



# Tips for Teachers

A Guide for Using *New Youth Connections*  
in the Classroom

November 2005

## Helping Teens Make Healthier Choices

This issue focuses on relationships, sexuality and birth control methods. As you know, these are topics of keen interest to your students. They are also fraught with emotion, taboos, and misinformation. The power of these stories is that they show real teens struggling with real challenges. The writers acknowledge their mistakes and regrets and they present many perspectives instead of offering right or wrong answers. And, when it comes to birth control information, the writers have done diligent research to insure that they present the most accurate and up-to-date information possible.

Teachers tell us that this peer-to-peer approach is the best way to encourage young people to openly explore these important issues and make more conscious choices, instead of doing whatever happens in the moment. Here are story digests and discussion ideas for some of the articles.

## Relationship Stories

“Player No More,” page 3. Rosheed Wellington describes his inability to become emotionally involved with other people, including a series of girlfriends he left with broken hearts. Then the realization that one girlfriend

really loves him ultimately enables him to enter into a caring relationship.

### Discussion questions

—Rosheed says he becomes a player because of his father’s example. Where do the young people in your class get their cues about relationships (e.g., parents, other relatives, peers, movies, television)? Ask them to give an example of something positive and something negative they’ve learned about how to behave in a relationship.

—Rosheed totally opens his heart to Ollie. The reward is that he feels a closeness and love he never felt before. What’s the risk? Is it worth it?

—How would students’ reactions to the story and the character be different if the story were written by a young woman?

**Assignment:** Have students write a letter to Rosheed telling him what you think about his decision to quit playing and fall in love.

“My Forbidden Love,” by Anonymous, p. 6. The writer develops a serious crush on a teacher.

### Discussion questions

—How common are student/teacher crushes? Is it OK to fantasize about a relationship with a teacher? Was it OK for the writer to offer to teach Spanish to her teacher? Was it appropriate for him to accept? What’s the boundary that should not be crossed? Who’s responsible for drawing the boundary: The teacher? The student? Both? What’s the difference between fantasizing about something and taking action? Is the writer immature for having the fantasy, or



mature in how she handles it?

**Assignment:** Have students imagine an alternative ending. Tell them to stop at the bottom of the fourth column, where Anonymous writes, “I wanted him for myself, and it was bad.” What would have happened if after that point the writer and the teacher began a romantic relationship? (This is a writing assignment rich with tragic possibilities.)

“Sex With the Wrong Guy,” page 8. Anonymous has sex with her boyfriend and then spends three years suffering through what she calls “cold, unsentimental and indifferent” sex. She finally breaks up with him and then initiates a more fulfilling sexual relationship. This story has two messages: 1) The emotional side of sex is far more important for the writer than the physical side. 2) The writer does not regret having sex so much as she regrets having bad, indifferent sex. So, this is not a story about “girl has sex, regrets it, and decides not to have sex.” Rather, it’s a story about searching for a fulfilling emotional and sexual relationship.

**Tips for Teachers** is written for the bulk subscribers to *New Youth Connections* to help them use the magazine more effectively with teens in their classes and programs.

For more information, contact:  
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Tips for Teachers is also available on our web site at:  
[www.youthcomm.org](http://www.youthcomm.org)

### Discussion questions:

—Why did the writer get into a sexual relationship with Carlos? Why do you think she stayed? And why do you think she stayed so long in an emotionally and sexually unsatisfying relationship? (Note: in the third to the last paragraph of the story the writer said she was with Carlos because she had a “poor opinion” of herself. What do you think she means by that?) Would the writer have been better off never having gotten into a relationship with Carlos? What did she gain from it? What did she lose?

—If you were a friend of Anonymous and she confided in you shortly after having sex with Carlos the first time—and wondered whether she was doing the right thing—what advice would you give her? Why?

—What are the biggest differences between the relationship with Carlos and the relationship with Angel? Why is it so important to the writer? (Note to teacher: The writer talks about growing more confident in her sexuality.



If you want to talk about women feeling empowered about their sexuality, you may also want to have students read “Infatuation with Masturbation,” p. 22.)

—In her last sentence, the writer says that in the future, “If I don’t want to have sex, I won’t have sex, period.” What does she mean by that? How has she changed?

