

Rights

All people, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, have rights that need to be respected and responsibilities that need to be exercised.

Everyone — female, male, or transgendered; heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual — has basic human needs for intimacy and affection and the right to fulfill these needs in ways that are respectful of themselves and others. All people have the responsibility to behave in ways that are equitable and sexually healthy.

It is unacceptable to pressure, force, or exploit another person sexually.

Each person should choose freely whether to engage in any sexual behavior — whether it's touching, kissing, sexual intercourse, etc. — without pressure. To knowingly engage in sexual behavior with someone whose judgment and self-control are weakened by alcohol or behavior-changing drugs is not acceptable and is often illegal.

In a pluralistic society, we must respect diverse sexual attitudes and behaviors, as long as they are based on ethics, responsibility, justice, equality, and nonviolence.

People have a variety of opinions and perspectives on sexuality because they come from different backgrounds and have different personal and cultural histories. However, most people agree that all sexual behaviors should reflect the principles of respect, fairness, equity, and mutual consent.

Choice

Information about becoming pregnant and about postponing, preventing, continuing, or terminating pregnancy should be easily available; the choice of whether or not to parent should be free and informed.

People need accurate and complete information to make childbearing decisions that are appropriate for them. They want and need to know about abstinence, birth control, abortion, adoption, prenatal care, and parenting in an age-appropriate context.

Sexuality

Sexuality is a natural, healthy, lifelong part of being human.

All people are sexual beings from birth to death. Sexuality is the interplay of gender, gender role, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual preference, and social norms as they affect our physical, emotional, and spiritual life. It includes emotions, attitudes and values, relationships, self-image and ideals, as well as behaviors.

Every individual has a right to pursue sexual health information and services without fear, shame, or exploitation. That right involves access to adequate, accurate, and age-appropriate information about sexuality, including the advantages and disadvantages of sexual expression.

All people — at all ages — need access to accurate information that will enable them to make life-enhancing decisions about their sexuality. More than 85 percent of adults favor sexuality education for children and adolescents.¹ Programs for adolescents and adults should be balanced, and include skills for communication and delaying intercourse and information about contraception. Abstinence-only programs are inadequate to ensure sexual health. Everyone needs accurate information to be sexually healthy throughout their lives. Ensuring access to health clinics without threat of personal, verbal, or physical attack, as well as safeguarding confidentiality for all clients, are vital components to sexual health services.

About Planned Parenthood

We Believe

Planned Parenthood believes that sexual experience can be a positive source of personal enrichment and satisfaction when it is based on informed choices and mature decisions — whether for pleasure or procreation.

This brochure articulates the values supporting the work of Planned Parenthood and the value statements that have been endorsed by its membership.



Planned Parenthood

www.plannedparenthood.org
www.teenwire.com

Love

Every child deserves to be wanted, loved, and cared for.

Parenting is a lifelong commitment, and should be considered carefully. Babies and their mothers are more likely to be healthy when pregnancies are planned. Sixty percent of the pregnancies in this country are unintended;¹ Unplanned and unwanted pregnancies can have negative effects on the fetus, mother, baby, and on the relationship between the baby's parents. Children require years of care before they are mature, so parents should be prepared for this responsibility.

Expression

Abstaining from sexual intercourse is the most effective method of preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

All people need information and skills about how to abstain from unwanted or unhealthy sexual activity. Because most people do have sexual intercourse at some point in their lives, they need to know how to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections once they are sexually active.

Young people explore their sexuality as part of a process of achieving sexual maturity; adolescents are capable of expressing their sexuality in healthy, responsible ways.

Becoming a sexually healthy adult is an important part of adolescent development. Maturing adolescents can learn to make healthy decisions, foster communication skills, develop meaningful relationships, and express affection, love, and intimacy in ways that are consistent with their personal values. Adults play an important role in supporting young people during this time.

There are many healthy ways to express sexual feelings, alone or with a partner; sexual intercourse is only one form of sexual expression.

People explore a wide spectrum of sexual behaviors in their sexual development. Many pleasurable behaviors pose no risk of unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection. These, like all others behaviors, should be consensual and respectful of one's self and one's partner.

Health

Uninformed or irresponsible sexual behavior poses risks.

Each year, about 15 million Americans become infected with one or more sexually transmitted infections.² Sexual assault is one of the most serious and fastest growing violent crimes in America. Alcohol and other drugs impair people's abilities to make appropriate decisions about their sexual behavior.

Without adequate, accurate information and skills, people endanger their health and the health of their sex partners. Young people in particular need comprehensive information about sexuality. Yet studies indicate that only about five percent of students receive comprehensive sexuality education throughout their school years.³ Those students who do receive sexuality education get an average of six hours of class time on the subject.

Trust

Women, men, girls, and boys benefit from fairness and flexibility in gender roles.

Sexually healthy individuals are the foundation for a sexually healthy society. Healthy interaction between the genders, at all ages, encourages personal autonomy and non-exploitive relationships. Both genders are victimized by socialization into rigid gender roles.

The principles of equality, justice, self-determination, and responsibility should underlie relationships between girls and boys, and between men and women, as well as their social roles, behavior, development, and opportunities. The benefits of flexible gender roles include the capacity for a better balance between paid work and family activities, better use of talent, employment advantages for many workers, and improved general well-being of both genders.

Individuals and society benefit when children are able to discuss sexuality with their parents and/or other trusted adults.

Parents are the primary sexuality educators of their children. Parents give messages and set examples about sexuality and relationships from the time their children are born. Honest, accurate family communication can help children learn how to take care of themselves and the people they care about. Family members who are comfortable discussing sexuality with one another have a greater capacity to make healthy decisions and build strong relationships based on their values.

Responsibility

Individuals and society benefit when childbearing is postponed until maturity.

Eighty-two percent of teenage pregnancies are unintended, and women carrying unintended pregnancies are less likely to seek early prenatal care. Their babies are at greater risk of being born with low birth weight and dying in infancy. Those that survive are more likely than planned children to be abused, to live in poverty, and to have developmental problems.⁴

The children of adolescent parents are less likely to complete high school with their peers, are more likely to become teen parents themselves, and are less likely to become self-sufficient as young adults. The gross annual cost to society of adolescent childbearing and the extent of social problems that confront adolescent mothers is calculated to be \$29 billion.⁵ Individuals who are prepared for parenting have a greater capacity to build healthy and strong families.

1 National Guidelines Task Force. *Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education*, 2nd Edition. New York: Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S., 1996.
2 Committee on Unintended Pregnancy, Institute of Medicine. *The Best Alternatives: Unintended Pregnancy and the Well-Being of Children and Families*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1995.
3 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "Measuring the Hidden Epidemic: Trends in STDs in the United States." (Online, 2000, accessed 2001, March 15. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncestd/datsa/1trend/trends00a.pdf>)
4 The Robin Hood Foundation. "Kids Having Kids: A Robin Hood Foundation Special Report on the Costs of Adolescent Childbearing." New York: The Robin Hood Foundation, 1996.

Planned Parenthood® federation of America produces a wide variety of sexual health publications in English and Spanish.

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