Hi Alice,

I have recently started university and moved away from home, and also I have met a guy who is now my boyfriend; it is going to be three weeks since we started dating and it has all been really good. We also have already started talking about making love and my boyfriend isn't forcing me into anything, and when I'm with him, it feels right, but the only thing that is bothering me is the fact it will only be three weeks. Both of us are virgins and I know he is sure he wants to lose his virginity to me and I feel the same way, but the time factor really bothers me. I really want to make this relationship work, and I think I'm going to be in love with him very soon...

My question is that are we rushing into things? Considering I have never been touched the way he has touched me, and if I am ready in such a short time period, should we go for it? Also what is the most reliable source of protection and where can I get it from? I want to take every precaution to make this one moment in my life the most amazing moment. Thank you very much.

Love, A.J.

Answer

Dear A.J.,

"Losing" one's virginity, or choosing to have sex for the first time, can be a major decision. You're taking a great first step in the decision-making process by spending time thinking about your choices and what implications and consequences, both good and bad, there might be for you, your partner, and your relationship.

There is no right or wrong answer to your questions; the decision to have sex is one that you'll want to consider carefully both by yourself and with your partner. You mention that the length of your relationship is one factor that has been bothering you. It's important not to dismiss this concern, but rather to examine it to see why you're feeling this way and gauge how important this factor will be as you try to make a decision. Here are some questions that might help you figure out whether you and your partner are ready to take the plunge:

- Are you having fun in your relationship? Are you able to communicate well with each other? Are you caring towards one another both emotionally and physically?
- What does having sex mean to you? How about to your partner? Are you on the same
page when it comes to what intercourse might mean for your relationship?

- What would happen if you waited a little longer? What might you lose? What might you gain?
- Are both of you giving and receiving pleasure in your sexual relationship now? Are you comfortable explaining to your partner what you like and don't like? Are there other options besides intercourse that you can explore to increase your enjoyment?
- When you picture yourselves having sex together, what parts of the imagined experience seem great? What parts make you feel somewhat nervous? What about your partner?
- Are you and your partner prepared to take on the responsibility of having safer sex? Do you feel similarly committed to and have a strategy for safer sex?

You also may want to make a good old fashioned "pros" and "cons" list or write down some of your feelings and concerns about having sex; sometimes seeing the words on paper can help you reflect on your thoughts. If something stands out to you as a reoccurring theme or a nagging concern, it might be better for you just to hold off on making the decision. Now may not be the time for you to have sex, but you can always change your mind. In the meantime, enjoy getting to know your partner more intimately by going to the movies or concerts, eating lunch or taking walks, discovering your common ground, and learning more about each other, past, present and future.

If or when you choose to have sex, male condoms are the most widely-used form of protection against both sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy. There are myriad options for safer sex, however, and more information about protection can be found in the Go Ask Alice's Sexual and Reproductive Health [2] archives. Here you'll find extensive information about safer sex and different types of contraception, where and how to get them, their effectiveness, and their advantages and disadvantages. You and your partner can also talk with your primary health care provider or a health care provider at your school's health services for more information and perhaps free contraception.

Lastly, one note of caution: for both men and women, the "first time" experience can range from "earth-shatteringly amazing" to "no big deal" to "painful, messy, and awkward." The idea of having sex is often thrilling, but it's also important to keep in mind that things don't always go as planned. Communication with your partner will be vital, so that you can adjust, laugh, and create "the moment" as the experience unfolds. Being sexual with someone doesn't always come naturally, but rather is something that improves with time, trust, communication, and practice.

Best of luck determining the decision that works for you.

Alice!
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