

# LOVESMARTS<sup>®</sup>

## CHANGING MINDS, TRANSFORMING LIVES!

Volume 15, No. 1, Winter 2020

### 3 POSITIVE TRENDS SHOW TODAY'S TEENS DOING BETTER!

It has been said that on broadcast television news, “if it bleeds, it leads.” Bad news sells. It would be easy to conclude that the world is doomed, with pessimism about youth a common subtext, but a report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control tells a different story when it comes to America’s teens. The report\* reviews trends over decade in four areas of Sexual Behavior, High-Risk Substance Use, Violence Victimization, and Mental Health and Suicide. Here are some highlights over a 11 year period from 2007 to 2017.

1) **Sexual Behavior** - Over the decade the number of teens who’d ever had sex declined by 17%. Contrary to the idea that “they’re all doing it,” 6 out of 10 American teens have never had sex. The number of sexually active teens who’d had 4 or more lifetime sex partners declined by 35%, from 15% to 10%. The number of teens who reported being currently sexually active dropped by 18%, from 35% to 29%. It’s clear that **3 out of 5 U.S. teens are making the smart choice to delay sexual involvement!**

see 3 Positive Youth Trends, page 5



Teens at Free Teens Back2School Club Kickoff



### WARNING SIGNS OF CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

In recent years there has been growing awareness of Child Sex Trafficking. Here are WARNING SIGNS to watch for:

- Signs of physical abuse such as burn marks, bruises or cuts
- Unexplained absences from school, truancy
- Less appropriately dressed than before
- Sexualized behavior
- Overly tired or falls asleep in class
- Withdrawn, depressed, or distracted
- Brags about making or having lots of money
- Displays expensive clothes, accessories, or shoes
- New tattoo (tattoos often used by pimps as a way to brand victims.)

see WARNING SIGNS, page 5

### QUELL YOUR INNER CRITIC!

Most people know it --- even kid about it; that they are their own worst enemy. They are critical of themselves in ways they would never be of others. And when they stop long enough to pay attention, they can also acknowledge that they are the worse for all of that self-chastising. The problem is that, too often, they don’t try to stop, or don’t know how.

Those who are masters at self-criticism often create relationship problems with it. Consider Nancy. She is a very nice woman who had a caring boyfriend, Steve. The problem is that she tends to doubt herself a lot and

often expects that people will judge her for her mistakes or failings. Because of this, every time Steve complimented her, she asked him why he would even say what he did or went on to explain how he was wrong. At first, Steve was eager to prove that she really was wonderful. But, after a few months, he grew so tired and frustrated by this that he began to associate spending time with Nancy with being annoyed. Soon he began making excuses to do things without her and eventually broke off the relationship.

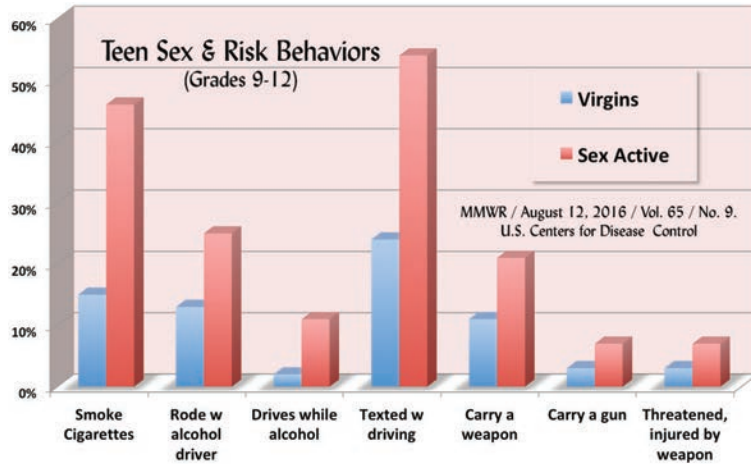
If you, like Nancy, are your own worst enemy, it’s important that you learn to be your own best friend. To accomplish this feat, you need both self-awareness and self-compassion. Self-awareness occurs at many levels. It means being in touch with your emotions enough to recognize and label them. It means being aware of your traits, strengths, and weaknesses. And it means understanding how your

