

[ 2 ]

CONVERSATIONS WITH ADOLESCENTS

# UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENTS AND SEXUALITY

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# CREDITS PAGE

We thank and salute all these friends who helped us  
create these books.

Dr. Jaya, Geeta and Nalini, UNFPA

Veena Shivpuri or Bahanji

Jaya Sharma

The Jagori Rural Team, specially Mast Ram

Suneeta Thakur

Nidhi Gupta

Vinay Aditya

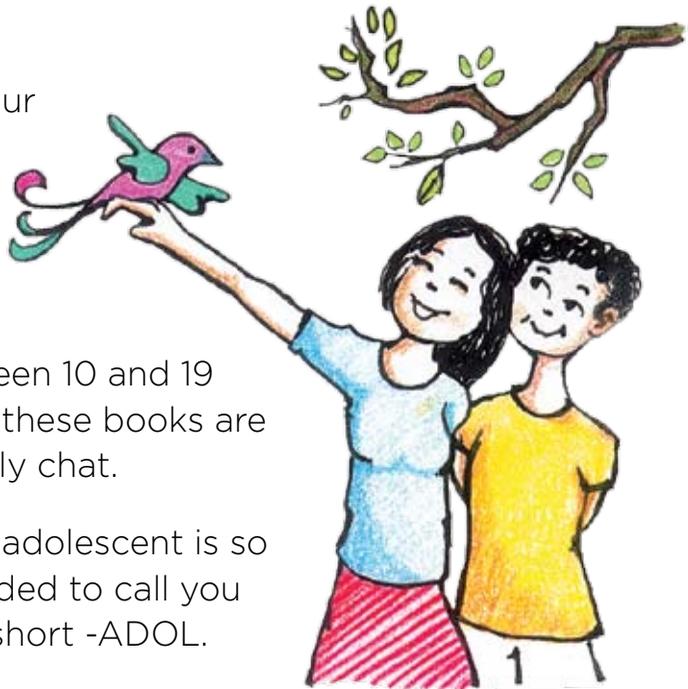


# FOREWORD



We have written four books for adolescents adolescence, that special phase in our life when we are between 10 and 19 years old. Actually these books are like a chat, a friendly chat.

Because this word adolescent is so long, we have decided to call you ADOL, sweet and short -ADOL.



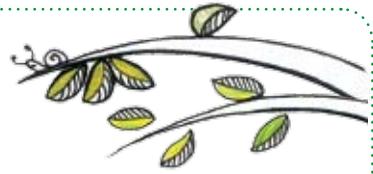
You adols may want to ask why we would like to have these friendly conversations with you since you have not invited us for this chat. Why are we running after you? The honest and only answer is, that when we think of our own adolescence, we feel our problems and worries would have been much less, if we had someone to talk to, someone who would listen to us and understand us. There were many adults ready to lecture us, tell us our faults, discourage us, but there was hardly anyone who would talk to us openly, lovingly and respectfully. We had to find the answers to all our questions and worries, either ourselves or with the help of others of our own age. How could those, who had no experience themselves, show us the way? We had many bitter experiences only because we did not have proper information and understanding.

This is why we thought we should chat

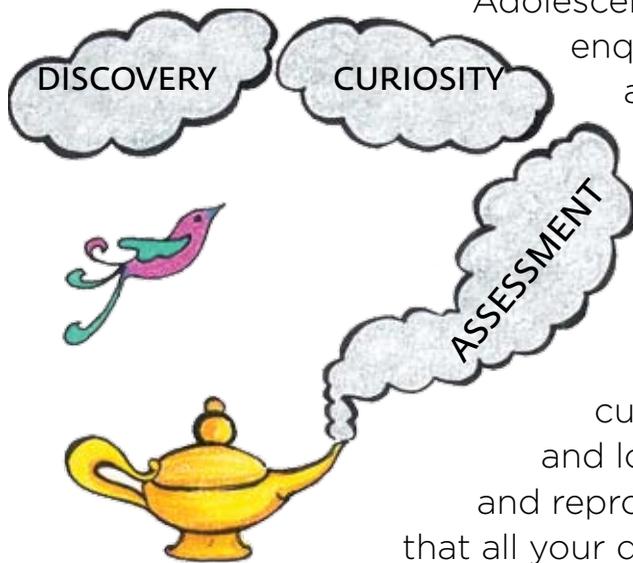
to you adols. Tell us; is there anything wrong in us taking the initiative to start this dialogue?

Years ago, we too were adols. We too experienced what you are experiencing now. We had this energy flowing in our body and mind. We had dreams



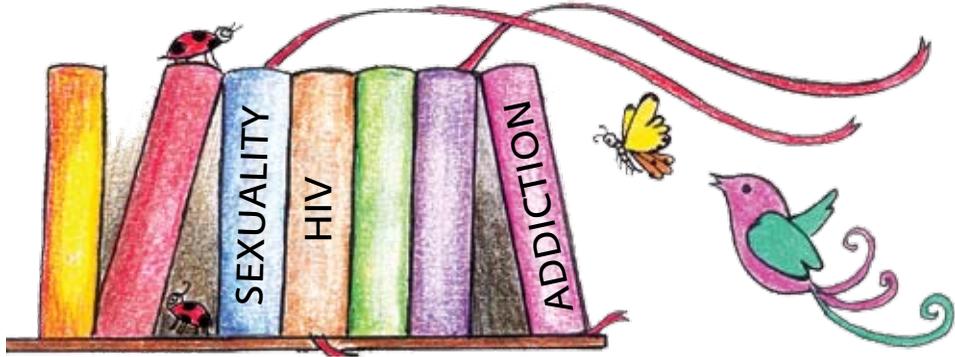


and the desire to do new things. We craved to have our own identity. Along with these feelings there was so much confusion and bewilderment. We felt wronged by our elders. We were filled with questions. We had so much to say, but everything remained inside, unspoken. Now at this age we feel that silence was unfortunate, not good for us. Talking to someone more experienced would have helped.



Adolescence is the age of enquiry, questioning, an age to check out everything and everyone. There are so many questions about our changing bodies and feelings.

There is so much curiosity about friendship and love, about sexuality and reproduction. It is important that all your questions be discussed openly and deeply, all your doubts be addressed thoroughly. We feel that information and comprehensive understanding will enable you to take well thought out and responsible decisions.



There is another reason for talking to you through these books. Many surveys have revealed that adols have limited information and understanding about important issues like gender, sexuality, HIV, alcohol and drugs. Many adols also said that they want more information and frank discussions on these issues.

So, here is an effort to reach out to you, to contribute towards making a positive difference to your experience of adolescence! Let us see if we succeed. You will be the judge. Let us wait and see what you think about these books and what grades you give us.

We will get good grades only if you are with us and will reach out to us. This way we will learn from each other.



So friends, these books are an invitation to talk with open hearts, to learn with open minds. These four books are about some important concerns and challenges of adolescence. To understand adolescence well, you should read all the four books, reflect, investigate your inner selves and have open conversations with friends and mentors.

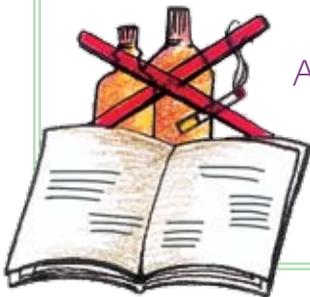


The first book is “**LIFE SKILLS: THE ART OF LIVING**” In this we have talked about some principles of life and living together and about LIFE SKILLS



The second book is “**UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENTS AND SEXUALITY**” In this book we have detailed conversations about all the changes that take place during adolescence, gender and gendering, sex and sexuality.

The third book is "HIV/AIDS AND ADOLESCENTS" In this book we have discussed many important aspects of HIV/AIDS and ways to prevent it.

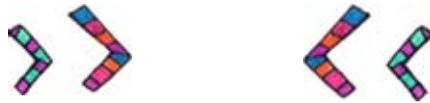


The fourth book is on "SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ADOLESCENTS" This book discusses substance abuse in detail and suggests ways to challenge this problem which many adols are dealing with.

Friends, the work of the author and the illustrators is over. It is now for you to read, reflect, discuss and move ahead fearlessly. Several opportunities are waiting for you. Good luck and HAPPY JOURNEY!



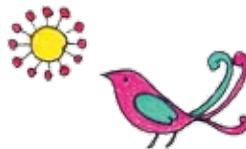
# CONTENTS



Adolescence and Adolescents: What is their Story? \_\_\_\_\_ 08

Adolescent Girls and Boys: Are they different or the same? \_\_\_\_\_ 15

Breaking the Silence on Sex and Sexuality? \_\_\_\_\_ 19





## **ADOLESCENCE AND ADOLESCENTS: WHAT IS THEIR STORY?**

Adolescence is that stage of our life when we are between 10 and 19 years of age. The word adolescence is derived from the Latin word *adolescere*, which means to grow, develop, mature, ripen or reach completion. This stage in the life of girls and boys is a journey between childhood and adulthood and the speed of this journey is pretty fast. This is the time when we are filled with courage, passion, energy and drive to experiment. During this stage we have this urge to try things out. We are not children anymore, but we are also not adults yet. Adolescents are people between childhood and adulthood.

### **GOOD BYE CHILDHOOD HELLO ADULTHOOD**



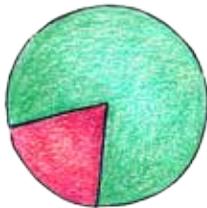
The excitement, passion and headiness of these years is familiar to adolescents or those who have gone through this phase. Growing and glowing bodies, shining eyes, blood and energy flowing in the veins; heart filled with hope, joy and passion; far away from fear, defeat or hopelessness. This phase of our life is filled with curiosity and search; it is filled with fun and frolic.



This is the time of possibilities; the age of setting goals and determining heights we have to achieve.

But, there is also the flip side of adolescence. Because so much within us is changing at a rapid pace, and so much is new and unknown, fears and anxieties also exist. We often feel fearful, insecure and perplexed.

Most adolescents move like a pendulum; sometimes energized and high, sometimes confused and low. In this book we will discuss both these aspects. Our focus however will be on problems and challenges of this age so that you understand these issues and are prepared to deal with them and move ahead successfully.

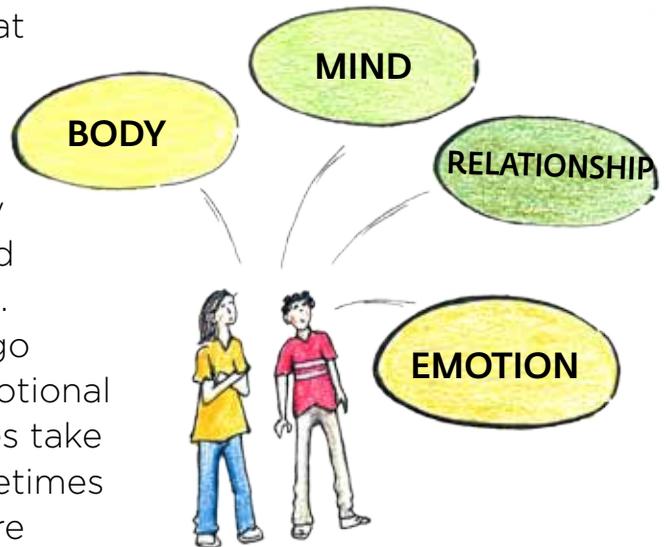


So, here we go, Adols.

**Adolescents are 22% or about 22.5 crores (225 millions) of the Indian Populations (census 2011)**

A close look at girls and boys between 10 and 19 will reveal that this group has some special characteristics.

Changes take place at every stage of our life but during adolescence the speed of change can be mind boggling. That little bud starts turning into a flower. The little plant grows into a tree and wants its own identity and space, Body, mind and feelings, all start changing. During this age we undergo biological, mental and emotional changes. So many changes take place so rapidly, that sometimes adolescents themselves are



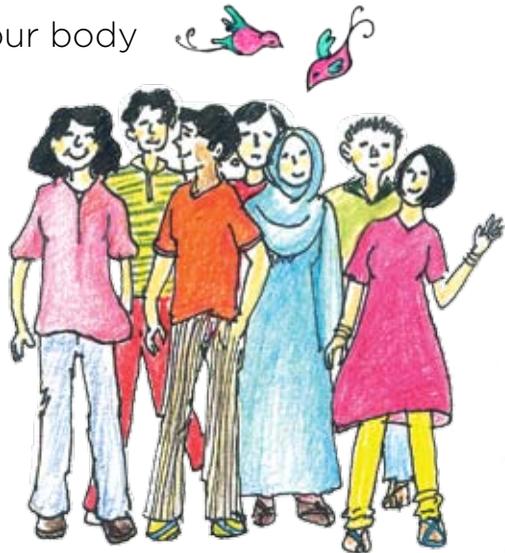
unable to understand them. They are often baffled and anxious. Do you ever feel like this? If yes, then it is important that we talk about your concerns and do some fact finding. Even if you are not feeling anxious, a discussion may be valuable as it could help you understand your friends better and may improve your awareness about yourself.

The process and the time when your body begins to mature and change and from being a kid you become an adult, is called puberty.

## PUBERTY

### 1. CHANGES IN THE BODY

Many changes take place in our body when we are between 10 and 14 years old. Our limbs and organs grow in size and strength. The two-three feet tall kids grow in to four to six feet tall adolescents. Some of you Adols become taller than your parents. Your weight increases. Those adols who play a lot or do physical work develop muscles.



