

Comprehensive sexual education is extremely important and plays a huge part in teen and young adult's lives. If people want young adults and teens to be safe, they must be equipped with proper education and resources so that they can stay safe. I grew up in Pequot Lakes, Minnesota, a close-minded small town. My ninth grade sex education was strictly abstinence-only. There was no talk about birth control options, resources if you get pregnant or need STI testing. Thankfully I had open-minded parents that educated me on what my school's curriculum left out. Where someone gets their sex education affects their view on sex and how prepared they are. But what about the kids whose parents are not like mine? Who must teach their kids how to practice safe sex? If schools have sex education in their curriculum, across the board all schools should be teaching the same thing. In my ninth-grade health class, we discussed a few STIs but they were used to frighten us. There was nothing about how to wear condoms to prevent STIs, it was simply "do not have sex unless you want these infections". Sex education should be about helping young adults with their sex lives, not putting fear on them by using scare tactics. There is no way to prevent kids from having sex, so we might as well help them and give them the proper resources they need.

Sex itself is seen as a taboo thing and makes most people uncomfortable. Before I had truthful sex education from my parents and the WeARE Clinic, I did not know much about the consequences of sex, besides getting pregnant. Once I knew more about sex, I took it upon myself to have conversations with my friends and try to educate them on what I had learned. Many of them would say "ew" and ignore the topic. I wondered why sex was so forbidden to even talk about. When I started my position on the WeARE Youth Advisory Council, I finally had a group of people my age that was passionate about proper reproductive health. I remember sitting in the clinic one day and talking to my friend about how sex is a scary thing for many people to talk about, why can't we make it normal? I felt that when I had the right education, I became more sex-positive and wanted my friends to feel the same way. Sex is a normal thing that most people of all ages take part in. Sex needs to be normalized because if it isn't, people will continue to get improper information and face the unknown consequences.

The issue is that kids learn about sex regardless and eventually become active. If schools could present correct reproductive information in a welcoming and open environment, the prevention of STI spikes and teen pregnancy spikes could be significant. We must normalize sex and give teens and young adults the proper information and education they need. We must make this education inclusive and make all students feel that they have the right to reproductive healthcare. Young adults should be able to make their own decisions for their sex lives, but they can't do that without comprehensive sex education and removing the stigmas toward talking about sex.

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