see QUELL Your Inner Critic, page 6

# TEEN VIRGINS ARE HEALTHIER, SAYS CDC

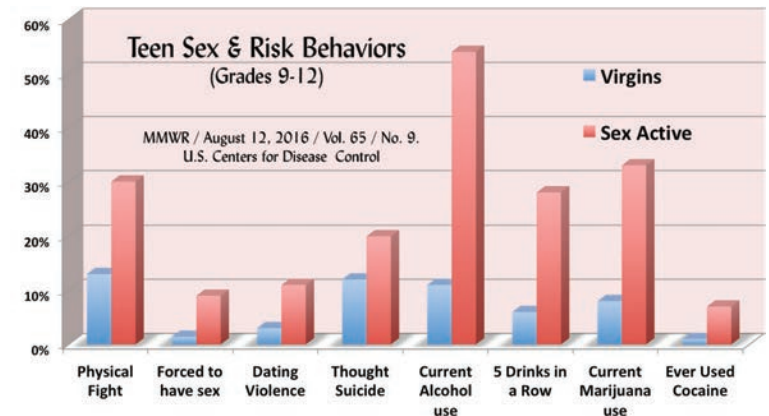
The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has found that students who have never had sex rate significantly and consistently better in nearly all health-related behaviors than sexually active peers.

The report examined a large array of health behaviors of high school students according to their self-reported sexual activity, including dating violence to substance abuse, to drunk driving, to carrying weapons. The major conclusion from the report is quite stark:



Virgin students rate significantly and consistently better in nearly all health-related behaviors than their sexually active peers. They do so by remarkably stunning measures.

The study found that sexually active teens have increased risk to engage in other risk behaviors such as smoking cigarettes, driving while drinking, texting while driving, carrying a gun, being threatened or injured by a weapon, getting in fights, being forced to have sex, dating violence, considering suicide, binge drinking, current alcohol and marijuana use, and having ever used cocaine.



## STUDY: UNCOMMITTED SEX -> MORE MARITAL FAILURE

A recent study published in the journal Psychological Science found that engaging in uncommitted sex while single increases the likelihood of failure in a future marriage.

Researchers found that when one or both spouses displayed behaviors making them more likely to engage in one-time sexual encounters and sex outside of marriage, they were less satisfied at the start of the marriage. One or both spouses were then found to have experienced a rapid decline in satisfaction over the first several years of marriage, ultimately predicting divorce. The researchers state, "strong motives to pursue uncommitted sex may interfere with marital success."

Juliana French, Emma Altgelt, Andrea Meltzer, "The Implications of Sociosexuality for Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution," Psychological Science, September 4, 2019.



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# STUDENTS WANTED MORE LOVESMARTS ED!

As a school counselor for Jersey City and a mental health clinician for several counties, I believe that the best way to help someone make the best decision for themselves is to provide them with as much information as possible. Too often, people will make life-changing decisions without weighing the pros and cons of the situations or even knowing what other options there could be for them out there.

Our adolescents are constantly being bombarded with different messages and suggestions of how to be cool and respected by their peers but not by their own standards and definitely not how to respect themselves. They are always changing themselves to fit into a mold that they believe society wants them to be in and oftentimes, it's not a respectful or sustainable lifestyle. Our adolescents are being shown things in the media that aren't indicative of real life, but they are unable to know that because they don't understand the number of things that are photoshopped and manufactured to look and be a certain way.

## FREETEENSYOUTH.ORG

Enter the LoveSmarts Program provided by the Institute for Relationship Intelligence. This program provided my school's sixth, seventh, and eighth graders with in-depth information about love and relationships in a straightforward and fun (but no nonsense) way that my students could truly engage in and understand.

Our coordinator, Ms. Julie Edwards, patiently and painstaking addressed every single concern or question the students had and was able to present the information in a way that commanded respect but conveyed true dedication to her craft and to ensuring that the students got everything that the program had to offer.

