

# Adolescent Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors

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### 3 Adolescent Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors: A Developmental Perspective

By Bonnie L. Halpern-Felsher, Ph.D., and Yana Reznik

Understanding adolescents' attitudes regarding sexual behavior is key to understanding why they choose to engage or not engage in sex, which sexual behavior(s) they initiate and continue, and the outcomes experienced during and following sexual behavior. This article briefly explores adolescent sexual behavior, positive and negative outcomes experienced, and the social and environmental influences that shape adolescents' sexual attitudes.



### 7 Working with Parents to Promote Healthy Adolescent Sexual Development

By Vincent Guilamo-Ramos, Ph.D., LCSW, and Alida Bouris, Ph.D., MSW

Although parents play a vital role in fostering healthy sexuality-related attitudes and behaviors among adolescents, many parents struggle with how to address sexuality-related topics with their adolescent child. This article provides practitioners with evidence-based frameworks and guidelines on how to work with parents in order to improve their efforts to help their adolescent child avoid the potential negative consequences associated with adolescent sexual behavior.



### 12 Sex, Sexuality, Sexting, and SexEd: Adolescents and the Media

By Jane D. Brown, Ph.D., Sarah Keller, Ph.D., and Susannah Stern, Ph.D.

Typically, adolescents spend six to seven hours a day with some form of media, including the traditional media and the new, digital, media. Both are being used by youth as they learn more about their developing sexuality. This article reviews how youth are using the new media to learn about sex, and how it can be employed to promote healthier sexual behavior.



### 17 Sexuality Among Adolescents with Moderate Disabilities: Promoting Positive Sexual Development

By Dana L. Harader, Ph.D., Harry Fullwood, Ph.D., and Melissa Hawthorne, M.S.

Adolescents with moderate disabilities are not being given vital information regarding their sexuality and ways to behave responsibly with their peers. This article examines the laws that govern the education of all persons with disabilities, how societal norms and attitudes have contributed to this lack of sexuality knowledge, how these adolescents are often victims of inappropriate sexual beliefs and attitudes, and how professionals can work effectively with these youth to promote positive sexual attitudes and behaviors.

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## From the Editor's PC

Dear Colleagues,

Adolescent sexuality and sexual behavior are normal parts of human development. However, most information regarding adolescent sexuality focuses on potential negative outcomes, such as pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. In this issue, we take a different approach; we consider teens' sexual attitudes and behaviors more broadly so that we can better understand their motivation and decision making for engaging in sexual behavior. Hopefully, with this basis, we can more effectively promote healthy sexuality and prevent premature sexual behavior and negative outcomes.

We begin this issue with an overview of adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviors by Bonnie Halpern-Felsher and Yana Reznik. This article briefly explores sexual behaviors engaged in by youth, the outcomes they experience (both positive and negative), and the social and environmental influences that shape their sexual attitudes.

Parents have a significant influence on the sexual attitudes and behaviors of their teen-aged children. In our second article, Vincent Guilamo-Ramos and Alida Bouris discuss how practitioners can work with parents to promote healthy adolescent sexual development. Their article focuses on parent-adolescent communication, parental monitoring, and the overall quality of the parent-adolescent relationship.

Another important influence on adolescent sexuality is the media, both traditional and new, digital, media. Jane Brown has spent more than 25 years studying how the media influences adolescents. In our third article, she and her colleagues summarize what is known about the use, content, and effects of sexual media among adolescents, how digital media is being used by youth, and the potential it provides for promoting healthy sexual behavior.

Often discussions about healthy sexuality overlook the needs of youth with moderate disabilities, even though they have the same sexual needs as their peers without disabilities. We conclude with an article by Dana Harader and colleagues who explore how and why youth with moderate disabilities often lack knowledge about sexual matters. This lack of knowledge places them at risk for many negative outcomes.

I hope this issue sheds light on the importance of looking at adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviors more broadly, instead of focusing only on the negative potential outcomes.

All the best,

Steven Ungerleider, Ph.D.  
Editor/Psychologist

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