



# Liz Masakayan

ON HOOKING UP

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## BEACH VOLLEYBALL; TWO-TIME OLYMPIAN; A TOP-RANKED PLAYER ON THE PRO TOUR

For as long as I can remember, I was always into sports and always one of the popular kids. I started at age 10 with Little League. Then it was AYSO soccer and junior high track. I played volleyball, but not on a team until 10th grade. Most of my friends were athletes and, being from California, some were skater and surfer dudes.

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By the time I was 13, I was physically more mature than most of my friends. I had grown into my body at an early age, and I was already 5-foot-8-inches tall. With what I thought was my maturity and confidence, I easily became one of the leaders of the group. I was the kid who wasn't afraid to try things and at times was also the instigator.

And at 13 and 14, that sometimes meant sex and drugs. There was a lot of flirting, pot and alcohol. We fooled around in the early stages of kissing and fondling.

I don't remember any sex education in school, and I'm sure my mom gave me words of wisdom, but, unfortunately, I never listened. The kids sort of learned from each other. Early experimentation was an "adventure."

I remember my friend "S" telling her story of going all the way. We were only 14, but none of us were surprised or thought that it was

a big deal. She had this huge crush on an older boy in 11th grade. And after it happened—she didn't even like it. It was all very sad, really.

It should have been a big deal! What about feelings? What about a real relationship—with someone who cares about you? It should have been a special time for her. It could have been sacred. But she was way too young to understand everything it should have involved, especially the right time.

Because I played three sports in high school and became much more involved with being an athlete, all my friends were my teammates. We felt good about our accomplishments and shared similar goals. Then there were those who continued to get deeper into risky behaviors. They tried to make themselves feel better through sex and drugs. One of my friends even dropped out in 11th grade, pregnant, on the streets and high all the time.

But I had a different avenue that I was interested in going down. I became a lot more serious about sports. I think it helped me to have the sense to stop before I got into trouble. I was so attached to being an athlete because winning was a great feeling. (It still is!) I did not have to mess with those risky distractions. Sports were my major distraction. OK, and boys.

**"I THINK [SPORTS] HELPED ME TO HAVE THE SENSE TO STOP BEFORE I GOT INTO TROUBLE."**

# HOOKING UP

Let's face it—you're curious. You've heard all this hype about boyfriends and girlfriends, hooking up, maybe even having sex, and you're ready to figure out what's so great about it. What's up with boobs, squirmy urges and the hottie in your science class? How come your friends are freaking out about how they look all the time and sharing bad-girl stories in the back of the bus?

...Suddenly, there you are, bombarded by a bazillion crazy feelings and pressures with absolutely no clue how to deal. What you need is not peer pressure from your friends or a textbook sex-ed. lesson. When these questions are brewing, you need someone to hook you up with real understanding of the whole scene. So here it is. The feeling of having a crush on someone who digs you too is magic. Holding hands and first kisses, although sweaty, can put a smile on your face and butterflies in your stomach for days. And honestly, getting down intimately, especially with someone you love, can be an exciting taste of bliss and make you feel like the sassiest thing alive. The whole scene be really tempting.

**HEADS UP, THOUGH.** The whole scene can also devastate you, take a toll on your heart and pretty much change your life forever. Like anything in life, the higher the risk, the harder you can fall. Getting emotionally involved with someone opens your big heart up to being hurt. Hooking up with someone isn't bad, but if you're not

## Red Flags

### DO YOU HAVE ...

- Pressure from friends, boyfriends or girlfriends
- An emotional hurricane: anxiety, fear, stress, confusion, guilt
- Next-morning regrets after alcohol and drugs

### YOU'RE HEADED FOR ...

- An unplanned pregnancy
- STDs (HIV/AIDS, crabs, herpes, etc.)—possibly resulting in death
- Loss of self-respect/feeling guilty
- Infertility (can't have kids—ever)

ready, it can leave you feeling guilty and dirty and make you question your self-worth. By going all the way with someone, you risk getting pregnant and/or catching a deadly STD (sexually transmitted disease) that you may carry with you for the rest of your life. Not to mention, you always risk getting caught up in a confusing ball of emotions. You can get blurry about how you feel about yourself, and how you feel about the person you're getting down with.