Ms. Julie empowered my students with the knowledge, skills and confidence to make decisions about their bodies, love and relationships based on their own terms not what they thought society wanted them to do. Through interactive activities, personal assignments, and incredibly informative and decorative PowerPoints, the LoveSmarts Program gave my students the ability to really take control of their

own destinies and live a respectful, informative risk-free life. Soon after our program tenure ended, I had many students come to me, begging for Ms. Julie and LoveSmarts to come back next year so they could learn more about taking care of themselves and successfully securing their future.

I personally cannot thank Ms. Julie and the LoveSmarts Program enough for the positive things that they have brought to my school and to my students. To see them so proud of themselves and what they have learned and can also incorporate into their lives makes my job even more worthwhile.

I believe that every school with the appropriate grades should do the LoveSmarts program. The change that can be seen with the students is inspiring and you'll want to keep passing that on year after year.

Sincerely,

Roniekia Thomas, Guidance Counselor

Jersey City Public Schools



Miss Linda and Ms. Julie, LoveSmarts Educators



☐ Please sign me up for weekly email updates. My email address is: \_\_\_\_\_  
If you prefer text message, provide number: \_\_\_\_\_ (Emails & phone numbers given will not be used for any other purpose.)

☐ I support IRI/Free Teens USA's efforts to share a risk-free lifestyle with youth. Enclosed is my donation for \_\_\_\_\_. Institute for Relationship Intelligence, inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, educational organization (EIN 22-3301766). All donations are tax-deductible.

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Institute for Relationship Intelligence, Inc.  
P.O. Box 97  
Westwood, N.J. 07675

# RELATIONSHIP INTELLIGENCE TRAINING FOUND TO INCREASE STUDENTS' INTENT TO DELAY SEX

Independent evaluators at Montclair State University found that Relationship Intelligence Training risk avoidance education significantly increased students' intentions to delay sexual involvement compared with students who had not received the program.

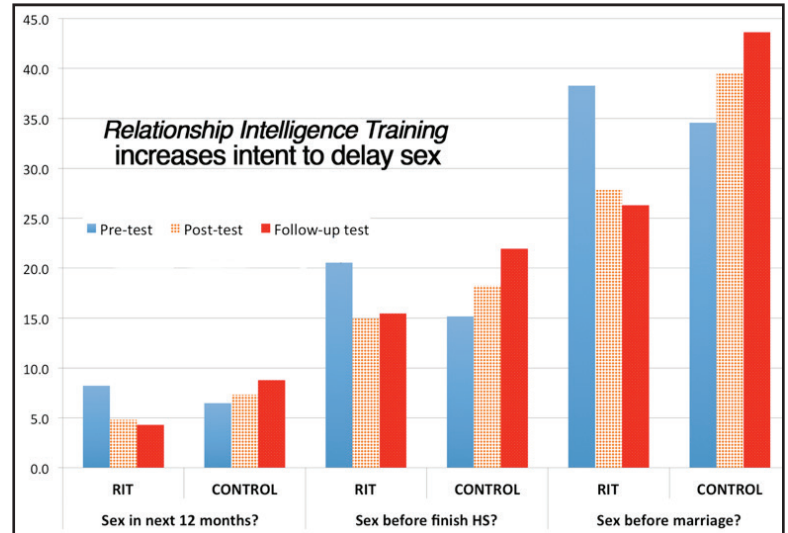
At a followup survey given 6 – 10 months after receiving 6 hours of RIT education students were 48% less likely to say they planned to have sex in the next 12 months. In contrast students who did not receive RIT had 36% increased intentions to become sexually active ( $p=.004$ ).

At 6 – 10 month follow-up, students who received RIT were 25% less likely to say they planned to have sex before graduating from high school, but students who did not receive RIT had 45% increased intent to have sex before HS graduation ( $p=.001$ ).

At 6 – 10 month follow-up, students given RIT education were 31% less likely to say they planned to have sex before marriage.

In contrast students who did not receive RIT had 26% increased intent to have sex before marriage ( $p=.001$ ).

