

## Working toward change

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Transgender and Questioning**

LGBTQ survivors share all of the usual practical issues with other survivors of sexual assault, but they have additional issues which may arise. One of these is the fear of being arrested under Virginia's sodomy laws if they report their assault or reveal their sexual orientation. Because of the homophobia and dominance of heterosexuality in our culture, LGBTQ individuals may be less likely to be believed than other survivors of sexual assault.

**Fear of Community Response:**

LGBTQ survivors may have more difficulty saying they were sexually assaulted; they may not want their sexual orientation to become known, and they may be afraid of homophobia and insensitivity in hospital workers or police officers, which can make the aftermath of sexual assault an even more hurtful experience for LGBTQ survivors.

**Being told that Sexual Orientation Caused the Assault:**

LGBTQ survivors may feel that they somehow provoked the attack by being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning, or that they are being punished for their sexuality. The assault may reinforce the myth that a woman without a man is fair game – a lesbian may feel that it was her status as a single or lesbian woman that got her into trouble. Some LGBTQ individuals, particularly those who are highly religious or have been rejected by their families, may feel they have been punished for their sexuality. Unfortunately, the assailant may have felt like the victim's sexual orientation 'caused' her/him to be assaulted, but the truth is that the assailant and her/his prejudice, ignorance, and personal problems are the true cause. Keep in mind that LGBTQ survivors may have been assaulted because the assailant knew they were LGBTQ, and they

may have been told by the assailant that the assault would 'fix' them.

**Some FALSE assumptions:**

Homosexuality is a disease or a mental disorder  
 All homosexuals need is good heterosexual sex (even forced sex)  
 Homosexuals are child molesters  
 Lesbians hate men  
 All lesbians are radical political liberals  
 Lesbians are unattractive females who can't find heterosexual partners, so they have to be homosexual and turn to other women as a last resort  
 An attack on homosexuals is justified because of her/his 'wrong' sexual preference  
 These are myths that children in our society learn as they are growing up, and that serve to alienate heterosexuals from homosexuals and make heterosexual people think of homosexual people as a separate and inferior class of people.

(...to be continued in the next issue)

**Local Happenings****2009 Youth Film Festival – XXL**

Big Stories in a Small Town

6:30-9pm Friday, September 18th

Light House's 8th annual film festival, fundraiser and community bash gets started with popcorn, drinks and cocktails in the awe-inspiring Ix building off Monticello Avenue. Come mingle with Light House mentors, parents, students and supporters before the 8pm screening of some of the year's best works. This year's theme of XXL focuses on our XXL footprint in the community and beyond. Special thanks to our XXL sponsor Blue Ridge Internet-Works, our XL sponsor Quantitative Investment Management, and our L sponsors CRL Surgical Associates, The Higgins Group at MorganStanley SmithBarney and SNL Financial.

Be sure to check out this year's special photo both feature!

For Tickets:

Tickets for high school aged youth and younger are \$5. You can also purchase tickets at Mudhouse Downtown from September 2nd. Questions? Call 434-293-6992

*In a survey of 6000 high school students who self-identify as LGBTQ: 86% reported being verbally harassed; 44% reported being physically harassed and 22% reported being physically assaulted at school. 74% heard derogatory remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke" and over 90% heard "gay" used in a negative way frequently at school. 61% of students who experienced harassment did not report it because they feared no action would be taken or the situation would become worse; of those who did report, 31% said the school did nothing in response. GLSEN released 2007*



*The effects of rape are the same, no matter the sex of the assailant.*



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# SARATeens

## What is Consent?

### Basic guidelines about consent

- *If the other person says no, take no as the answer.*
- *If the other person says nothing, take that as a no too.*
- *Never guess at consent.*

If you think you're going to have sex with someone other than yourself, there are a few key things you'll definitely want to have. Three things in particular should be non-negotiable on your mental checklist:

1. A place to do it.
2. Protection from pregnancy and/or STDs (e.g., condoms, dental dams, or other latex).
3. A partner who is actively choosing to be sexual with you.

These things (especially the third one) may seem obvious to you, but bear with us. The thing is, consent is not just about manners and decency; it's actually the law. Legally, **you need a partner who is voluntarily, actively, clearly giving his/her consent** prior to sexual activity. That means they have to be awake, lucid and able to communicate what they want or don't want. This is true even if you've been dating for a long time, even if you are committed. Any sex without consent - even within a marriage - fits the definition of sexual assault in Virginia.

A person who is too drunk, asleep or otherwise too out of it to be sure about what's going on can't legally meet the criteria for consent. Nor can someone who feels threatened or is afraid that if they say no something worse will happen.

**Every person, no matter what the circumstances, has the right to withhold consent for sexual activity at any time.** That means that if you don't have active consent from the person you're with, guess what? You risk committing a sexual assault, maybe without even realizing it. That's all there is to it. So it's crucial to be sure.

### How Do I Know if There's Consent?

The only way to be positive your partner is consenting is to check in with them along the way, listen to their responses, and act accordingly. In other words, **ASK!** And ask again if you're not sure.

## Is your relationship healthy?

As a teen it is tough now a days to keep up a truly healthy relationship. More and more high school teens each year have a problem knowing whether their relationship is healthy or not. Ever wanted to go to an outing with some friends that your significant other couldn't go to, and they didn't want you to go because they were afraid you would do something? Is your significant other constantly flirting with other people and then denying doing it when your friend saw them? These are some examples of an unhealthy relationship. If you feel like your relationship is not healthy, then talk to your significant other, or someone you trust. Ending a relationship might be the hardest thing to do, but it is always an option. No person should stand in the way of your health and well being.



*Got a question? Concerned about whether your relationship is healthy? Worried about a fiends relationship? Contact us. We'll get you an answer or help you work through it. You can find us on Facebook, email us at [sara\\_teen@yahoo.com](mailto:sara_teen@yahoo.com) or feel free to call the Adolescent Educator at SARA 434.295.7273*

## Handy Behavior Chart

Healthy Behaviors	Unhealthy Behaviors	Abusive Behaviors
Open Communication	Not communicating openly	Yelling or Screaming
Trust and Commitment	Disrespectful	Threats
Respect for boundaries	Not Trusting	Domination
Equality and shared responsibility	Dishonest	Intimidation
Fairness and negotiation	Controlling	Humiliation
Honesty and responsibility	Smothering	Possessiveness
Consensual physical affection and intimacy	Pressures partner into sexual activity and/or ignores the consequences	Minimization and Blame
		Forced physical intimacy