During puberty special hormones are secreted. Hormones are chemical substances which differ in girls and boys. The main hormone in girls is called estrogen and the one in boys is called testosterone. These hormones are responsible for the following changes that take place in the bodies of girls and boys



 Body grows fast

 Body grows fast

 Hair start sprouting in the armpits, pubic area

 Hair start sprouting in the armpits, pubic area, chest and face. Voice becomes heavier

 Menstruation and ovulation start

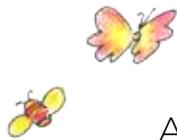
 Nocturnal emission or wet dreams take place

 Breasts grow in size

 Penis grows in size



Usually, girls attain puberty one or two years before boys.



All these changes are **natural** and **normal**. There is nothing **dirty** or **wrong** about them. You do not have to be **afraid** of them or **hate** them. It is best to **understand** and **accept** them.



A careful look and reflection will show that the main biological differences that Nature has created between girls and boys, like - vagina in girls and penis in boys; uterus, ovaries and breasts in girls and testicles in boys; estrogen hormone in girls and testosterone hormone in boys, are all related to **reproduction**. Other than these few differences girls and boys, men and women are the same; both have two ears, two eyes, one nose etc. This means Nature has made men and women different only for reproduction. Other than reproduction, whatever women can do men can do and whatever men can do women can also do. It is true that Nature has not given men the ability to nurture a baby in the womb and to breastfeed her/him, but despite this, men can and should look after and nurture children just as women do.

Although Nature has given women the power to be a mother, this does not mean every woman HAS to give birth to children. It is a woman's choice whether she wants to become a mother or not. Motherhood should not be imposed on her.

## **SOME CHANGES THAT MAY CREATE ANXIETIES**

Some bodily changes during adolescence may bother and scare you. These are -



Menstruation in girls



Nocturnal emissions in boys



## **MENSTRUATION**

In some families, older sister, sister-in-law or mother may tell girls about menstruation. But in some families there is total silence on this. Some girls have no idea about what is happening to them.

They try to access information from different sources that are often unreliable. When they start menstruating often times they are worried and anxious. There are also several myths and misunderstandings about menstruation. So, it is best to get to know it.



Menstruation in girls is natural and biological. The onset of menstruation means that a girl can now become a mother. Every month the ovaries found in girls produce an egg to enable pregnancy. The wall of the uterus also thickens with blood every month in preparation for a possible pregnancy. When the sperm from a man does not meet the egg, both the egg and the blood and tissues from the wall of the uterus flow out in the form of menstrual blood. This cycle repeats itself every 21 to 35 days. It is important for all of us to know that-

- ☀ The menstrual blood is not dirty
- ☀ There is nothing impure or polluting about menstruation
- ☀ During menstruation a girl can do everything, go anywhere, and eat anything.
- ☀ Keeping the body clean is important during menstruation



Not allowing menstruating girls and women to go in to the kitchen and religious places is a superstition. This could have been done to allow some rest to girls/women or it can be a conspiracy to declare women to be impure and inferior.

Many girls experience pain/discomfort in the lower abdomen. Many girls have menstruation every 24-28 days, but some girls may have shorter or longer cycles. There is no need to worry about this as this is quite common. If the pain is intense, it is advisable to talk to experienced



and elderly women in the family or consult a doctor. One should accept menstruation as an essential and important part of a woman's life. Girls should think of it as their strength and capability because menstruation is linked to creation of life.

## **NOCTURNAL DISCHARGE**

During adolescence boys may have an erection without any sexual excitement. They may have a discharge from the penis during sleep. This discharge can also take place if they dream about a sexual relationship and the pleasure related to it.

- This is a totally natural and normal phenomenon
- It does not cause any weakness
- This does not prove that you were having any “bad” thoughts.



In any case, there is nothing wrong or bad about thinking about sexual pleasure.

## **ADOLESCENTS DO NOT EXPERIENCE THE SAME CHANGES AT THE SAME TIME**

Here you must understand that adolescence related changes are not exactly the same in all adolescents. We have already mentioned that Nature has a lot of diversity. Some girls start menstruating when they are 9, 10 or 11 years old, where as others start later at age 13-14.



DIVERSITY IN NATURE



Some boys get facial hair quite early, while others get it later. Some boys have a lot of hair. The size of penis also varies. Some boys may have some estrogen hormone and some girls may have some testosterone. Therefore, some boys may have little or no facial hair and some girls may have some facial hair.

Friends, all this is the result of the incredible diversity in Nature. We could all be exactly like the same if we were produced in a factory, but that is not the case. This is why we are all different and unique. So Adols, there is nothing to worry about, if you experience changes which are different or which take place at a different time.

## WHAT IS BEAUTY AND WHO IS HANDSOME?



During adolescence we become conscious about our body and looks. We want to look pretty or handsome. Some adols cannot stop looking at the mirror. At this stage in our life, we become more interested in our looks and appearance. Because of social reasons girls seem to be more interested in their looks. Some adol

girls whose families consider them impure during menstruation and restrict their movements, or girls who experience pain, discomfort or anxiety during menstruation, start to hate their body.

This kind of negative thinking makes them anxious and unhappy. Such an attitude towards one's body can be harmful. It is really important to have a friendly and loving relationship with one's body.

It is natural to be interested in bodily beauty





but getting obsessed about it can lead to unnecessary problems. During adolescence due to hormonal changes adols can have acne on their face. Normally it disappears on its own after some time. Therefore do not fret about it. But, if the acne is too much and it persists then do talk to an elder or consult a doctor.

These days some big companies are exploiting this interest of adols in their appearance. To make profits they are not only selling their products, they are pushing some harmful notions of beauty. For example, they are saying only fair and thin are beautiful; or some film hero or heroine is the standard of beauty. Everyone is not fair. Is it not strange that those who are fair or white keep trying to acquire a brown skin and those who are dark or brown want to be fair?

Such products and their advertisements are misleading adols and creating inferiority complex and dissatisfaction in them.



You should try and understand the real and deeper meaning of beauty. What is beauty for you? We think that being healthy and strong is beautiful; to accept and take care of our body is beautiful. Actually, real beauty is that of our thoughts, actions and character. Good thoughts and strong character are reflected on our faces and they make us attractive. Are you attracted to people just because they are fair, thin or tall, or because of their good behavior and character? Bodily beauty is temporary. It is there today, but may not be there tomorrow. Therefore friends, **it is not good enough to look good. Your character and personality have to SHINE**





## IT IS YOUR TURN NOW TO THINK AND SPEAK



"Do you have questions about adolescence? If yes, then look for a person with whom you can share your thoughts and doubts. Do not keep everything bottled up inside. Your poor mind and heart will get exhausted!



It will be good to have some frank discussions about changes in your bodies. Find people you like and trust and who like and trust you and talk to them.



Are you worried about the changes you are going through? If yes, than try and think why you are worried. Is it because you look different; or the changes you are going through are too fast and too many; or because you do not have enough information to understand these changes; or are you fed up with all the restrictions being put on you; or is it something else?



Try and understand your worries and anxieties. Find someone nice to talk to and get some more information. Just know that these anxieties will not last forever!!

## THIS IS TRUE BUT WHAT TO DO?

Adols, during this period of rapid changes you also have some responsibilities. When you also fulfill your responsibilities your body will be healthy, agile and strong. During childhood your parents took care of your food, cleanliness etc., but now you need to takeover some responsibilities. Here are some steps you could take –



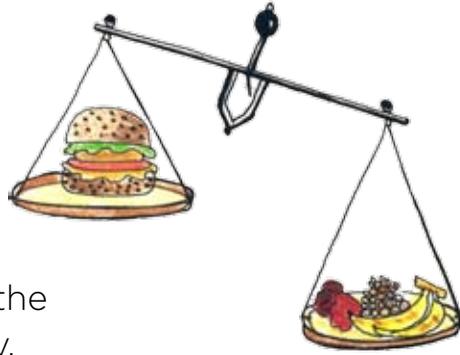
Bodily cleanliness is necessary in all stages of life but more so during adolescence, especially the cleanliness of our reproductive organs. Cleanliness is necessary during menstruation and also for nocturnal emission and discharge of semen.



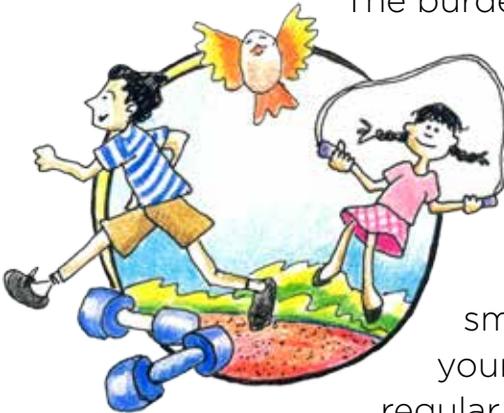
It is necessary that your food is nutritious and you eat at regular intervals. These days a lot of junk food is being advertised and sold. Aerated drinks, fast foods like pizzas and burgers, may indeed be tasty but they are bad for health. Eating junk food will not make you healthy or strong, but it is likely to make you obese. Because of eating



junk food 30 to 40 percent children in the US are suffering from obesity. The same is happening to the rich kids in our country.



Physical **exercise** is essential during adolescence to make your body strong and agile. These days play grounds are empty or they are disappearing.



The burden of school education is increasing and whatever free time is there is spent mainly in watching television or playing computer games. If you want to be healthy and smart and have a glow on your face, then get on with regular exercise.

**FAIRNESS CREAMS FOOL YOU  
NUTRITIOUS FOOD AND EXERCISE  
MAKE YOU COOL**





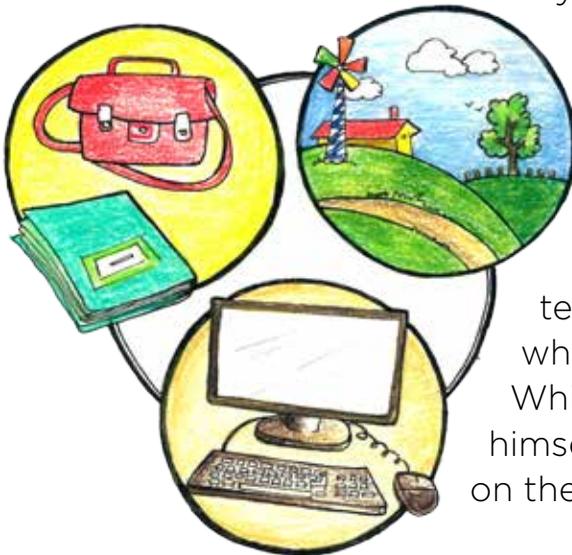
It is not in our hands to get everything we desire in our life. We cannot choose the family or the country we are born in to, but we can surely make the best use of what we have and of our circumstances. Have you ever played cards? In this game, cards are dealt to the players. No one knows what cards they will get but everyone tries to play their cards well. In the same way we have to make the best use of what we have got in life, make progress and be happy. This is what life is about.



## 2. ALONG WITH THE BODY FEELINGS ALSO CHANGE: SOCIAL AND MENTAL CHANGES AND MATURITY

During adolescence bodily changes are accompanied by mental changes. The capacity to think and ways of thinking change. Your thoughts gain maturity and your capacity to think and understand increases. At school, you learn new things. Outside, in the community also you learn many things. You make friends at this stage. You share and learn along with them. These days one can learn a lot also from television and the internet. You form your own ideas now. Your new ideas and views may be different from those of elders in your family.

In addition to increased understanding, this is the time of ASSESSMENT and CRITICAL THINKING. You start assessing and questioning your elders too. For example, if you are scolded or beaten for no reason, you know this is wrong. You can recognize the follies and duplicity of your parents and teachers, if you see them telling lies or bossing around. They tell you to speak the truth while they themselves tell lies. While unable to give up smoking himself, a father lectures his son on the bad effects of smoking.



With improved understanding, our tongue also opens up. You want to express yourself. Because you have things to say, you want to be heard. You are now ready to discuss and debate.

Now you want to be consulted during decision making by family, school or friends. Because you are not a child anymore, you wish to participate. Some adols may start thinking that only they know what is right and they have a monopoly on truth. This kind of ego trip is of course not right.



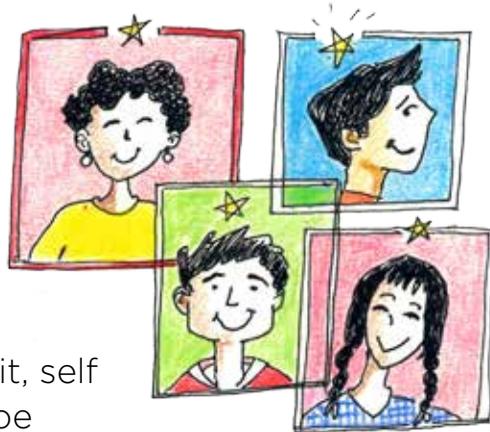
Because you are moving towards maturity you can have your own ideas now that may be different from those of the others. If you have ideas, then express them assertively, without getting agitated. After that, listen to others with an open mind and heart, and only then make up your mind.

Speak assertively  
Listen with  
an open mind



### 3. SEPARATE IDENTITY AND DISTINCTIVE PERSONALITY

Adols start developing a separate identity. Now you wish to be recognized for yourself. You want to be liked and appreciated. You start developing self-confidence and along with it, self esteem. You do not like to be criticized, scolded or ridiculed in public by your parents, teachers or anyone else. All this is totally natural. You must have your own identity. You are an important member of your family and society. You have capabilities and courage to do things. It is essential that people recognize and respect you. However, please remember that people will respect you only if you respect yourself and behave in a respectable way. Friends, we cannot demand respect. Respect has to be earned. And please do not forget that like you, others also like to be respected, so be sure that you respect others.