The evaluators, Dr. Joseph Donnelly and Dr. Robert Horn, analyzed surveys given to 7th grade students during the 2013-2014 school year in Hudson and Passaic Counties who were surveyed again as 8th grade students in the Fall of 2014.



## WHAT 15 TEENS SAY ABOUT LOVESMARTS ED

### 10th Graders at Lincoln HS, Jersey City

- I liked that everything was straight-forward. I feel like everything that was talked about was serious and real.
- I really like how open our conversations were. No dead space.
- It's teaching me the things I don't know and information I can take into consideration when I'm in these situations. One thing I learned and I found interesting is the difference between mature and immature love.

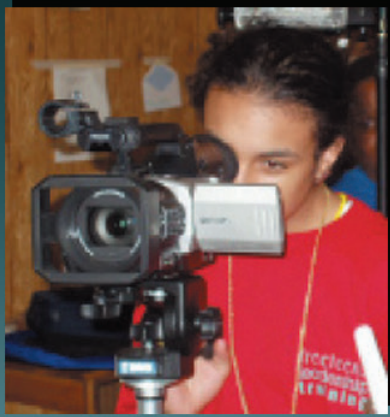
- Yes (I liked the program), because school doesn't really talk about these types of things.
- It was very eye-opening hearing what happened with teens who had sex so early in their lives. This can be an eye opener for the younger generation to prevent them from making big mistakes.
- I would recommend this program for other teens because it opens the eyes of teens whose lives might be going to the wrong path.

### 9th Graders at Lincoln HS, Jersey City

- I like the way Ms. Linda gave me a better picture on protecting my feelings and how a relationship is really supposed to be.
- It's very detailed and doesn't sugar coat anything.
- It informed me on things I didn't know but needed to know for my health and safety.
- I learned about how sex can kinda control you. Sex can make a breakup worse than it should be.
- I would recommend the LoveSmarts program to people my age because they are out there making bold choices without knowing the consequences.
- It taught me a lot about sex, relationships, and maturing.
- It's blunt and straight-forward. I feel this is perfect for people my age.
- It changed my point of view in many ways. The most interesting thing in this program that I learned was that if your lover doesn't respect your family values, he's not the one for you.
- She didn't sugar coat anything.







# 2020 Teen Media Summit

May 1-3, 2020  
Fairview Lake YMCA Camp  
Newton, NJ 07860  
Info & Registration at  
[FreeTeensYouth.org](http://FreeTeensYouth.org)

## 3 POSITIVE YOUTH TRENDS, CONT FROM PAGE 1

**2) Use of Illicit Drugs** – Over the last decade the number of high school students who'd ever used illicit drugs declined by 38%, from 23% to 14%. The number who'd ever injected illegal drugs declined by 25% from 2% to 1.5%.

**3) Victims of Violence** – Over the last decade the number of high school students who were threatened or injured with a weapon at school declined by 23%, declining from 7.8% to 6%. The number who experienced dating violence also declined by 22%, from 10.4 to 8%. Those experiencing sexual dating violence declined by 34% from 10.4 to 6.9%.

Overall, increasing numbers of today's teens are making smarter choices to delay sex and to reject illicit drugs and violence, but a significant minority still engages in these self-destructive behaviors, so more work needs to be done!

\* Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Data Summary and Trends Report 2007-2017. Kann L, McManus T, Harris WA, et al. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2017. MMWR Surveill Summ. 2018;67 (No. SS-8).

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## "WARNING SIGNS" FROM PAGE 1

- Older boyfriend, new friends with a different lifestyle, or gang involvement
- Disjointed family connections, running away, living with friends, or experiencing homelessness

## COMMON BEHAVIORS OF PIMPS/TRAFFICKERS

- Jealous, controlling and violent
- Significantly older than female companions
- Promise things that seem too good to be true
- Encourage victims to engage in illegal activities to achieve their goals and dreams
- Buys expensive gifts or owns expensive items
- Is vague about his/her profession
- Pushy or demanding about sex
- Encourages inappropriate sexual behavior
- Makes the victim feel responsible for his/her financial stability. Very open about financial matters.

