

**TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION**  
**WHY DO TEENS BECOME SEXUALLY ACTIVE?**

1. **To be more sophisticated or to appear more grown up and cool.**  
Many teens want to grow up in a hurry. They have the false belief that doing grown up things will make them independent and give them more freedom. The reality is the responsibility and possible consequences that follow force you to grow up before you are ready.
2. **To prove their love for another person.**  
Some teens really believe that sex is proof of love. Some teens pressure their girlfriend/boyfriend into sex by demanding this proof of love. Your response should always be, "If you really love me, you won't ask me to do something that I am not ready for."
3. **To become more popular.**  
Think about it! Have you known this to happen? A person seeking popularity by giving away his/her body may soon find themselves without the very friends they were seeking.
4. **Peer pressure and acceptance.**  
In a 1993 poll by Seventeen magazine, 20% of the guys responding said they had been pressured into having sex. Fear of rejection or not following the crowd can be real strong. Most teen parents tell us that if they get pregnant, they seldom if ever see those same friends on a continuing basis.
5. **To find love, attention, warmth and affection.**  
"Many young people today get little affection or attention at home. They begin to search for someone to love and to love them. Teens often look outside the family for someone who shows a little attention or interest. For them, sexual attachment is interpreted as love, so they engage in intercourse in an effort to find closeness and caring."  
- from Teen Challenges and Choices Curriculum, 1993, Colorado Department of Education
6. **Believing "Everyone else is doing it"**  
A person with low self-esteem is easily convinced that if everyone else is doing it, there must be something wrong with them if they're not.

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7. **Being pregnant is exciting, attention getting, and I will have a sweet baby to love and who will love me.**

This idea is expressed by many young teen mothers who felt that a baby would cement their relationship with their boyfriend. Or, if her parents had objections to her relationship with her boyfriend, they would have to let them be together if she is pregnant. The reality is that 85% of these girls raise their babies without the former boyfriend being anywhere near. Sometimes this is because it is the girl's choice and/or the choice of one set of parents or the other.

(Statistic from Teen Parent Directors, 1994)

8. **To rebel against parents.**

Teens who are having trouble with their parents may try to hurt them by engaging in risky behavior. Ironically, most teens who become pregnant then turn to their parents for help with finances and child care.

9. **Curiosity.**

As a result of advertising, movies, and other media, many teens are curious as to what it would be like to experience sex. The term "casual sex" was coined the 70's, and shows a contradiction in terms. "Casual" indicates no commitment or responsibility; "sex" is loaded with both. There is no such thing as casual sex unless there are such things as casual pregnancies, casual HIV virus infections, or casual broken hearts.

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