## IT IS YOUR TURN NOW TO THINK AND SPEAK



Please tell us if you agree with what we have just said.



In the last few years have you begun to think and understand more?



Do your family members hear you out? Do they accept what you say?



Who listens to you more?



Do your teachers ask for your views and allow you to express yourself?



Do some people still consider you to be a baby? Who are these people?



Do your friends allow you to talk or do some of your domineering friends like to hear only their own voice all the time.



Are you yourself a domineering /controlling type?

## WHEN DO ADOLESCENTS FEEL REALLY HAPPY

When do young people feel the happiest- when they eat their favorite food, drink alcohol, have sexual encounters, earn money, meet friends or when they get recognition and respect?

A survey of college students revealed that what they like most is appreciation and respect. They love it when their performance or success or their behavior is liked and appreciated.

This means good actions, performance and behavior give happiness as well as create a solid foundation for a nice future.

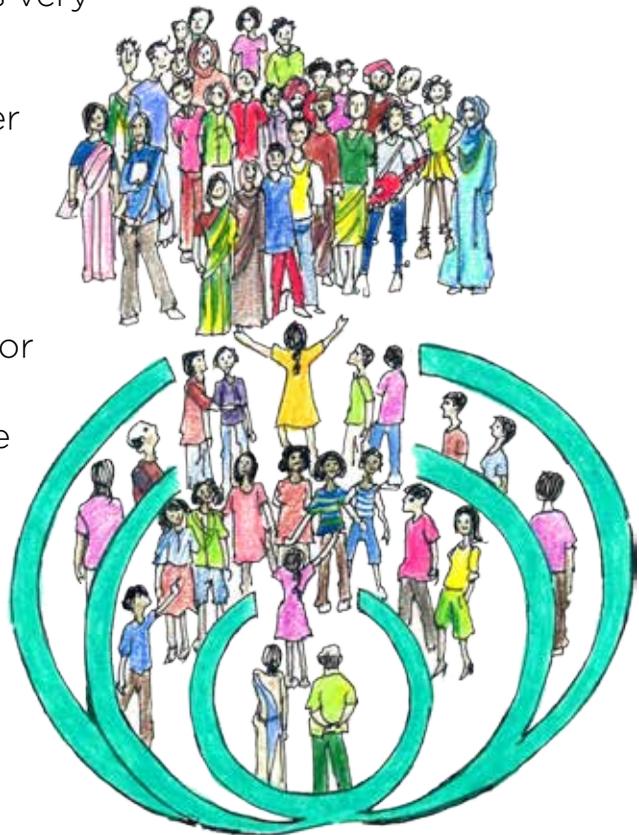
(From- The Week. Health, February 20, 2011)



## EXPANSION OF FRIENDSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Because children cannot go out on their own, our childhood is spent mainly within the family. Adols start going out on their own. You meet new people in school and community. You make friends outside. You interact with others. Things you hesitate to discuss at home are now shared outside with friends. Some things, like sexuality, are normally discussed only with friends. At this stage of your life, getting love and acceptance from friends becomes very important.

There can also be peer pressure from your peer group. If your friends smoke, wear expensive clothes or drive their family motor cycle, you might feel the pressure to do the same. You feel that if your behavior is different from your friends, they may not accept you or they may ridicule you.



**IT IS YOUR TURN NOW  
TO THINK AND SPEAK**



Tell us about your friends. What kind are they?



Do they act and behave responsibly? Do you ever feel pressured to do what they do?



Do you think it is right to put pressure on friends? What do you do when any pressure is put on you?



Do you put pressure on others? Are you a Dada or Don type?



What does "beauty" mean to you? Is it related to getting dressed, make up, or good personality and behavior or something else?



Try and put down your thoughts on beauty on a chart paper. You could also write on "I consider myself beautiful because..."



Ask your friends to do the same and put these writings on the wall in your class room.

## THIS IS TRUE BUT WHAT TO DO?



On the issue of friendships, our experience tells us that we should choose our friends carefully. Friends who have harmful habits and behavior can mislead you. Just think and see if it is right to put pressure on friends, or to cheat and mislead friends? We feel this is not right.



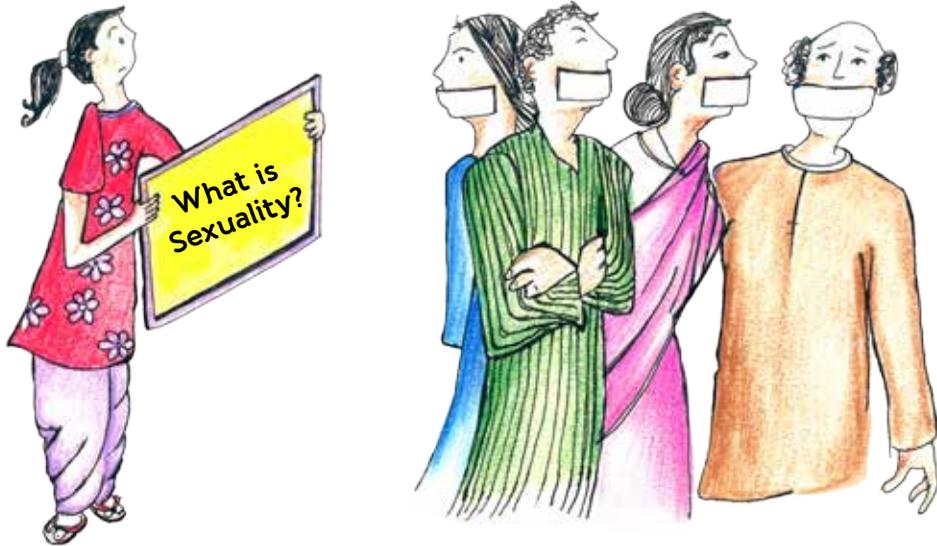
So friends, try not to do anything under pressure. Do something ONLY if you think it is right, otherwise do not do it. After all, only you will have to deal with the harmful consequences of wrong actions. Therefore, do only that for which you can take responsibility.

However, do follow your friends if they give you good advice and ask you to do fun and nice things.

## SEXUAL MATURITY, SEXUAL FEELINGS AND INTEREST IN SEXUALITY

We have seen that many changes take place in our body during adolescence. Adols begin to have sexual feelings. We feel attracted toward someone and fall in love in this age.





We keep thinking about that person. We wish to be with and talk to that person all the time. We want to touch and kiss that person. We may also feel sexual excitement. It seems as if our body has its own desires and needs now and it is difficult to control them. Some adols, especially boys, start having sexual relations at this young age.

Because many families, communities and religions consider sex to be bad or impure and do not allow open discussions on it, you adols are also not able to talk openly about it. Sex is very new for you but it may be important for you. You may not have enough knowledge or understanding about it, but there is silence on this topic. You can only talk to friends about it,

and that too, secretly, as if you are discussing something bad or dirty. A natural and normal thing is turned into something bad; as if it is a crime. The result of all this is that many adols start feeling guilty about their sexual feelings.

**IT IS YOUR TURN NOW  
TO THINK AND SPEAK**



How important is sexuality for you?



What and how much do you know about it?



Do you talk to anyone about it? With whom?



From whom do you get information?



Do you wish to know more about sex and sexuality?

Because sex and sexuality are an important part of our lives and our bodies and minds are involved in it, we will soon have an open and detailed discussion on it.

## HUGE CHANGES NOT JUST WITHIN BUT ALSO OUTSIDE

Today, adols are living in and dealing with a fast changing world of globalization. It has brought new opportunities and possibilities, but it has also created some problems. There is a lot of external influence and pressure on adols today. Sitting at home you can see the entire world on television. You are exposed to different life styles, relationships, sexuality, violence etc. All kinds of advertisements entice and encourage you to buy things. It is natural to desire all that is being advertised, but very few adolescents can actually buy these things. Most adols can only be disappointed and miserable seeing what they cannot have. Some adols may develop a sense of inferiority. Some adols may want

to possess these things

at any cost. So,

some may start

stealing money

from home or

stealing things

from outside.

Some adols

have even

murdered their

friends for money.



**I want ... I  
need...**

Some girls and boys start selling their bodies for sex to have money.

**Give me...  
give me...**

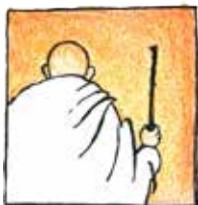
Today , what we possess seems to be more important than our character and human values. There is limitless consumerism all around and it is difficult to escape this poison.

**I want...I  
need...**

On the one hand there is open display of expensive things and riches; on the other hand

about 50 percent people in the country are poor. All this is creating tendencies to show off, greed, dissatisfaction, frustration and anger amongst young people.

There are very few leaders, teachers, social workers from whom adols can learn simplicity and honesty. There are few role models around. This means you adols face bigger challenges today.



Cut throat competition has become the order of the day. Families are always worried about the future of their children. If they do not get good marks how will they get admission in good schools and colleges; how will they get good jobs? Because of this fear families are putting a lot of pressure on children. Every child is expected to excel in everything.

Because of all these pressures, some young people experience psychological problems and some even commit suicide. You need to understand and face this challenge bravely and with maturity.

### **LISTEN AND LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY NOW**

Every human being has some capabilities and talents. You try and find out your capabilities and talents and strengthen them.

You do not need to compete with others

Nor become like anyone else.

You are Unique

Just keep improving yourself

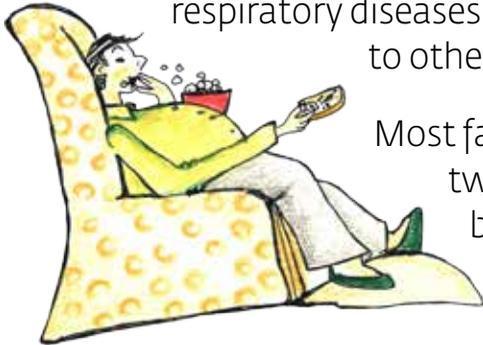
And keep moving ahead.



Do you know that there are indigenous communities in India and in other parts of the world, where there is no or little competition? They live together and share everything. Because they are not competitive, there is not much anger and jealousy; hatred and violence are not widespread. They do not have many needs and expectations. They are grateful for and satisfied with what life has given them. Of course, according to our present standards these communities are not considered “developed”, because our kind of development needs competition. However excessive competition can become a sickness.

Is that kind of progress any good which makes even children competitive, unhappy and anxious?

These days the health of adolescents is going down because of pollution, junk food, sitting for hours in front of television, and lack of exercise. Children of rich families are suffering from obesity. Many adols are suffering from asthma and other respiratory diseases. Chemicals in our food are leading to other illnesses.



Most families have only one or two children now. Often, both parents have jobs outside. There are no grandparents around. If there is any tension

between the parents, then the atmosphere at home is tense all the time.



Individualism is increasing. Everyone wants to live for oneself, in his/her own way. In the present world, tolerance, mutual understanding, selflessness, doing things for others, seems to be on the decline. Patience, the desire and ability to adjust also seem to be disappearing.



Because of all these changes and tendencies around us, adols are facing increased tension and difficulties.

Also, many families are migrating and getting uprooted. Thousands

are leaving their villages for cities in search of jobs every month. Insecurities are increasing. All these factors are also making life difficult for adols. You need to understand and deal with all these challenges bravely.

Our leaders and governments also need to pay more attention to all these issues. If the present model of development is destroying the environment, increasing unemployment, leading to migration, increasing inequalities, competition, conflicts, making every one insecure, then is it not time to

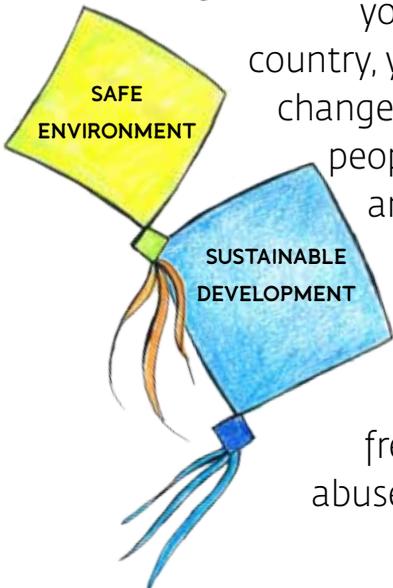
rethink development? In Book 1

on Life Skills, we have provided some suggestions for dealing with these challenges. Do read them again carefully.

Because in

10-15 years

you will start running this country, you can take the lead to change things. Today many young people between the ages of 25 and 40 are working for solutions to these problems. They are involved with movements for environmental protection, sustainable livelihoods, freedom from substance abuse, communal harmony etc.



Look for these movements and the brave people leading them on Google or other sites and get to know them. Along with this, do think and see what you can contribute towards your society.

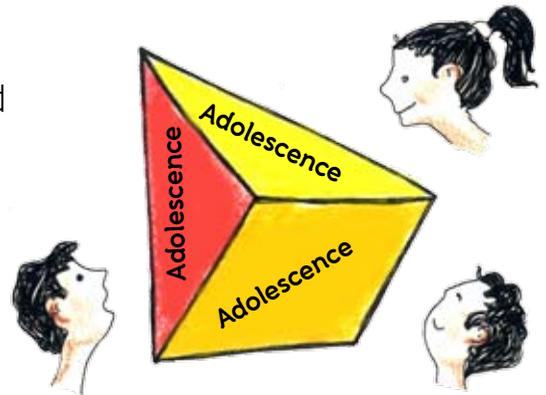
## **ADOLESCENCE IS NOT THE SAME FOR EVERY ADOLESCENT**

Earlier in this chapter we have said that adolescence has some special features and most adols experience them.