“Not Too Young,” p. 16, by Anonymous. The writer, 14, dates a 22-year-old. Adults in her life strongly disapprove and work to break off the relationship. The writer is convinced it is good for her.

### Discussion questions:

—Is this relationship good for the writer, on balance, or is she deceiving herself? What would be different if she had a relationship with someone closer to her own age? Compare with the teacher crush story above. This writer doesn’t just fantasize about a relationship with an older man, she gets involved. What responsibility does a 22-year-old have about drawing a line with a 14-year-old?

—Have your students read the sidebar interview with the psychologist. What do they agree with? What do they disagree with? What do they have mixed feelings or opinions about?

**Assignment:** Have students write a letter to Anonymous describing their reactions to her relationship, and any advice they have for her on whether to stay in it, how to handle it, how to handle the adults in her life, etc.



Amir Solimon

“My Slacker Boyfriend,” p. 24, by Anonymous. The writer’s grades and motivation plummet when she falls in love with a slacker.

### Discussion questions:

—Should love be blind, or should you keep your eyes open and try to fall in love only with people who will also support your goals in life? Do you think the writer really wants to succeed in school and have a good life, or is she just using the boyfriend as an excuse for her own desire to be a slacker? Would it have been better for the writer to keep her love for this guy at the fantasy level, and find a real boyfriend who’s more in line with her own goals (like the writer of the teacher story)?

**Assignment:** Have students write a letter to Anonymous telling her the straight truth about what they think of her relationship and whether she should stay in it.

## Writing Contest

page 2

Deadline: November 14, 2005

### “What does *New Youth Connections* (NYC) mean to you?”

We’re interested in hearing some stories from readers about what they get out of the magazine. This assignment will work best with students who have read more than one issue, but there are also plenty of articles in this issue that will be highly engaging to readers. Please ask them to read several articles (and think about articles they’ve read in the past, if any). Then have them

write a letter to us about what it means to them to read these articles by their peers, and the impact on them of reading the articles.

We are giving away an iPod Nano to the winner.



### Classroom & Advisory Resources from Youth Communication

Youth Communication has published over 70 books and booklets written by teens. Each one is an anthology of the best stories from our magazines on topics like conflict resolution, food and nutrition, friendship, parents, gender issues, identity, resilience, and others.

These anthologies inspire teens to read and help teachers start discussions and improve their students’ writing skills. Visit our E-store at [www.youthcomm.org](http://www.youthcomm.org). Or you can get our catalog by calling Loretta Chan at 212-279-0708 extension 115.

**“How to Handle the Reluctant Condom Wearer,” page 11**

Planned Parenthood has compiled a list of excuses to avoid using a condom—and possible responses to those excuses. See if your students can match the response to the excuse. The “right” answers are on page 11 but some responses might fit more than one excuse. (The goal is this exercise is not to get the right answer so much as to spark a discussion about condom use and how to overcome objections.)



**Birth Control and Sex Education Stories**

“**All About Birth Control**,” p. 10-14, gives students the facts on condoms, the diaphragm, the patch, the sponge, spermicides, the cervical cap, Depo-Provera, the ring, and the morning after pill.

**Assignment:** Create your own quiz or scavenger hunt to encourage students to focus on the facts of these birth control methods and to get them to realize that there are many options

to consider.

Questions you might ask include: Which ones prevent pregnancy? Which protect against STDs and AIDS? Which are for women? Which for men? Which require remembering to do something regularly? Which do not? Which is the most expensive? Least expensive? Which requires a prescription? Etc. Trick question: Which method is the cheapest, the most effective, and can be used by boys and girls? Abstinence. (But, like all the other methods, it only works if you use it.)

**“Sex 4-1-1,” by Sex, Etc., p. 23**

Sex, Etc. is teen-written newsletter about sex and relationships. It offers an extensive and excellent website ([www.sexetc.org](http://www.sexetc.org)), which



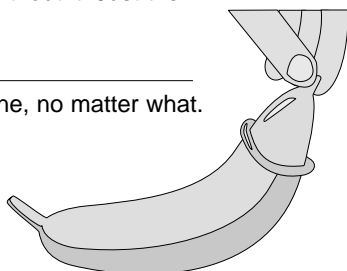
is also written by and for teens in conjunction with family life and sex education professionals. We'll be publishing excerpts from their Q&A section throughout the year. Encourage your students to use the Sex, Etc. site for further information about all of the topics in this issue and more.

