

Jessica Mendoza

Softball, Olympic gold medalist, world champion

Hookin' Up

When I was in the eighth grade, I started hanging out with a couple of girls from the cool crowd. I was so psyched that they liked me and wanted to spend time with me. They were going out with these high school guys. Before I knew it, a high school guy asked me out, too. It seemed like the best thing ever. He was 16. He drove a car, and I felt like he was a god, I was so excited.

Our first “date” wasn’t really a date. We just went over to someone’s house, and everyone broke off into couples. My friends disappeared behind closed doors, and I was left alone with Paul. I had never had a boyfriend before, and I didn’t really know what to expect. We started kissing. That was OK. Then he tried to go further. Not OK. I stopped him and pushed him away. I felt strange about the whole thing, and I asked Paul to drive me home. He was okay about it, even polite—that first time.

The next couple of times, the same thing happened. We would make out, and he would try to do more. I didn’t really know what to do. But I did know that it didn’t feel right. I was totally uncomfortable. We never went anywhere, and all we talked about was sex.

He was my first boyfriend. Obviously, I really wanted him to like me. But things weren’t going well. He stopped being polite about it. He kept pressuring me to go further. But I said, “No! I can’t do this!” So after three or four times, he broke it off.

Getting dumped was terrible. I felt hurt and unsure of myself about the whole thing. Was I supposed to be doing what he wanted? Was there something wrong with me? My so-called friends were no help. They teased me and called me a prude. They told everyone.

Looking back now, I realize Paul was a total loser. What was he doing with a 13-year-old girl, anyway? He didn’t want to get to know me at all. He only wanted to have sex. And I wasn’t ready for that.

That experience came and went. In high school, my boyfriend was my best friend. We were really close, and he was good to me. I learned what it meant to be in a caring relationship. When I was 13, a little voice in my head kept saying, “Don’t do this.” It kept getting stronger and stronger, until I finally listened.

I guess it was partly instinct. I don’t know. You have to learn to trust yourself and have confidence in your decisions. There are so many times in life when you come to that fork in the road and you have to make a decision. Have faith in your own feelings, and know that it’s okay to listen to that little voice.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Did Jessica do the right thing?
Why did Jessica feel so bad about getting dumped?
2. Have you ever heard a “little voice” telling you what to do? Did you listen?

Everywhere you look, people are getting it on. In videos, magazines and songs, on TV, on the streets, even in school. Girls want to know what's up with all the hype. What's up with crushes, holding hands, kissing and more? What's up with those butterflies and tingly feelings? It's a crazy time, no doubt. But it's nothing to freak out about. If you keep your head on straight, you can make sense of it all.

Your body and your emotions will go on a wild ride together. For the first time in your life, you're starting to have crushes. You hear about fooling around and maybe you start to think about it. Dating. Guys. Girls. Sweaty hand holding and sloppy first kisses are the fireworks in your day to day. That's totally cool.

But there is a flip side. Getting down with someone puts your body and mind at risk. You are also risking heartache—after you do something you are not ready to do. The further you go, the greater the risk. Sexual activity, even oral sex, increases the chance for scary diseases AND puts you at risk of getting pregnant—even when you're using a condom—and can do crazy things to your head. Alcohol and drugs can make a confusing situation worse, because they dull your mind. You could risk doing stupid things. What you do with your body is way too big of a decision to make when you're not all there.

You will definitely have some hard-core decisions to make. But you have plenty of time. And you have a brain. Use it, girl. Think about what's best for you before you hook up.

Trust yourself. Take it slow. If it doesn't feel right at your age, at this time—don't force it. You won't be able to go back in time and change what you did. Make sure you feel confident about the call you make.

When you find yourself in that steamy situation make sure you are prepared to take the risks you could be setting yourself up for. Don't do anything that makes you uncomfortable. If you can't talk openly about what you're about to do, then you're probably not ready to be doing it. It should never be about fitting in or bending to pressure from someone else. Hooking up doesn't make you mature or sexy—knowing who you are and what you want does. It's your body. It's your choice.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

RESOURCES

www.ashastd.org
www.itsuptome.org
www.likeitis.org.uk
www.nsrvc.org
www.rainn.org
www.teenshealth.org
www.teenwire.com

JOURNAL IDEAS

Have I ever felt pressured to do something I wasn't ready to do or didn't want to do? Have I ever pressured someone else? Why do people pressure each other?