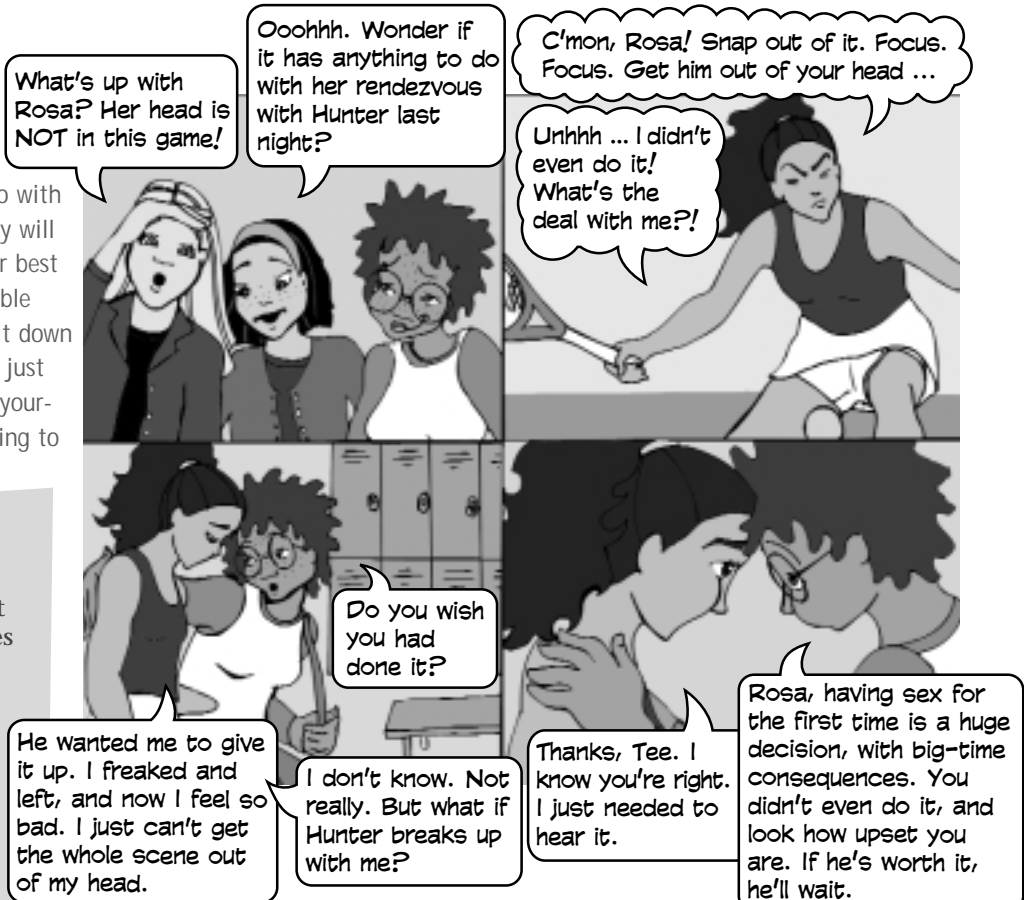
Intimacy with someone you like is never bad or good. It's always a little of both, depending on how you look at it. No one can tell you what the "right" decision is—not your parents, not your friends and certainly not someone who may be pressuring you to go all the way. The only right decision is the one you are totally com-

comfortable living with—the one you made knowing exactly what the risks are. So chill out, take it slow and know that how far you go with someone has nothing to do with how much you love them or how much they will love you. Remember your instincts are your best friend—trust them. If you feel uncomfortable with how your relationship is going, slow it down and sort out your feelings. You're probably just not ready yet. Above all else, take care of yourself—the decisions you make today are going to be a part of your tomorrow.

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## Deal With It!

- Educate yourself! Know how to protect your body and your mind from diseases and other risks.
- Take it slow—you can always go further tomorrow, but you can never take back yesterday.
- Find an adult you trust (coach, parent, friend) to help you answer tough questions.
- Be confident—you are in charge of making your own decisions about relationships and sex—it's your body and your life!



What's up with Rosa? Her head is NOT in this game!

Ooohhh. Wonder if it has anything to do with her rendezvous with Hunter last night?

C'mon, Rosa! Snap out of it. Focus. Focus. Get him out of your head ...

Unhhh ... I didn't even do it! What's the deal with me?!

Do you wish you had done it?

He wanted me to give it up. I freaked and left, and now I feel so bad. I just can't get the whole scene out of my head.

I don't know. Not really. But what if Hunter breaks up with me?

Thanks, Tee. I know you're right. I just needed to hear it.

Rosa, having sex for the first time is a huge decision, with big-time consequences. You didn't even do it, and look how upset you are. If he's worth it, he'll wait.