Deciding to devirginize [1]

Dear Alice,

I am an 18 year old virgin, but my boyfriend wants to have sex with me. We have been dating now for eight months, and he says he has been waiting long enough. I have this fear of having sex because of the consequences, but I try to tell myself that as long as I use protection, things like that shouldn't happen.

I'm not sure what I'm asking for; I'm not sure it's advice either. Right now I'm reasonably sure that I don't want to have sex, but this little voice (probably his) keeps asking "What's the big deal?"

I know it's not a big deal, but it's something I really believe in, and I want to wait. I only have one life to live and I want to do it right. I did a lot of things I ended up regretting, but this is really important to me. The only thing is, I have no problems fantasizing about making love to him. I just have trouble with carrying out the actual act. I really need to ask if you think my fear of sex is unnatural or just a product of the way I've been raised?

Is there any way I can get over all the horror stories of regret and painful first times and just give myself to the guy of my dreams?

? Confused

Answer

Dear Confused,

It sounds as though you are choosing not to have sex right now, a perfectly reasonable decision that deserves the support of your boyfriend. Your letter says clearly that this is something you really believe in and that you want to wait. You may feel this way because of personal conviction, your values, or possibly even fear; however it is your choice and deserves to be heard and respected regardless of what's behind it. Your boyfriend may feel he is ready to have sex, which is also a perfectly reasonable decision. Even though the two of you feel differently about sex right now, you may decide that continuing to discuss the issue and trying to understand each others' perspectives will serve to strengthen the relationship.
It's a good sign that in your fantasies you have pleasure when you think about being sexual with him. This is important when you finally do choose to become sexually active. It also is a way to give yourself pleasure now.

Someday you may "give yourself to" or choose to become sexual with the guy of your dreams, and only you can decide when that will be. Making the decision to have sex can be a pretty big deal for many people, you are not alone in feeling confused. To help clarify your feelings, consider asking yourself and your boyfriend, what's the rush? You will undoubtedly be sexually active for many years. While you're thinking about what you want, here are some more questions that you and your boyfriend may want to discuss: What would having sex mean for our relationship? How do I want to feel about a person I have sex with? Are we prepared to practice safer sex? Are we willing to talk about our feelings openly before and after having sex for the first time?

Continue to explore your feelings of closeness with your boyfriend. Keep talking with him about the things you are willing to do with him? socially, romantically, sexually? as well as the things you are not willing to do with him. Perhaps there are ways that both of you can get your needs met, while you still remain a virgin.

Before you decide to have sex, it would be a good idea to make sure you're aware of your birth control options as well as how to protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Both of you can read related Alice! questions concerning sex, STDs, and contraception in the Go Ask Alice! Sexual and Reproductive Health archives. You and your boyfriend may also want to schedule an appointment with a health care provider. You may find more information about safer sex and contraception at Planned Parenthood.

Have courage, girlfriend. Sex can be wonderful? the first, fifteenth, and fiftieth time? when you choose to have it. The when, where, and with whom, are up to you.

Good luck!

Alice!
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Resources

Safer Sex Map (Morningside/ Barnard) [12]
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