

Sex Makes You...

~~Cool~~ Vulnerable

~~experienced~~ obligated

~~Pekular~~ Pressured

~~relevant~~ emotionally Broken

Stopping The Sex Stress

Ending Sexual Pressure Should be a Priority for Public Education Systems, Peers, Parents

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It can be heard in the hallways, on television, in the lyrics of songs and on the news as the latest scandals. It can be heard everywhere.

Teenagers live in a society that puts a spotlight on sex.

Faced with the pressures of conformity and social acceptance, teenagers find themselves giving in to uncomfortable situations rather than taking the time to think through the emotional, physical and even social consequences of sexual relations.

Teenagers should realize using peer pressure to get others to be sexually active is not okay and that one do not need to partake in sexual activities to be socially accepted.

Almost on a daily basis, teens deal with peer and social pressure from friends and media. It becomes easy for some students to get caught up in their reputation. To seem cool or relevant, especially in the first few years of high school, some students say things they don't really mean and do things they don't really want to do. Sometimes, this involves building an image of sex promiscuity.

Some younger teens don't realize that a reputation that may seem cool freshman year can be the total opposite by senior year.

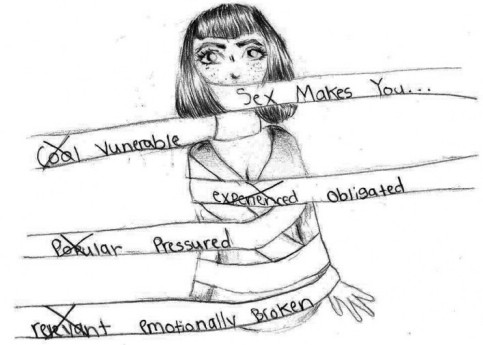
According to a publication by Parent Further, 28% of students surveyed said that giving into peer pressure ended up improving their social status. However, being called cool or experienced can backfire and end up becoming derogatory and degrading. Just like a positive reputation can bring good effects later in life, a negative reputation can build to bad effects, including bullying, depression and anxiety.

A study published by Psychology Today says that one in three boys between the ages 15-17 say they feel pressure to have sex, often from their male peers. And, many teens, especially boys, feel pressure to have sex before they are ready. While 63% of teens think it's a good idea to wait, few actually do, and peer pressure is usually the major factor.

Beyond friend and social stress, teenagers usually feel pressure within relationships to engage in sexual activity before they are ready. It becomes the norm to quickly give it up simply because they are in a relationship. This should not be the case. One obvious consequence can be unplanned pregnancy from a lack of protection and knowledge. Less obvious are social and emotional issues and health consequences such as STDs.

Teens fail to realize that peer pressure and the thought that "everyone else is sexually active so I should be too" can end up leading to extreme consequences like cases of sexual assault and acquaintance rape. According to RAINN.org, approximately 4 of 5 rape cases are caused by someone who the victim knows, while 47% are acquaintances and 25% are intimate partners.

It's well known that peer pressure can lead to risky behavior, but unlike the pressure and behavior of drinking and



using substances, teen sexuality is less reported. Because there are two social viewpoints on teen sexuality, making intercourse both acceptable and taboo, teens are scared to say anything for fear of trouble or they don't say anything because they feel like it is no big deal.

For a variety of reasons, schools have programs that address risky behaviors like drugs, alcohol and texting and driving, but teen sexuality is less discussed.

Schools need to include more programs addressing teen sexuality. From assemblies and small group discussions to requiring incoming freshmen to take a health class or attend a session where sexuality is discussed, schools need to make sure students get a proper education on peer pressure and sex.

With help from the school, teens can start considering that no one should feel obligated or pressured to engage in sexual activity if they do not want to or do not feel ready. After gaining more knowledge, teens will be able to see that while sex may seem cool at the time, it can lead to serious consequences that may not be reversible.