



## Discussion Guide

For Adults Working with Teens

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### Sex with Seniors: No Fairy Tale for Freshmen

A few days ago, as I was standing in the lunch line to purchase one of my school's delicious platters of toxic waste, two freshmen girls stood behind me, talking.

I wasn't really paying attention to their conversation (I'm really not the type to eavesdrop), but what one of the girls said really caught my attention. Her exact words were: "I don't really want to do it, but he's a senior, so if I do, it'll make him and other seniors like me."

Now, I know they could have been talking about anything (maybe she didn't want to help him cheat on a test or something simple like that), but the tone in her voice made me believe "it" was something sexual.

I don't know why, but suddenly I felt extremely angry at her. Why would she think that she had to do anything for someone just because he's a senior? Why did she feel it was so important to have the seniors like her anyway? I couldn't understand her reasoning until I thought back to when I was a freshman and desperate for the same acceptance of the allegedly larger-than-life upperclassmen.

### No Picnic

For freshmen, the abrupt transition from eighth to ninth grade is already hard enough, with the drastic change in homework. On top of that, supposedly you're automatically at the bottom of the social ladder. So now you're a prime target for humiliation from anyone who can say they've been in high school longer than you, which, unfortunately, is everyone.

It's a common misconception that the only way to avoid this humiliation and being branded an outcast is to give in to the pressure to have sex.

There are so many freshmen in my school who feel that it is a social taboo to turn down the advances of seniors; they feel it will leave them friendless their entire high-school career. This couldn't be further from the truth. Seniors—or anyone else—do not have the right to take advantage of you just because you are new to the school.

Unfortunately, many seniors count on freshmen girls to be too intimidated by them to say "no" to sex. Some girls agree to have sex or perform oral sex, hoping that the next day in school that senior will wave to them in the hallway or invite them to sit at their lunch table. Then, they'll be one of the "cool" freshmen with a bunch of senior friends, and everything will be perfect.

Sadly, the reality of the situation is not a fairy tale. More likely, a freshman will agree to have sex with a senior, and the next time the two people pass each other in school, it will be as though the girl doesn't even exist. He'll walk right past her without saying "hello" or even making eye contact. She'll just be known as another freshman he conquered.

Freshmen guys reading this may think that this doesn't apply to them, but that's not the case. Both girls and guys deal with pressure from their peers. A freshman guy may feel he has to get involved with a lot of girls, because he thinks that is the only way to win the approval of male seniors.

### **Aftermath**

So, what happens when freshmen give in to sexual pressure? There can be long-lasting effects after casual sexual encounters, especially if two partners didn't use protection. If they had oral, vaginal, or anal sex without it, one of the partners could get pregnant or get a sexually transmitted disease.

The effects are not just physical, though. If teens start thinking that the only reason seniors want to be their friend is to have sex, their self-esteem will plummet. They might just think that seniors only like them for the "sexual benefits." It's important to understand that if two people truly want to be friends, they accept each other for their personalities.

### **Not All Bad**

I'm not saying that all seniors are evil and you should avoid them like the plague. I'm sure you'll meet some really great seniors who honestly want to be your friend or date you, and you should try to hang around those types of people.

I know that being a freshman can be, for lack of a better word, scary. But don't let that fear allow you to make decisions you may regret later in your life. There is no rule that says you have to have sex once you enter high school.

Don't let others dictate when you're ready to have sex or do anything else. Wait until you are certain that you're ready and you're not doing it so people will like you or just to fit in.

Saying "no" to something you're not comfortable with won't turn you into an outcast. It will show people that you're not some naive freshman they can pressure, and they will respect you for that. And even if you're labeled an outcast, the people who will actually make great friends won't care about some unimportant label.

High school can be a fun experience, as long as you take it at your own pace. And before you realize it, you'll be a senior, remembering how foolish it was for you to be scared.