However, because of various social factors there are also many differences among adols. We

need to understand these differences also. Come,

let us examine some of these differences.



## **ADOLESCENCE IS OFTEN DIFFERENT FOR GIRLS AND BOYS**

Among the 22.5 crore adols in India about 55 percent are boys and 45 percent are Girls (Census 2001). The meaning and experience of adolescence



Patriarchy is a social system and ideology

according to which men are considered to be superior to women. Many religious, cultural and social customs, festivals, rules, proverbs have been created to make men look and feel superior. For example, many Hindus believe that only sons can perform the last rites of their parents. Most religious laws consider only sons to be heirs. Husbands are considered the heads of families, etc. The flip side of this story is that women are considered to be weak and inferior to men. It is believed that women should always be under the control of men. Most women have neither their own name nor do they own any property.



can be, and often is, very different for girls and boys, Because of this patriarchal system and thinking, in many homes boys are given more love, better food and health care and more freedom. This is why, even today, women and men are not equal anywhere in the world. In some countries and societies there is extreme inequality.



In many families when boys are 10 or 11 they seem to get wings. They begin to fly and they are also allowed to fly. They get increased freedom to go out.



When girls become 10 or 11 some families restrict their movements and freedom. Girls who were wearing frocks are made to wear salwar-kameez or even saris. Some are told to cover their breasts or even their faces and entire bodies. Their freedom to go out, to play outside is restricted. Their wings are clipped. If there is a shortage of money, only boys are sent to good schools. A large percentage of girls are married off at a young age and many of them become mothers while they have not yet grown out of childhood.



## SOCIETY NEGLECTS AND GIRLS SUFFER

Because society is patriarchal or men dominated, men and boys are given more importance, love, care, opportunities and resources. Daughters do not get the same love, care, food and freedom. They are not able to choose the education, life partner or life they want. These are the reasons behind the following figures provided by the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), 2005-2006.]

-  In India 56% of girls in the age group 5-19 are anemic and weak.
-  Although child marriage is illegal, 47% women between the ages of 20 and 24 reported that they had been married off before they were 18.
-  18% adolescent girls became mothers before they were 18.

These statistics show that a large number of adolescent girls in our country are anemic, they are physically weak, yet they are forced to get married and have children at an early age and many die during child birth. Our families and societies, which mean all of us, are responsible for this tragic state of affairs.



## TWO DIFFERENT WORLDS OF RICH AND POOR ADOLS

Although the Constitution of India gives equal rights to all, the reality is totally different. Adols from rich families study in good and expensive schools. They have all the facilities. Other people, including servants, do their work at home. They have loads of toys, mobile phones, computer games, branded clothes and music systems. They get what they want, sometimes even without asking for it.

The situation and experiences of adols from poor families is quite the opposite.

Many children from below poverty line families are not even able to attend school. Many of them have to work to help the family survive.

DiFfe Rence

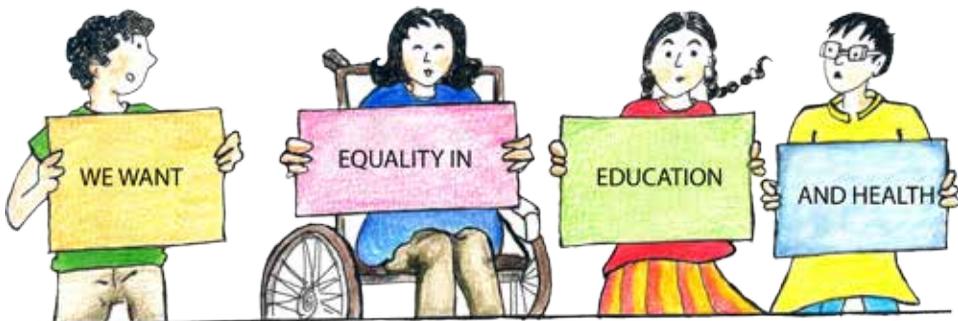


They are child laborers, they sell things on the roads, they migrate to cities with their families or even alone. They work in rich people's homes from early morning till late at night. They live in slums or sleep on roads. They look at advertisements on roads or television, but they are not able to purchase any of those things. These adols become adults in their childhood and shoulder responsibilities befitting an adult.

## DIFFICULT LIVES OF ADOLS FROM DALITS, TRIBAL AND MINORITY COMMUNITIES AND OF ADOLS WITH DISABILITIES

Even after 67 years of Independence, Indian society practices caste discrimination. Dalit adols face additional problems. In addition to poverty they face untouchability. They are made to sit and eat separately in schools and insults are hurled upon them. They have few opportunities to progress. Dalit girls face sexual abuse also. Tribal adols face similar problems. Tribal areas lack development, schools and health facilities. Many times they have to leave their villages because of the construction of dams or mining projects of big companies. They become refugees in their own country.

Similarly, adols from Muslim and Christian families may experience difficulties. They may face discrimination in society, schools and in employment opportunities.



Adols with physical and mental disabilities face even more challenges. Even today there are few facilities and opportunities for them. They are often ridiculed and made fun of.

Instead of being integrated in society they are made to lead separate lives. Their parents also face many problems.



It is important to understand all these differences. All the inequalities based on these differences are wrong and unjust. Our governments have made many good laws against these inequalities but they are hardly implemented. All of us have a duty to remove these inequalities. Everyone should get their rights. Rich and caste minded people have to realize that their actions and behavior are wrong and illegal. These inequalities harm the entire society. Inequalities produce conflicts and violence and every one suffers including the rich and powerful. All of us need to join hands to uphold justice and equality in society.

**EVERY ONE KNOWS  
INEQUALITIES AND INJUSTICE CREATE  
CONFLICTS AND TENSIONS**

**IT IS YOUR TURN NOW  
TO THINK AND SPEAK**



What kind of food do you and your friends like to eat? Is this food good for your health? If not, then why not sit with your friends and create a menu for all your meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) which is both tasty and healthy. Also ensure that most of the food you choose is locally produced.



In this world of cut throat and mindless competition, the writer tells you “you do not need to compete with anyone or try to be like someone else. You are unique. Keep improving yourself and moving ahead”. Do you agree with her? Please explain give reasons for your thoughts.



Make time and opportunity to identify your special skills and talents which you would like to develop and hone. Make a note of these and try and encourage your friends to do the same. You could then sit down in a small group and share your ideas about how you plan to polish your talents and skills.



“Everyone knows that inequality and injustice create conflicts and tensions.” Do you agree with this statement of the writer? Give two examples from your surroundings to explain this. Do you think inequality and injustice are harmful even for the rich and powerful? Please explain with examples.

# 2



## ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND BOYS - ARE THEY DIFFERENT OR THE SAME?



### LET US UNDERSTAND GENDER

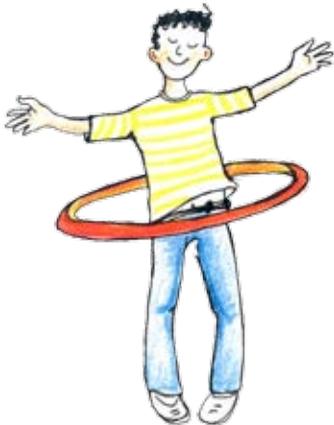
In Society, girls and boys, men and women, have two kinds of definitions. One is their biological definition given by Nature. According to this definition, the one who has a penis and testicles is a boy. A girl has a vagina and clitoris. Some people are born with mixed and a



girl turns into a woman. Women have vagina, uterus and breasts. A baby grows in the body of the woman, she gives birth to and breast feeds children.

Other than these few differences, girls and boys are the same. Their bodies have more similarities than differences. Except for genitals and reproductive organs, all other body parts are the same. This biological construction is called SEX, and it is made by Nature. This definition of human beings is the same in every family, society and country.

Before anyone of us starts thinking that our bodies are totally fixed and they are purely biological and natural, it is useful to note three points.



Firstly, our bodies are very different. All boys are not alike, nor are all girls the same.

Secondly, every boy has a little bit of a "girl" in him and every girl has bit of a "boy" in her. This is why girls and boys are much



more similar than different. This means even our biology/body is not totally fixed. Our bodies are fluid and diverse. This is why many boys/men are “feminine” and many girls/women are “masculine”. There is endless diversity. Denying and wiping out this diversity creates a lot of pain for people who are different.

The third point is that even human body is not only biological. It is influenced a lot by society, upbringing and our mind.

### **HUMAN BEINGS ARE CAPABLE OF TRANSFORMING THE NEEDS AND CAPACITIES OF THEIR BODIES**



For example, through regular practice we can develop muscles, climb high mountains, do tough yoga postures or complicated dance steps. If they want, human beings can fast for days and months; they can take a vow of celibacy not to ever have sex. What this means is that we are not slaves of our bodies. Our body, mind and feelings

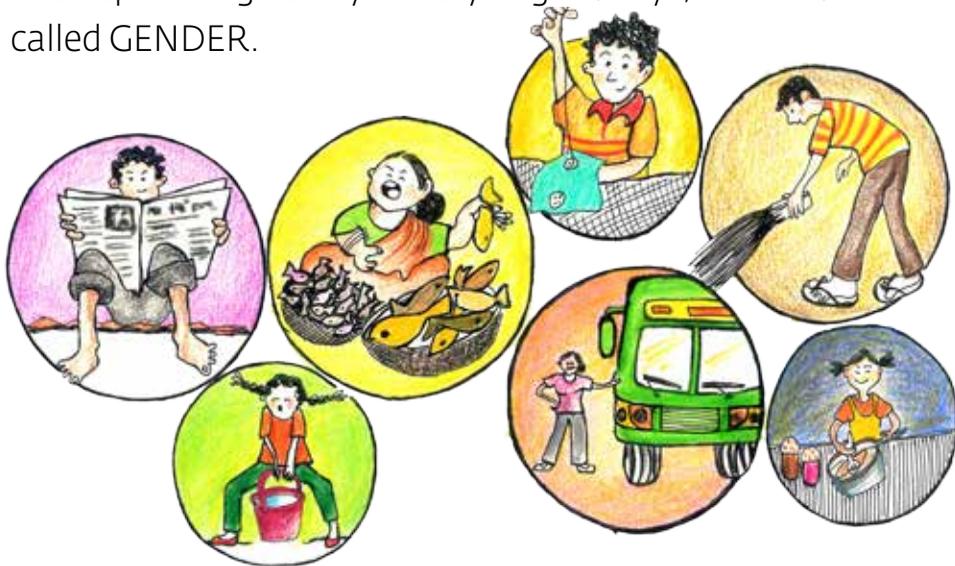
are interconnected and they influence each other. For instance, when we are sad our bodies feel weak and limp. When we are excited, we get the strength of a lioness and the speed of a deer, from somewhere.



Other than the few biological differences between girls and boys, the other differences in dress, hair styles, attitudes, behavior, likes and dislikes, are all societal, not natural or biological. This is why these things can be and often are different in different families, societies and countries. Girls and boys have short or long hair. Boys wear ear rings and necklaces. In some families boys also do household work, in others they do not. Some women work only at home because they are not allowed to go out. Some women are veiled. On the other hand, there are women who have no veils and who work outside and also sell things in the market.

Nature created a few differences in girls and boys for reproduction, but societies have created discrimination and hierarchies between them.

The definition given by society to girls/boys, women/men is called GENDER.



Just to explain, it is society which says women and girls will remain in the home. Boys can go out and return whenever they feel like; or girls are given less food than boys and girls are not allowed to play outside the home. Boys are sent to expensive schools for good education so that they can take over the family business or get good jobs. Not much attention is paid to the education of girls.

All these are gender differences and they are NOT made by nature or biology. They are all created by society and these societal definitions make boys/girls and women/men unequal. It is societies who say boys and men are superior and women and girls are inferior; men are powerful, women are powerless; men are independent and free, women are dependent and not free. This kind of societal thinking has created hierarchies and inequalities between women and men. This is why there are all kinds of violence against women/girls; their talents are not allowed to flourish, they are not given opportunities to progress.



In the same families boys thrive while girls crumble. They do not have equal rights. This is why girl and boy adols grow up in different ways and have different attitudes and behavior.

This gender inequality not only affects girls and boys negatively, it also harms our families, societies and countries. If we look carefully we will find that many things are imposed on boys also. They are not allowed to cry; in the name of masculinity they are forced to become rough and violent. If a boy does not like to fight or behave in a "macho" way, he is ridiculed.



The harmful result of such societal thinking is that many more boys get in to harmful and dangerous activities, like smoking, drinking, taking drugs.

More boys/men are involved in traffic accidents and crimes. Boys are more violent. None of this kind of behavior of boys and men is natural or in-born. Nature does not make them like this. If Nature made boys/men violent, then there would be not a single gentle and caring boy/man in the world. But, there have been and are men like Mahatma Gandhi, Jyotiba Phule, Nizamuddin Aulia, Martin Luther King, and the Dalai Lama.