**Myth** - Traffickers are always strangers to victims, using kidnapping to acquire victims.

**Reality** = Like sexual abusers, traffickers are also known to victims, including family or partners.

**Signs of control:** monitoring, isolation, canned stories, financial dependence, anxiety about sexual history or work responsibilities

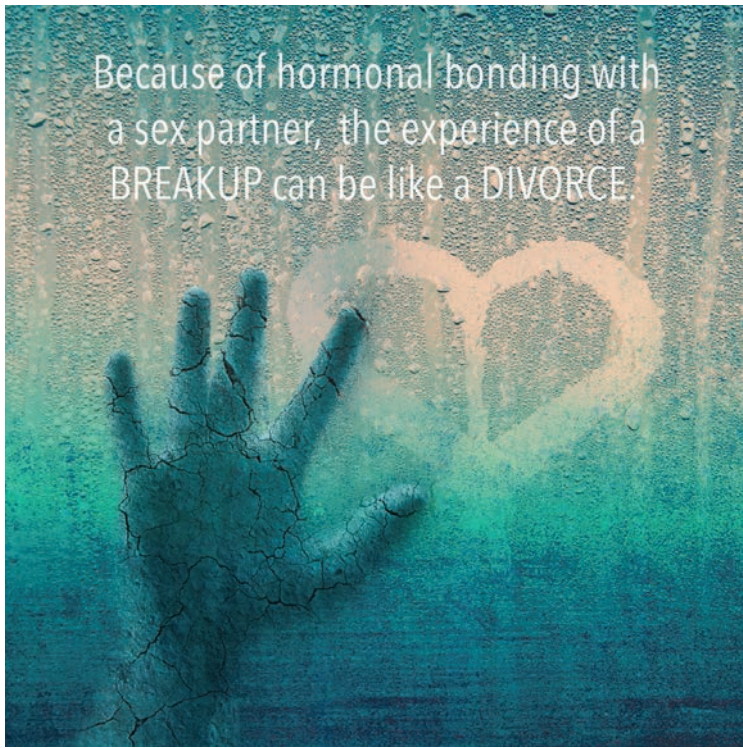
- Has s/he ever asked you to do something you were uncomfortable with?
- Are you being monitored or watched by him/her?
- What do you think would happen if you didn't do what s/he asked you to do?
- Are you able to keep any of the money you earn or have access to finances?

For more info, contact  
National Human Trafficking Hotline  
1-888-373-7888

Courtesy of Shared Hope International, [www.SharedHope.org](http://www.SharedHope.org)

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Because of hormonal bonding with a sex partner, the experience of a BREAKUP can be like a DIVORCE.

#### QUELL Your Inner Critic, from page 1

life experiences have affected, and how they continue to affect, you.

Self-compassion is about approaching yourself in an accepting and caring way. While Nancy might be self-aware, she is anything but compassionate toward herself. Instead, she uses her knowledge about herself to be more critical. If she learned to practice self-compassion, she would be more accepting of herself, loving the whole package of who she is. She would also be more open to positive feedback. And if she found herself being self-critical, she could practice being compassionate toward her struggle. Even if she were uncomfortable with some of Steve's compliments, she would choose to focus on the fact that he sees her in a flattering way and perhaps even learn (with time) to see herself that way, too.

Such compassionate self-awareness is a wonderfully effective antidote to self-criticism. Although it takes time and effort to practice,



Who has the BEST SEX?  
Married Couples  
who are FAITHFUL!

- National Health  
& Social Life Survey,  
U. of Chicago

you can help it along by choosing the right, supportive partner — one who sees all of you and loves you for who you are (accepting, or even loving, the parts that you think are not so lovable). By looking to that person and really practicing seeing yourself through his or her eyes, you just might find self-love along with a loving relationship.

Courtesy of Leslie Becker-Phelps, PhD.

<http://blogs.webmd.com/art-of-relationships/2012/03/join-forces-to-quell-your-inner-critic.html>,

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