - What does this mean for TPPPs nationwide?

- Implications for TPPPs
  - What role do we all play in making a difference?

- Action Steps
  - Where can we get more help/support?
Categories of Common Myths and Trends Among Teens

- How Pregnancy Happens
- Virginity
- Sexual Orientation
- STDs and HIV

Myths and Trends: Teens

- Trends among YSPs
- Implications for TPPPs
- Action Steps
- Resources
Category One

How Pregnancy Happens
Can a girl get pregnant from pre-cum?
NO

- Pre-cum made in Cowper’s Gland (#10)

- Sperm made in testicles (#4)
Can a girl get pregnant from anal sex?
NO

- Anus and rectum separate
- Not connected to reproductive system
Does drinking Red Bull, Mountain Dew, or other high caffeine drinks lower sperm count?
NO

- Anabolic steroids
- Certain meds
- Smoking/recreational drugs
- Physical trauma
- Excessive heat
- Hormonal imbalance
- Intensive/over-exercising
- Age
Is “pulling out” an effective form of birth control?
Well, here’s the thing...

For pregnancy prevention ONLY: stats all over the place

As safer sex: NO PROTECTION

Contraceptive Technology:

- **Perfect use:** approx. 96% effective
- **Typical use:** approx. 73% effective
If a guy ejaculates, gets some semen on his hand, and an hour later touches his female partner’s vulva, can she get pregnant?

NO
If a guy ejaculates on his female partner and the semen lands on her thigh, stomach, arm, foot — can she get pregnant? 

**NO**
If a male–female couple are having dry sex, and he ejaculates, can she get pregnant?

NO

(but be careful re: clothing placement)
Trends

- Much more concerned re: pregnancy than STDs (HIV—depends on location)

- Paranoia among girls: Taking multiple pregnancy tests even if menstruated

- Very limited accurate info re: how pregnancy happens (boys and girls)
My ex-boyfriend fingered me right after he had touched or rubbed his penis so he had fresh precum on his fingers. This was on November 27th. I took a pregnancy test on December 9th which was negative. I had a period or period like bleeding from December 13th till the 16th. I took another test on December 31st, it was negative as well. I had another period or period like bleeding from January 9th through the 12th. I took more tests on: January 16th, January 24th, January 27th, January 31st, and February 4th. I had another period from February 5th through the 9th. I took more tests on February 8th, 14th, 17th, 20th, 22nd, and 27th. at least 4 of the tests i have taken were Clearblue digital. All the tests resulted with negative answers. But i experience lower back aches sometimes and i have gained 2 pounds. I am very worried, i come from a very religious family and would be kicked out of my house if i was pregnant. Please help!!! -- 17, female
Trends

- Girls go on hormonal birth control but have no clue how it works.

- Anovulation/amenorrhea: they think they’re pregnant.

- Fatalism/coping: “Oh well, we can just do it this one time, I’m sure it’ll be fine.”
Category 2

Virginity
Here’s A Story…

Marcia: “Doug, your hand is on my shoulder.”

Doug: “Yes it is, Marcia.”

Marcia: “Well, that’s third base and I don’t go that far.”
• No more “bases” — or very different

• Want to be “sexually active” but still want to be “good” (girls)
Am I still a virgin if...?

- I got fingered?

- We had oral sex?

- We had oral sex, but I didn’t swallow?

- We had anal sex?

- We had vaginal sex, but it was only inside me for like a minute?

- We had vaginal sex, but it didn’t feel good?
Trends

- Moralistic judgment on girls

- Gender/masculinity pressure on boys

- Self-esteem: higher for girls the longer they wait; higher for boys the shorter they wait (research)
• Safer sex issue: “We’re both virgins so we don’t need to get tested, right?”

• But virgin = no penile–vaginal sex; have had oral sex with others
Category 3

Sexual Orientation
Myths/Trends

- People can choose whether to be lesbian or gay
- Guys can't be bisexual
- Lesbians can't get pregnant (study: higher risk for lesbians/bisexual girls)
- Having trouble coming out to parents as gay, lesbian or bisexual
- Even with internet, often feel alone/isolated
- Confusion between gender/gender identity and sexual orientation
Biggest myth?