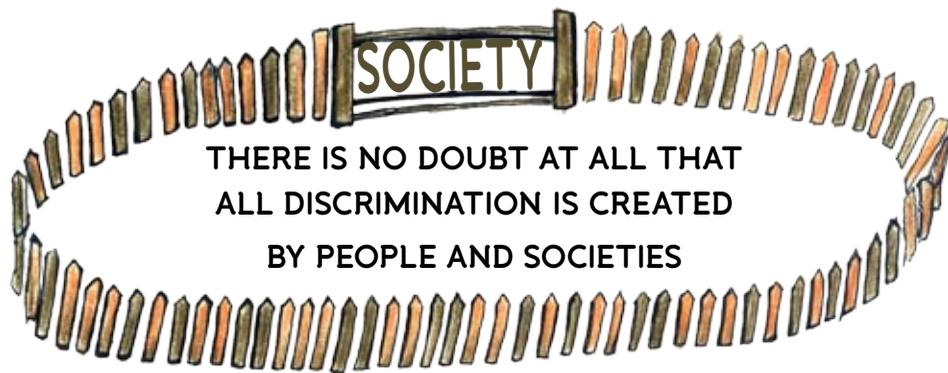


The concept of gender has become very popular in the past 30-35 years. With the help of this concept we are able to separate the biological and societal factors. It is essential to do this otherwise society cleverly makes Nature or God responsible for social inequalities.

Family or community members, for example, say, "Girls cannot climb trees or they cannot whistle or cannot go out alone at night". Nature has not said all this. The only thing Nature has determined is that given their bodies, if women want they can produce a child and breast feed the child. Nature has not provided girls/women any special organs or limbs for cleaning utensils, washing clothes, cooking or for serving everyone. This means doing these activities has nothing to do with Nature. Society has made these rules and therefore if all of us want we can change these rules or traditions and bring equality.

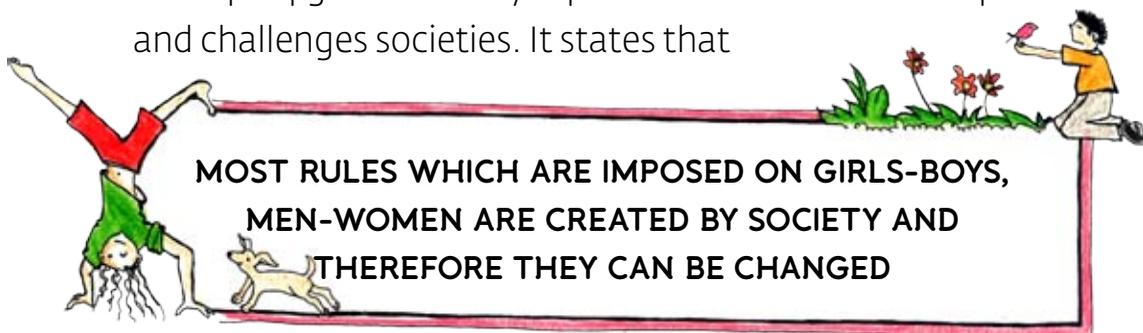


By claiming that these rules are made by Nature or God, our societies justify the existence of socio-cultural inequalities. For example, some people argue that Brahmins are born from the head of Brahma and Shudra's from the feet and that is why they are unequal. They claim castes are God made and therefore it is no use questioning the existence of caste. By using such illogical and false arguments, those in power only wish to continue these inequalities and exploit people.



**THERE IS NO DOUBT AT ALL THAT  
ALL DISCRIMINATION IS CREATED  
BY PEOPLE AND SOCIETIES**

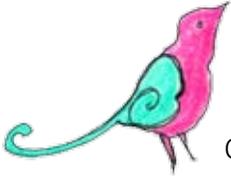
In the context of inequalities between women and men, the concept of gender clearly separates natural and social factors and challenges societies. It states that



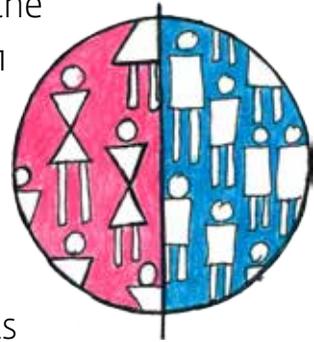
**MOST RULES WHICH ARE IMPOSED ON GIRLS-BOYS,  
MEN-WOMEN ARE CREATED BY SOCIETY AND  
THEREFORE THEY CAN BE CHANGED**

Friends, try and understand this concept of gender clearly and then examine your own views, attitudes and behaviors. The wide spread inequality between women and men is harming every one. Because of this, the number of girls, women in our country has been constantly going down. States with high per capita income like Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and people from well off and educated families, are leading the practice of misusing technology to ensure that they do not have daughters





Do you know about sex selective abortions? These days some families get an illegal test done to find out if the fetus is male or female. For any reason, if they do not want a girl, they abort the fetus. Rich and educated doctors, clinics and companies commit this crime along with the families. The result is the declining ratio of girls. According to the 2011 Census of India there are only 918 girls to 1000 boys in the age group of 0 to 6 in the country. In Punjab there are only 846 girls and in Haryana 834 girls for every 1000 boys. There is a law against this crime but its effective implementation remains a challenge.



We believe that without equality and mutual respect between girls and boy, men and women, our families and societies cannot be happy. With such violence around, we cannot have good relations. If girls are not happy and their potential is not realized, can our families and societies progress?



**BE THE CHANGE  
YOU WANT TO SEE**

To discuss this subject more deeply we now wish to have separate conversations with girls and boys.



In many families you girls are given less respect, love, care, rights and freedom than boys.

Because not enough attention is paid to your health, your bodies do not become strong. Because you are considered "Paraaya Dhan" (some one else's wealth) your education is not considered important.

In many families at a young age you are made to look after younger siblings and do household work. Many of you do not enjoy a childhood.

You are often not allowed to express yourself, to play or go out; with the result that you do not get rid of shyness and fears.

You are taught and made to look after and serve others.

No one seems to care for your likes-dislikes, choices, your desires and dreams.





MAY WE SUGGEST TO YOU  
DEAR BROTHERS  
LEARN TO DO  
THINGS FOR OTHERS



in many families you are given more love, respect, care; more rights and freedom than girls.

♂ Your sickness is attended to immediately. Because you are considered to be the 'heir', the best possible arrangements are made for your education.

♂ Your sister is made to do household chores but not you. You are given the freedom to go out, play, cycle. You are made to do shopping and jobs outside the home. All this makes your body strong and helps you get rid of your fears and shyness.

♂ Observing the behavior of older men, you also learn to demand, order and dominate.

♂ You do not learn to understand the needs of others.

♂ You learn to take rather than give, speak rather than listen.

**Family heir**

**Gives Orders**

**Full freedom to go out**

**Speak more than listen**

**Take rather than give**

♀ Many families believe good girls should be shy, soft, gentle and house bound.

♀ You are not taught to be free and independent and to have self esteem.

♀ If you talk frankly, behave freely, you are told "stop behaving like boys"

♀ This kind of upbringing affects your attitudes, behavior and relationships.

♀ Boys are taught the opposite of what you are taught.

♀ Therefore it becomes difficult for you to have equal relationships with boys/men.

♀ You are taught never to take initiative in friendship and love





You brothers are not even expected to be gentle, modest and soft spoken.



You are encouraged and taught to go out, see the world, and be strong and never to cry.



Those of you who are gentle, who do not like fighting and dominating, are called 'sissy' and teased. You are forced to be 'manly' and macho.



This kind of upbringing affects your attitude, behavior and relationships.



Girls are taught the opposite of what you are taught.



Because of this, it is difficult for you to make equal relationships.



Many of you learn to think that teasing girls and being nasty to them is fun.



You find it difficult to be sensitive and gentle.



You are expected to be the active partner and take initiative in friendship and sex.





You remain shy and do not express what you think assertively.



You let all the decisions be taken by your friend and you also expect him to pay for things.



In a love relationship with a boy, your friend takes initiatives.



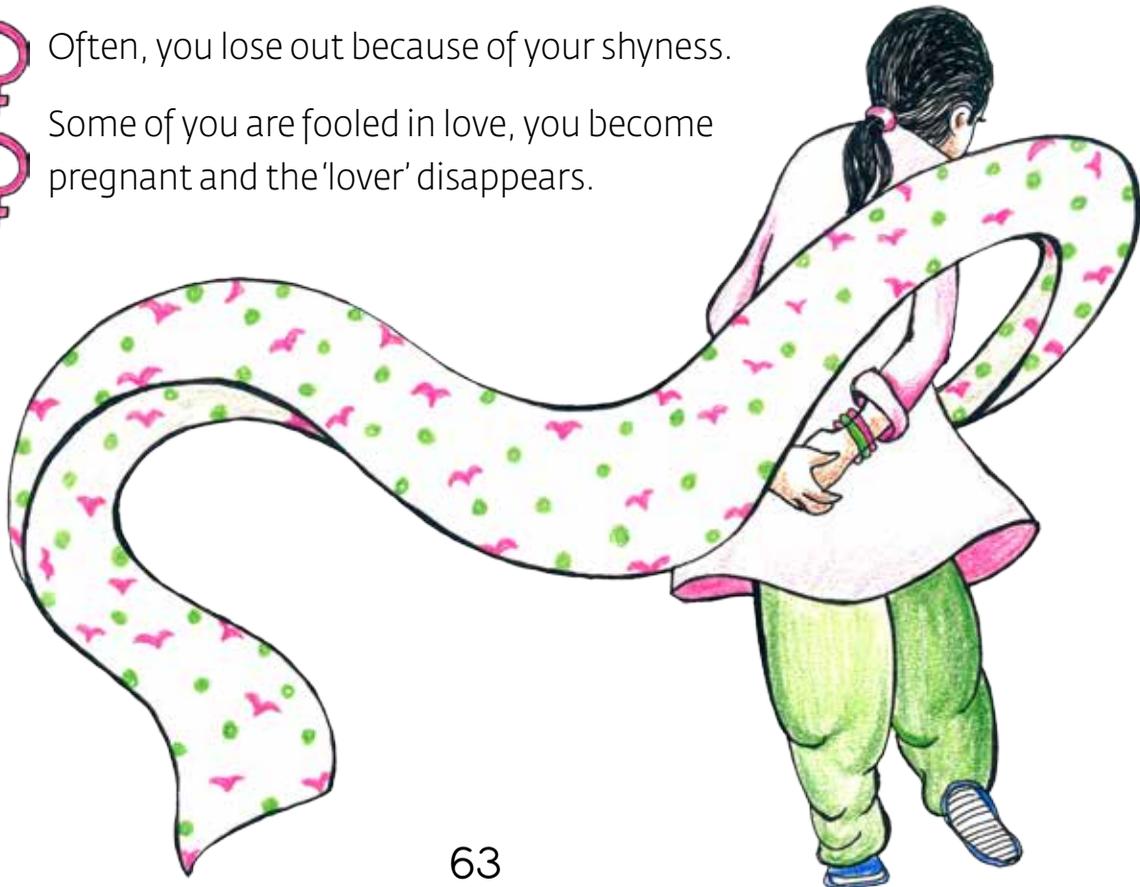
At times, even if you are not willing, you are not able to say NO.



Often, you lose out because of your shyness.

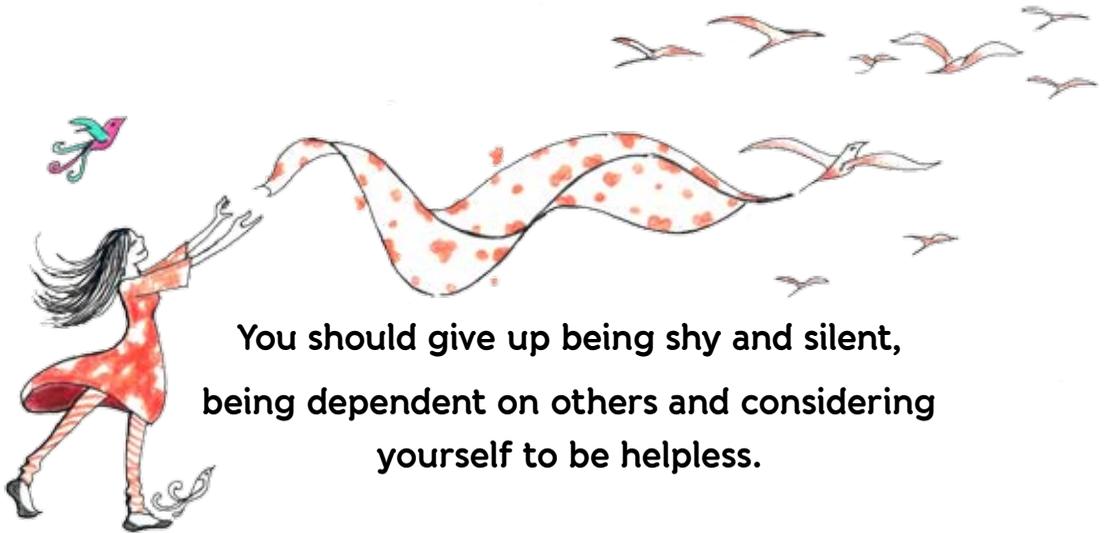


Some of you are fooled in love, you become pregnant and the 'lover' disappears.



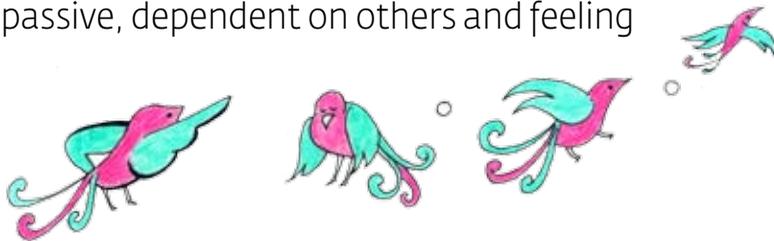
- ♂ Often there is no equality in your friendship.
- ♂ You keep trying to have your way all the time.
- ♂ You are also expected to take most decisions and pay for drinks, food, films etc.
- ♂ Normally you boys take the initiative for sex.
- ♂ Some of you even go and have sex with sex workers.
- ♂ You take the lead in relationships but do not take any responsibility for them.