**Where the Boys Are**

In this month's Speakout, p. 15, we ask eight boys about how they've been misjudged by girls, what they'd like to tell them, and other questions.

**Assignment:** Have boys in your class write their own answers to the questions in the Speakout. Have the girls write their responses to the answers given by the boys pictured in NYC (e.g., What do they like about what they say? Dislike? Do they believe them? Then have a discussion among the students about boy/girl relations. Are boys really misunderstood? Do girls misjudge them? What's the evidence?

| EXCUSE  | RESPONSE   |
|---|--|
| 1) I don't like using condoms.  | a) Practice makes perfect.   |
| 2) It doesn't feel as good with a condom.                                   | b) I'm not going to "prove my love" by risking my life.                            |
| 3) But we've never used one before.   | c) Women can get pregnant from pre-cum. It can also carry infections.              |
| 4) Condoms are gross.   | d) Well, doing it without a condom is playing with my life.                        |
| 5) Don't you trust me?  | e) I can do something about that.  |
| 6) I'll pull out in time.   | f) Well, then I guess we're not having sex.  |
| 7) Condoms aren't romantic.   | g) Practice makes perfect.   |
| 8) Making love with a condom on is like taking a shower with a raincoat on. | h) Why not?  |
| 9) It just isn't as sensitive.  | i) I'll feel more relaxed. If I'm more relaxed, I can make it feel better for you. |
| 10) I don't stay hard when I put on a condom.                               | j) I don't want to take any more risks.  |
| 11) Putting it on interrupts everything.                                    | k) Being pregnant is when I don't want to be is worse. So is getting AIDs.         |
| 12) I'll try but it might not work.   | l) Making love and protecting each other's health sounds romantic to me            |
| 13) But I love you.   | m)Trust isn't the point. People carry infections without knowing it.               |
| 14) I guess you really don't love me.                                       | n) Not if I help put it on.  |
| 15) Just this once without it. Just the first time.                         | o) With a condom you might last even longer, and that'll make up for it            |
| 16) I'm not using one, no matter what.                                      | p) Then you'll help me protect myself.   |



# STDs and Condom Use: Group Activity

Purposes: Reinforce need for condom use. Reinforce idea that only no sex is truly safe sex. Reinforce how STDs are spread from person to person to person.

Related stories in this issue: This issue contains a group of stories about sex, relationships, and decision making.

Materials: Enough index cards and pens/pencils for your group.

NOTE: It is better not to describe the object of the lesson.

Mark three of the cards as follows.

a) Place an "X" in the corner of one card. (This stands for the "HIV positive person.")

b) Write a "C" in the corner of one card (for condom use or safer sex practitioner)

c) On one card write DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON ANY CARD AND DO NOT LET ANYONE WRITE THEIR NAME ON YOUR CARD (This is the "abstinent person")

d) Write "B" on the rest of the cards for birth control other than condom use.

Keep the "X" card for yourself. Don't tell them what the letters on the cards signify.

2) Give the cards to the students. Tell them they have 2-3 minutes to walk around and get three people to put their names on their card, including you. You also get three people to sign your card. After they are done they should go back to their seat.



3) Tell the students that the X on your card means you are HIV positive. Remind them what this means. (If anyone reacts strongly to your announcement—makes a sound of disgust or a nervous giggle—ask that student why he or she responded that way.)

4) Read the names on your card and ask them to please stand. Then everyone still seated

should read the names on their cards. If students have your name or the name of a standing person then they must stand. Continue with the process until all students are standing except the "abstinent person."

5) Tell the students that for the purpose of this exercise, writing their names on cards or having other people sign their cards represented having sex. Everyone standing put themselves at risk of getting HIV by exchanging names with the teacher or someone the teacher had exchanged names with and so on.

6) Tell the student with the "C" card to sit down. Tell the class that this student had a C on his/her card which means they always used a condom and are less at risk of getting HIV. Those with "B" on their card used birth control that did not protect them from HIV.

7) Ask your students to notice that one person did not stand up. The reason this student did not stand is because he or she did not allow anyone to put their name on his/her card. He or she was playing the role of someone who is abstinent.

Closing: Ask your students what they thought of the exercise and if they learned anything about how STDs are spread.