“It’s really no big deal. Teens are fine with it, it’s the adults that are uncomfortable.”

**NOT TRUE**

Homophobia/bullying alive and well...
Homophobia more pronounced toward boys

Girls tolerated/valued for sexual attraction, unless don’t fit in gender role stereotype

"I can see two women together but two men together is gross."
Category 4

STDs/HIV

Chlamydia

The Pox

The Clap

Herpes
Myths and Misconceptions

• STDs are spontaneously created by two people

• You can’t get an STD from oral sex

• You can tell who has an STD just by looking at them.

• HIV can be spread through saliva or sweat

• HIV: Still primarily gay males (unless community experience)

• Lesbians can’t get STDs
Trends

- Not as much concern about STDs: Curable, just need a shot
- More concerned re: pregnancy than STDs
A few consistent concerns we hear from boys...
- My penis is too small
- My penis doesn’t look normal
- If I masturbate x number of times a day will my penis shrink?
- Am I a pervert for masturbating?
- Is something wrong with me because
- I think of sex/masturbate all the time?
Now turn to a partner...

• What are some of the other common myths you hear from the young people with whom you work?

• Where do these myths come from?
Let’s talk about some of the issues and trends that face youth-serving professionals...
Trends Among Youth-Serving Professionals

Logistically:

- Professional development $ cut
- Often not invested in topic area/required to attend
- Those who are invested often isolated, esp. in school settings
- Topic area often off the radar unless in crisis, then unrealistic expectations
Logistically: Administrative support for school-based sexuality education varies widely:

- Some: “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” when it comes to sex ed. Teachers can do what they want as long as they don’t make waves.

- Others: Progressive; allow just about anything.

- Still others: squash everything (e.g., TX school cancelling all after-school activities just so a GSA can’t start).
Trends Among Youth-Serving Professionals

Professionally:

- Teach around sexuality (e.g., health curriculum)
- Ignore/skew facts/rationalizing teaching misinformation (e.g., anal sex and pregnancy: “I’m going to teach them that anyway”)
- Misinformed, esp. around HIV transmission (sweat/saliva)
Professionally:

- Resistant to using technology: "What happened to good old text books, why do I need to let them use the internet?"

- Too much time to do ppt; don’t see the value in using social networking/Twitter

- Many schools: limited internet/tech access or sex ed sites blocked. Others: Smartboards, tech savvy, etc.
Personally:

- Varying levels of comfort/ background

- HUGE boundary issues viz. disclosure, religious beliefs, personal values

- Strong belief in gender-role stereotypes
**Personally: Significant amount of homophobia (esp. urban areas)**

- “I don’t know how to deal with a student who has this problem.”

- LGBTQ youth were all molested and “made” LGBTQ

- Only an LGBTQ adult can help an LGBTQ young person
Personally:

- Teaching about sexuality is sterile: fear of controversy, sex-negative (“Do we really have to say that it feels good?”)
What are the implications for TPPPs nationwide?

- Myths VERY powerful: Perception = reality for youth. Data re: condom use vs. belief in data re: condom use.

- Need to do a lot of work on busting myths — remember youth are being actively taught misinformation (media, culture, peers, etc.)

- Is about far more than pregnancy prevention—all sexuality topics relate to this work
What are the implications for TPPPs nationwide?

- Need to do some more reviews/basic content with youth (AND ysps!)
- Need to keep our staff current on content (e.g., sperm in pre-cum)
- Can’t make assumptions that other YSPs are progressive/on board with what we’re doing
Action Steps: Now What?

Individual Writing: 5 minutes

- What are at least 2 things I will do differently relating to this information?

- What are at least 2 things I will urge my staff to do differently relating to this information?
For Teens: More Mythbusters

- Top Ten Sex Myths:
  http://www.sexetc.org/story/2225

- Popular Sex Myths
  http://www.sexetc.org/story/sex/1909

- Sex Myths: Get Your Facts Straight!
Research citations


Research citations

For More Facts...

- Answer
- SIECUS
- Advocates for Youth
- Healthy Teen Network
- National Campaign
- Scarleteen
- Go Ask Alice
- CDC
- Guttmacher
- American Social Health Association
- GLSEN