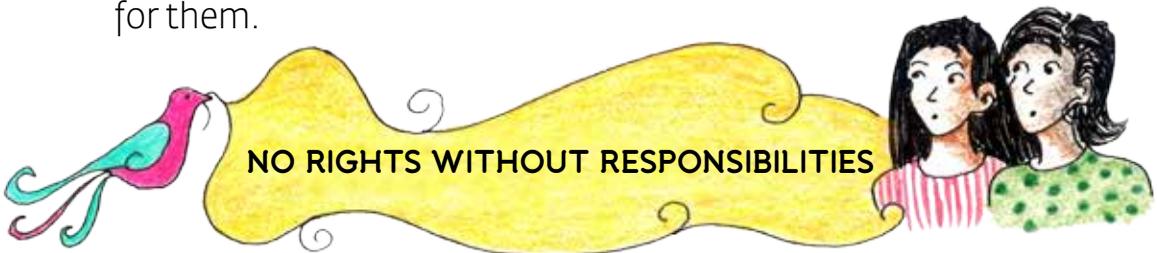


**You should give up being shy and silent,  
being dependent on others and considering  
yourself to be helpless.**

To protect yourself from unwanted pregnancies, STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and HIV, you have to stop being shy, passive, dependent on others and feeling helpless.



You need to learn to take decisions and take responsibility for them.



You need to think if you are doing things under pressure or are you doing what you consider to be right?

You should know that no one, even if they are family members, relatives or teachers, has the right to touch you without your consent. You have the right to say “NO” to any unwanted touch that you do not like. But “NO” has to be said strongly and assertively, not in the Hindi film style, where you say “no” but mean “yes”.



**YOU NEED TO ALWAYS  
REMEMBER  
THAT ONLY YOU HAVE  
CONTROL OVER YOUR BODY**

How much do you know about your own body, about STIs and HIV? If you do not know enough, then do seek information and discuss these issues.



**TO GAIN CLARITY AND CONTROL  
YOU NEED KNOWLEDGE AND  
INFORMATION**

To create equal, strong and beautiful relationships, you boys need to give up your roughness and false sense of being “macho”.



You will have to think if-



**TO BE A REAL MAN DOES ONE HAVE TO SMOKE, DRINK ALCOHOL OR HAVE MULTIPLE RELATIONSHIPS?**



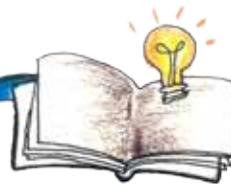
To protect yourself from HIV and STIs is it not necessary to avoid this kind of dangerous 'masculinity'? You have to realize if you are doing certain things only under peer pressure? Think for yourself, is it 'manly' to feel and act under pressure?



**COOL BOYS RESPECT GIRLS**

You should understand that you have no right to touch anyone without his/her consent. Also, no one has a right to touch you without your consent. If someone older or stronger than you forces him/herself on you, say a firm 'NO'. Similarly, if someone who does not like your advances says NO to you, accept that and stop pushing yourself on them.

If your family has property, see to it that everyone gets his/her share. It is also your responsibility to ensure that your sister gets her share. Only when she is economically strong will your sister have an independent and fearless life.



## TO GAIN CALRITY AND CONTOL YOU NEED INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

How much do you know about your own body, about girls, about GIRLS' BODIES, diseases spread by unsafe sex?

If you do not know enough, UNSAFE SEX, STIs, HIV, get information and discuss these matters.



If you wish to have a sexual relationship with your INFORMATION SEX DISEASES friend, think about it carefully, discuss it with your friend and think of every DISCUSSION DESIRES, consequence before you do anything, so that you do not have to repent later.



You girls have to prepare yourself to be economically independent, if you want to be respected and have equal rights.





Because money is important you need to become capable of earning and making a living.

You should know about your property rights and try to get those rights. You have to seek education and training to become employable.



If you are dependent on others for fulfilling your needs, how will you get equality? To gain respect you have to work hard.



It is possible that some of you girls or boys do not wish to have a job. You may want to be home makers. But, you may need to earn at some later stage in life. Therefore, everyone should have education and skills to make a living.

Study well, get training and prepare for a job/ work which you find enjoyable, which enables you to fulfill your potential and which can help you earn enough to live well.



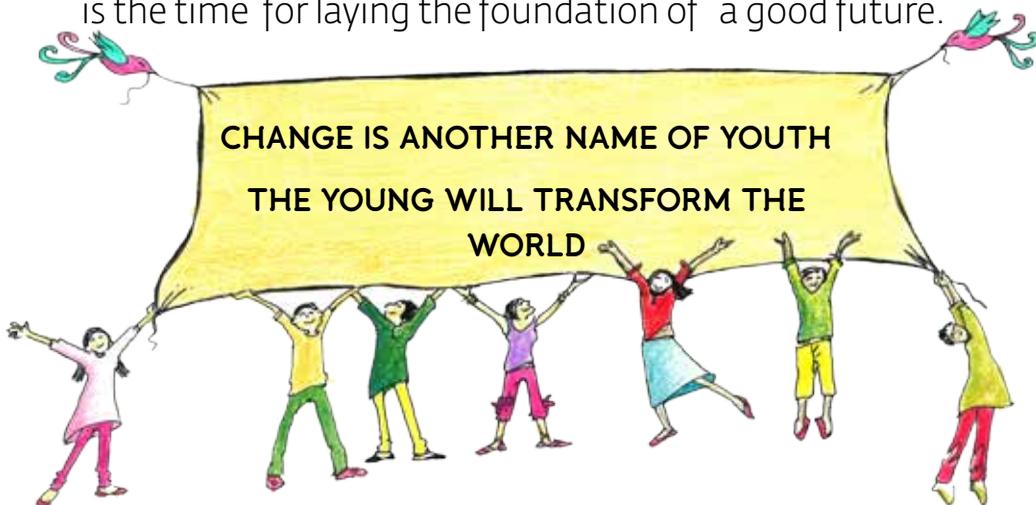
## **EQUAL RELATIONSHIPS- GOOD RELATIONSHIPS**

If you and your friend wish to have sexual relations, it is advisable to think carefully, discuss it with your partner, think of every consequence beforehand so that you do not have to repent later.



Through this conversation we wish to encourage you to think deeply about yourself, to understand yourself and others and to begin the journey of change with yourself. If you change, the world will change. All we want friends, is that with the help of correct information and understanding you make your own decisions, in an informed and independent manner, free from pressure or coercion.

If you wish to take your own decisions, wish to behave like an adult then you have to become financially capable. Youth is the time for laying the foundation of a good future.



## IT IS YOUR TURN NOW TO THINK AND SPEAK



What do you understand by sex?



Are our bodies only biological or natural? Please explain with examples.



What is Gender?



“Boys should not cry”, “girls should not laugh loudly”, who has created these rules? Is there any truth in these statements/beliefs?



With the help of two illustrations on page 70, the illustrator has advised you to examine yourselves and if necessary, change. Do you find this advice useful? If yes, please explain why.



## BREAKING THE SILENCE ON SEX AND SEXUALITY

Sex and sexuality are important aspects of our lives. Without them none of us, or for that matter, our families or societies would be around.

Although sex and sexuality are crucial, there is very little open, frank and detailed discussion on them. Even when discussed, it is done in such a hush-hush manner as if one is talking something bad and dirty.

Something natural and beautiful has been turned in to something dirty, wrong and even violent. The meaning, understanding and importance of sex and sexuality are not the same for everyone. For some people sexuality is limited to producing children. They consider it wrong to have sex for pleasure. There are others who see nothing wrong in having sexual relations for pleasure.



Some religious people consider sex to be a hurdle in religious practice; therefore they take vows of celibacy. On the other hand there are religious people who think sexuality can be a way to reach God or enlightenment.





Some people consider sexual relations outside of marriage as wrong, but for some this is okay. Many men have several sexual partners or even wives at the same time, although in most countries more than one marriage is illegal.



As discussed, there may be opposing views on sexuality and rigidity around them. Everyone thinks that only their views are correct and this sometimes leads to tensions, conflicts and even violence.



Sexual relations are not just physical or bodily. Our thoughts and feelings are also involved. Therefore, irresponsible and dishonest relationships can not only be meaningless but also harmful.



Because of all these reasons it is important to talk about sexuality and develop a clear understanding. Instead of repenting later, it is better to be cautious and careful.



**RASH ACTIONS LEAD TO ACCIDENTS AND REPENTANCE**

**THEY HURT US AND MAKE US A LAUGHING STOCK**

– KABIR

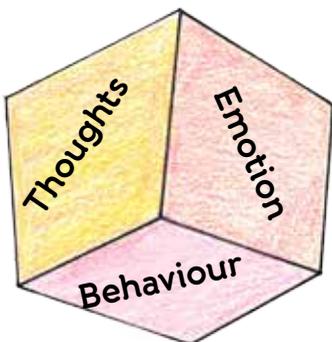
## SEX

The word sex is used for many different things, like-



- ⇒ Our sexual identities- male, female or intersex (when someone does not have clear genitals or inner reproductive organs).
- ⇒ Our genitals or sexual organs
- ⇒ Sexual relationship or intercourse which can lead to pregnancy,

The meaning of SEXUALITY is quite broad and complex. It is related to our thoughts, emotions and attitudes. Our attitude towards our body influences our sexuality. Because it is a very important aspect of our life, our sexuality influences our self-confidence and self-esteem. Sexuality is linked to the following-



- ⇒ Our sexual and other organs which provide us sexual excitement and pleasure. This is not the same for all.
- ⇒ Our views, feelings, and attitudes about sex and our desires for, and interest in sexuality. Some people are very interested in sexuality.

They think, read, watch films about it and keep trying to make sexual relationships. There are others who are not at all interested in sexuality. They are fine without it. There is diversity among people and in their interests.

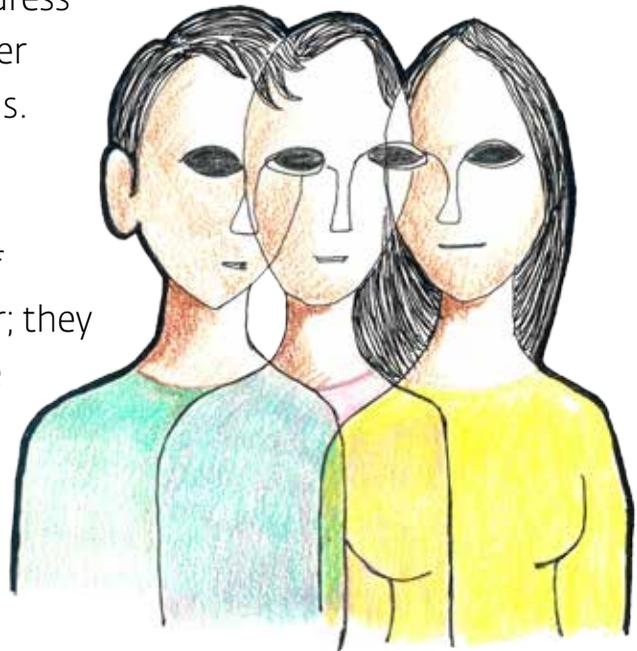


Our sexual identity or whether we are a girl, boy or intersex. Some people do not have well defined and formed sexual organs. They are called inter sex or third sex.

Some boys like to dress and behave as girls. They feel, although they have a male body but their soul or inner being is that of a female/woman. They normally prefer to have sexual relations with boys/men. Similarly there are girls

who like to behave and dress up as boys and they prefer sexual relations with girls.

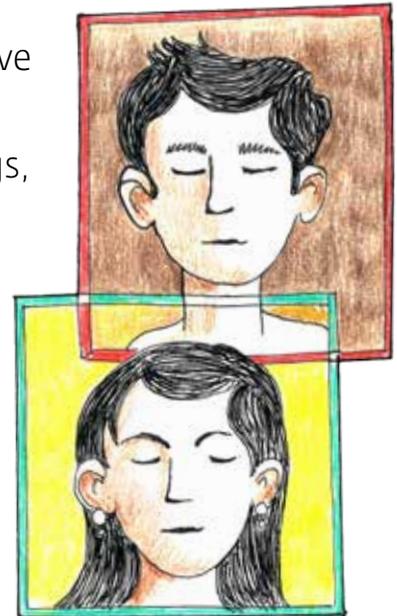
These people are called transgender because they cross the borders of socially defined behavior; they transform gender. Some trans-gender people decide to undergo hormonal treatment and surgery to change their sex.



They undergo these complex and expensive surgeries because they feel trapped in a wrong body. Because of their deep feelings, they desire the body of their choice and science has now made this possible. This means even our bodies are not fixed and unchanging. Even here there is so much diversity.

By listening to the experiences of transgender people we can understand how different the feelings, thoughts and behavior can be of girls/boys with similar bodies. This clearly shows that our thoughts, feelings, preferences and behavior are not determined by nature alone. Our societies also construct and control them.

But, just see the amount of diversity around us, despite strict socialization and societal control. This is why attempts by societies to make everyone uniform or same, cause so much pain for so many people.



**ALL AROUND THERE IS DIVERSITY BUT SOCIETIES  
WANT AND IMPOSE UNIFORMITY**



Such societal pressures cause tremendous pain for people who are different. Their lives get filled with negativity, violence and unhappiness.

Because of societal attitudes and pressures (not because of Nature or biology) girls and boys often have different views on and attitudes towards sex and sexuality. Because society gives more freedom to boys and does not control their sexuality much, they often have more interest in sexuality. Some boys are sexually aggressive. They tease girls, forcibly touch them and even rape them. Because of societal pressures and the fear of pregnancy, girls often avoid sexual relations and do not initiate them. But now, because of the availability of contraceptives, some girls and women have also been moving towards sexual freedom.



## **OUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION IS ALSO DIFFERENT**



Most people are sexually attracted towards the opposite sex and they desire sexual relations with them. This is called heterosexuality.

### **HETEROSEXUALITY**



For ever, there have been homosexual people in this world, who like to have sexual relations with people of the same sex, men with men, women with women.

### **HOMO SEXUALITY**



Some people are BI-SEXUAL. They have relations with both men and women.



In many countries homosexuality is accepted and homosexuals can live freely, get married and adopt children; but, in many countries homosexuality is not accepted and it is illegal. In these countries homosexuals are forced to hide their sexual orientation. They suffer different kind of discrimination and violence. Some of them are pressured by their families to get married. They are forced to live a false and double life. In democratic countries with strong human

rights movements, there are campaigns for sexual freedom. In India also there is a people's movement for making homosexuality legal. In our neighboring country Nepal homosexuality has been legalized. Since South Africa gained independence, homosexuality is legal there also.



## **SOCIETAL CONTROLS OVER SEX AND SEXUALITY**

Some societies have strong rules and controls over sex and sexuality, like- who can have sexual relations with whom; who can get married to whom. In some communities, even today young people are ex-communicated, even killed, for going against these rules.



Societies control sexuality because the result of sexual relations can be far reaching. For example, girls can become pregnant; if girls and boys are very young and economically dependent, if the health of the girls is not good, then there can be harmful effects for the whole life.

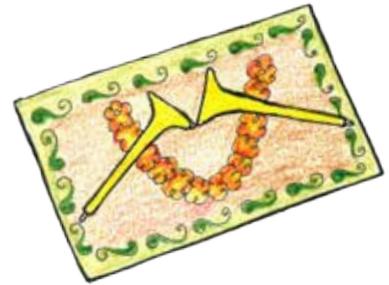


If a boy forces a girl to have intercourse, he can go to jail for this crime. He can be thrown out of school, college or from a job. Unsafe sex can also lead to infections like STIs and HIV and our health can be endangered.



Along with these there are other reasons to control sexuality. These are related to family property, caste and religion. Property is very important for most families. In order to control property, families control sexuality and marriage of young people.

Families are also most concerned about the continuation of the family tree and name. Therefore, marriage is not just a relationship between two individuals; it is a matter between two families and communities. Financial and property transactions often take place through marriages. This is why arranged marriages continue to be common in South Asia.



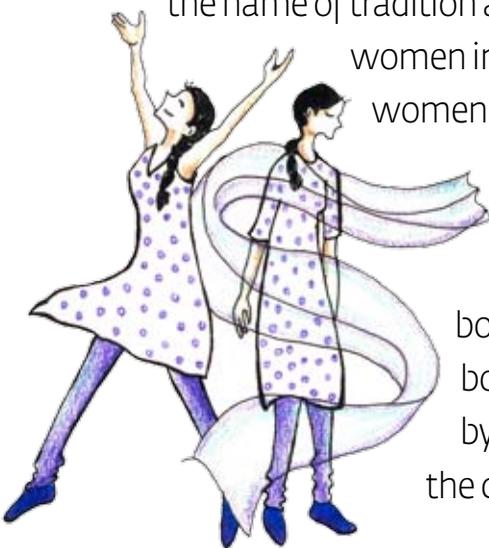
Then there are families for whom 'purity' of religion and caste is very important. They do not want their children to marry or have sexual relations with people from other religions and castes. Because of all these reasons sexuality and marriage are controlled by families and communities.

Patriarchal societies control girls/women much more. Most of these restrictions are due to a mindset and they are imposed in the name of tradition and culture. Our societies categorize

women in to two kinds- the "good" and the "loose" women. Because of the fear of being labeled

'loose', girls/women imprison themselves mentally and emotionally. They control their own feelings, sexual desires and

bodies. A girl/woman who trespasses social boundaries can be given harsh punishment by her community. It seems the "honor" of the community/ family is located in the sexual



'purity' of girls/women. Men are not expected to be sexually pure or to have fidelity in the same way.

There is another way to suppress the desires of girls/women and to control them. The biggest crime for girls/women is to have pre marital or extra marital relations. Boys/men do not face similar restrictions and criticism. Girls are often blamed even for rape. The raped girl/woman is considered 'dishonorable', not the rapist.

Girls hesitate to express their sexual desires because if they do so, they are considered "loose" or 'flirts'. This is why even when they are interested they say 'no'.

Therefore when girls say "no", men think they are saying 'yes'. Strange, is it not? We believe girls can get the right to say "NO" only when they are free and have the right to say "yes".



So friends, it is quite clear that there are different views on and attitudes towards sexuality. There is a lot of diversity here too. Therefore, it is important to get correct information, to discuss and to develop a good understanding on sexuality.

Only when you are clear, can you decide what you consider to be right and what are your own feelings and tendencies; when with whom and what kind of relations you want to have, or whether you want any sexual relations at all at this age. You need to take responsibility for your own thoughts, behavior and relations.



## YOU ARE THE ONE WHO SAY YOU ARE NOT A CHILD ANY MORE



The following statistics should also encourage you to understand sex and sexuality properly

### ← **WHAT DOES RESEARCH SHOW** →

 15 PERCENT Indian boys and 4 percent girls between the ages of 15 to 24 said they had pre-marital sex (Youth in India, 2006-2007, International Institute of Population Sciences and Population Council).

 The rate of child marriage is quite high in our country, especially for girls. A large number of girls are married off and they have sexual relations before they are 18.

 In the age group 15 to 24 one out of every 1000 young people is HIV infected (NFHS, 2005-2006)





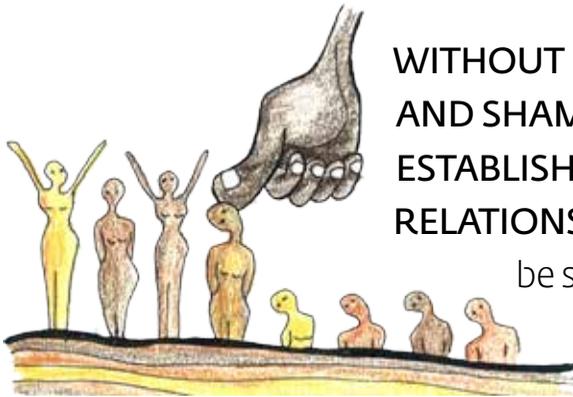
These statistics show that many adols are sexually active, before and after marriage. There are sexual relations between adols of the same sex also. Although many young people are sexually active, many of them do not know enough about their bodies, sex and sexuality.

Because of lack of or incorrect information, a large number of adols, especially girls, face a number of challenges.

Many researches have revealed that many girl adols become pregnant, but they are not aware of it for 3-4 months. Abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy is dangerous. Even doctors do not advise abortion after this stage. Therefore, many girls use unsafe methods to abort, and face many health problems; sometimes they die. Correct information and understanding can prevent such problems.



The fear of pregnancy and social disapproval and the notion of shame affect the sexuality of girls/women. Fear and shame suppress their healthy sexual desires. Some girls never get rid of this fear and shame. In our opinion

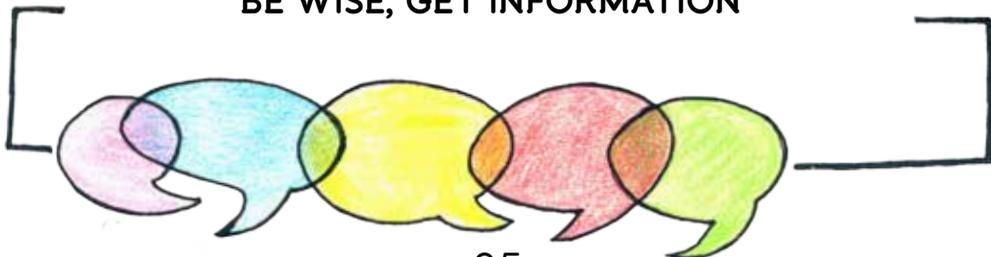


**WITHOUT FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND SHAME ADOL GIRLS CANNOT ESTABLISH PLEASURABLE SEXUAL RELATIONS** and they will continue to be stressed about sexuality.

It is even more necessary for girls to understand sexuality because most of the restrictions and violence on them is because of sexuality. To challenge and remove violence against girls and women, you need both information and sexual rights.

Some people believe that open discussion on sexuality will harm or spoil adols and they will become sexually active. The truth however is, that adols who are well informed make informed choices and take sensible actions.

**BE WISE, GET INFORMATION**



## IT IS YOUR TURN NOW TO THINK AND SPEAK



Do you think it is necessary to have frank discussions about sex and sexuality? Please give reasons to explain your viewpoint.



What do you understand by sexuality? Talk about this with your peer group and write down your views in a diary. It will be interesting to read these after a year or two to see if your understanding and views have changed. If they have changed, then have another discussion with friends and again put your views on paper.

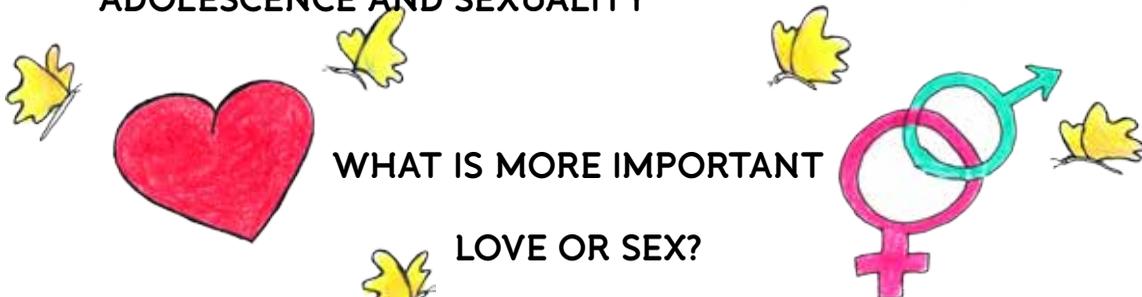


The writer has repeatedly talked about diversity in sexual desires and sexual orientation. Do you agree that sexual diversity is natural? Please discuss this with friends.



On page 85, the illustrator has shown girls to be under the thumb of society. Do you agree that this is a social reality? Think about such instances around you and talk about them.

## COME, LET US CONTINUE OUR CONVERSATION ON ADOLESCENCE AND SEXUALITY

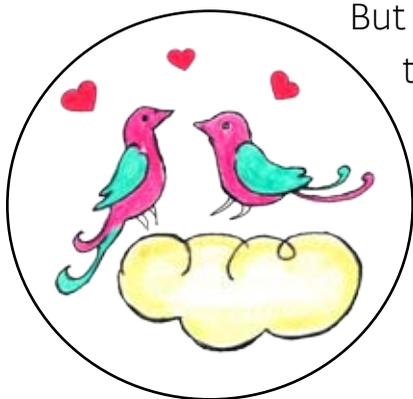


### WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT

### LOVE OR SEX?

The desire for sex is natural but as we have already said, societal attitudes and beliefs influence sex and sexuality. Most people find it difficult to free themselves of social prejudices and have a natural and healthy attitude towards sexuality.

Sex is also a biological need; it is necessary for reproduction.



But human beings do not have sex only to have children. We have sex also for pleasure. Many sexual relations are based on love. Because you love someone you wish to be physically close to that person and express yourself sexually.

However in some sexual relations there are no emotions and love. Some people can and do have sexual relations with a sex worker or with an unknown person purely for physical pleasure or for satisfying bodily hunger.

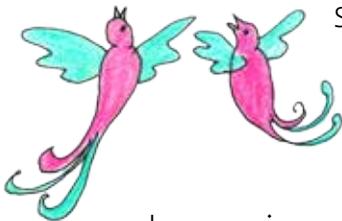
It is important for us to understand that human beings can

control the need and urge for sex. Sexual desires are strong but we humans are stronger than them. Each one of us needs to know when we want sex and with whom do we want it. As we have said earlier, people have different views, attitudes and behavior on sex and sexuality. Some people believe love and sex are two separate things and therefore it is not necessary to have love and friendship with the person you have sex with or to have sex with people you love. We respect these views but our own view is that during adolescence you should act most carefully. You can have sexual relations after you gain some more maturity and can take sound decisions.

At this stage your main responsibility should be to prepare yourself for a healthy and meaningful future. It is indeed difficult to create a balance between hard work, patience and pleasure, but it can be done. So keep trying friends...



In our opinion sexual relations are intimate relations. During sex our body, even our whole being, merges with that of the partner. Do you want such intimacy with a stranger? Do you wish to buy sex? Can one have real pleasure in such relationships?



Friends, we hope by now you have understood that it is essential to have a clear understanding on sexuality and sexual pleasure.

There are many sexual acts and they can all give pleasure.



Sexual acts done with penis, vagina and anus or intercourse are not the only way to have sex or sexual pleasure.

Some people get more pleasure by hugging, kissing, gently caressing, sitting intimately than through intercourse.



In order to have instant sexual excitement or to prove their masculinity, some young people specially boys/men, have multiple partners and brag about this. We should know that pleasure is not derived by changing partners.

**IF YOU ARE NOT A GOOD PARTNER FOR ONE, HOW WILL YOU BE GOOD WITH TEN?**



It is quite possible that to have good, meaningful, joyous relations you do not need to change partners; you may need to change yourself.

You are responsible for your sexual behavior. No one else can take responsibility for it. If you are old enough to have sex, you should be old enough to take responsibility for it.

You should think hard and decide if you want sex in your relations, when and what kind of sex? If your intentions are clear, you will act accordingly and give clear signs. Others can take undue advantage of your lack of clarity.



## WHAT DOES LOVE MEAN FOR YOU?

Each one of you needs to reflect about and understand love and your love relationships. Is there anyone you love? Why do you love him/her? Have you thought what love means to you? Does it mean to understand someone and be understood; to give someone attention and importance; to allow someone to speak; to understand your friend's likes and dislikes; to give your friend the feeling that s/he is not alone? Does love mean to make someone feel secure and special; to become a shoulder to cry on; to become a partner to laugh with; or does love mean something else to you?



## LET US REFLECT

Many so called love relationships are full of power struggles. Many of us want to get more than give, want to speak more than listen; we want to impose our views, likes and dislikes. There is so much inequality and tension in some "love" relationships that love is nowhere to be seen. You go to your lover for getting healed and feeling good, but return wounded and upset. We think, unequal and conflict ridden relationships are not only meaningless, they are dangerous too.



Do you not think it is better to avoid dominance and inequality? Surely, no one 'falls' in love to feel insecure, inferior; to be ordered around; to feel miserable. It is necessary to think about and discuss these issues.

Every love relationship does not have to be sexual. It is no less pleasurable to sit and chat, to go for walks, to read to each other, to see films together.

**ACTUALLY SOMETIMES UNWANTED AND UNPREPARED  
SEX CAN DESTROY A BEAUTIFUL RELATIONSHIP**

We are of the opinion that adols should not get in to sexual relationships at such a young age. Sexual relations at a young age can lead to several problems. Unwanted pregnancies can be disastrous. If a young girl has a baby it is a problem. Aborting a child is also no easy option. So, we suggest that for the time being you read the following poem and follow what it says

Hello young ones under twenty!

If you desire, have friendships plenty!!

Fall in love with girls or boys!

Share your sorrows and your joys!!

Hug, hold hands and even kiss!

But, for now, give sex a miss!!

Why not keep some things for later!

Waiting can make our pleasure greater!!

But, if in spite of our advice and this poem you wish to have sexual relations, then discuss the issue thoroughly with your partner. Think why you want sexual relations now. What is the hurry? Having sexual relations without adequate thinking and with closed eyes is childish. To have sex under pressure is also irresponsible and dangerous. Take a decision only after serious consultation with your



**Be  
Alert**

partner and thinking about the consequences. If you must have sex, then have safe sex, safe sex means you ensure that you or your partner does not get pregnant, none of you gets infected with STIs or HIV and none of you suffers mentally or emotionally. Using a condom is a good option, because it protects you both from pregnancy and infections.



There are some other important issues related to sex and sexuality which you must understand and pay attention to. Let us look at them.

### **MASTURBATION OR GIVING PLEASURE TO YOURSELF**

Children are curious about their bodies. They want to see and touch their body parts. Because of changes in the body, adols may experience sexual excitement and pleasure.



During this time you like touching and caressing your sexual organs. This is what masturbation or giving yourself pleasure is. This is completely natural.



Through this, without having a sexual partner, you can experience an orgasm (the peak of sexual pleasure). Most girls and boys experiment with this at some point of time.



Because of social disapproval and misinformation, adols are confused, not sure or even guilty about masturbation. In our view, masturbation is just a way to release sexual excitement and feel sexual pleasure. Unless you get obsessed with it, masturbation does not harm your health, nor does it make boys impotent. It does not in any way harm your future sexual relations or your chances of



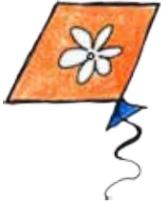
having children. You can masturbate even when you have a sexual partner. What you decide to do depends entirely on your wishes and decisions.



## LACK OF INTEREST IN SEXUAL RELATIONS AND KEEPING A DISTANCE FROM THEM



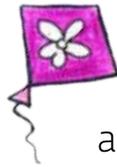
This lack of interest can be of various kinds-



Even when in love, you may not want to have intercourse. You may want to express your love through touching, kissing or being together.



It is possible that you do not wish to have any romantic relationship yet. You may have other interests and dreams.



All these attitudes are normal and okay. You do not need to give any explanation to anyone, nor feel guilty about not being interested in sex.

You have every right to make these choices and live freely with your desires. Some people are interested in sex, others are not; both are natural, normal and okay.



**IT IS YOUR TURN NOW  
TO THINK AND SPEAK**



Why do you think families and societies control sex, especially for girls?



Sex is a natural desire but we humans are not under its control, do you agree with this view? Discuss this with your friends and see what they feel and think about this.



What do you think of love? Try and write down your feelings and thoughts about it in your diary.

If you like, share these thoughts with your friends. You can also put your thoughts on a chart paper and put them up in the Teen Club or class room.

## SEXUAL HEALTH

The word health means physical, mental and emotional well being, comfort and satisfaction and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity. The same is true of sexual health. For sexual health it is necessary that-



Our sexual relations are healthy, they are based on equality, and they give us pleasure, bring out the best in us and encourage and help us to grow.



We have correct and adequate information about sex and sexuality.



Sexual relations are safe and there is no chance of getting infections or have unwanted pregnancy.



We have self confidence and we can express ourselves assertively.



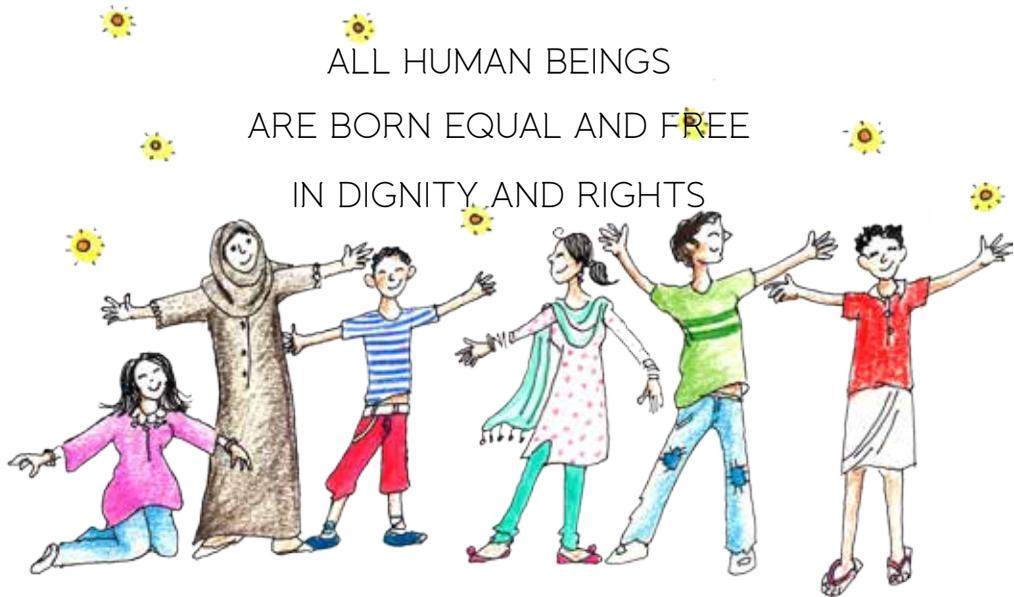
The relationship is based on trust and respect. There should be no force or violence in it. You must have the right to say NO to sex.



There should be freedom to experience sex, and all sexual acts without a sense of guilt.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Today most countries and societies accept and respect human rights of all and they try to protect them. All human beings get these rights at birth. Article 1 of the United Nations Human Rights Declaration says-



ALL HUMAN BEINGS  
ARE BORN EQUAL AND FREE  
IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS

This means, everyone including children, women, Dalits, tribals, people with disability, poor people, people belonging to minority communities, have human rights. Our sexual and reproductive rights are part of our human rights and they include the following-



Right to get information and services related to sex and reproduction.



Right to decide freely with whom, when and what kind of sexual relations we want.



Right to take decisions about sex and reproduction without any force or pressure.



Right to choose your life partner and right to marry.



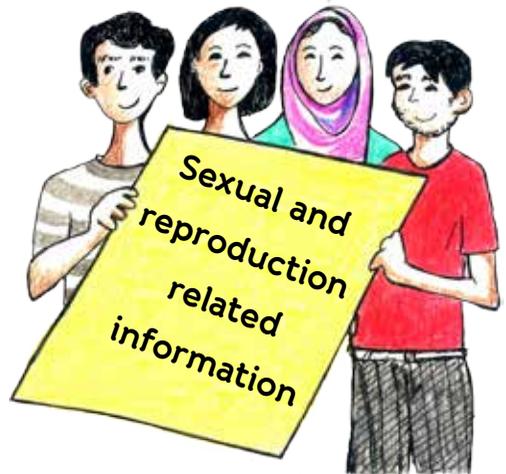
Right to decide IF, WHEN and HOW MANY children you wish to have.



Right to be free of all forms of violence and pressure.



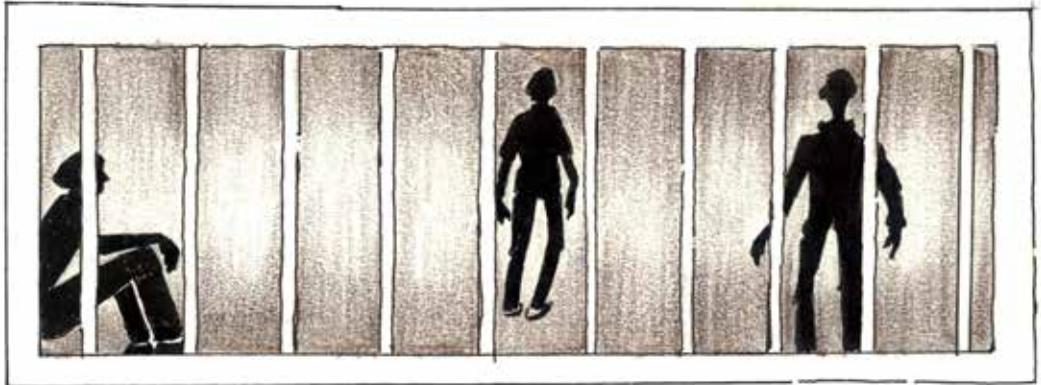
Adols also have all these rights. They should also be provided information and services related to sex and reproduction. They cannot be denied these. It is your duty to claim these rights for yourselves and to help others get them.



## **SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

Sexual violence can be of many kinds and it can be inflicted on both girls and boys, although girls face it more. Insulting words/language, gestures, unwanted touch, are all forms of sexual violence.

No one has the right to touch you, tease you or have sex with you without your consent. In some countries even a husband cannot have sex with his wife without her consent. This is considered marital rape and it is a crime.



If teachers, professors, hostel wardens pressure or lure you to have sex with them, this too is sexual violence and a crime. Similarly, if a close relative or a family friend forces any kind of sexual act on you, it is a crime and it can be reported to the police.

Because we do not talk about sexual violence, especially about that which takes place within the home, this kind of violence continues to exist and cause pain and harm. Sometimes our own brother, uncle, brother in law, a friend of our father or brother may do this to us. Several research studies and conversations have revealed all this.



This violence has a very negative and long lasting impact on our mind and feelings. A sense of fear may settle inside us. Because we do not talk about it to anyone, emotional knots may be formed. A kind of silence and distance may creep into our relationships. One may find it difficult to trust anyone even within the family.



Therefore, it is necessary to break our silence about violence. If we do not speak about it and allow the perpetrators of violence to roam around freely, violence will only increase. Children and adols will keep facing violence and keep suffering..



**NO MORE SILENCE  
ON VIOLENCE**



You can talk about sexual violence with people you trust and those who have the courage to challenge injustice. You can also talk to some good friends or to the school counselor. There are also women and children's rights groups who help in such matters.



If there is no one you can talk to, then you can report to the police. You should never forget that-

- ☀ Sexual violence is a crime
- ☀ Violence free life is your fundamental right.
- ☀ Those who do violence should be ashamed, not those on whom violence is inflicted.



- ☀ Everyday there is news about rape cases. By being careful we can reduce the possibility of rape.

### **Here are some suggestions-**

- ☀ You should never appear to be weak, fearful or helpless. Even if you are fearful inside, give the impression of being strong and loud.
- ☀ It is better to avoid going to dark and lonely places alone.
- ☀ If you find the attitude and actions of someone strange, avoid meeting such a person alone.
- ☀ Keep a distance from people who use force or favors to entice and use you.
- ☀ If you feel someone is going to be violent and use force run



## Be Alert



away from there. If necessary scream loudly.

Be firm and let people know what you like and what you do NOT like. Let people know through your body language and behavior that you will not

tolerate any violence or injustice.



Help each other to challenge sexual violence.



Togetherness and mutual support will help you to challenge sexual violence, to get the guilty punished.



And to deal with mental and emotional pain and stress caused by sexual violence.





WE ARE LIKE THE OCEAN  
WE KNOW OUR  
STRENGTH  
IN WHICHEVER DIRECTION  
WE TURN  
WE WILL CREATE  
NEW PATHS

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Technical Inputs and Financial Assistance provided by  
**United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA),**  
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