Librarian likes Go Ask Alice!, Parent is concerned

Alice,

I am a Children's Librarian and I was specifically made aware of your site by a parent concerned that her child would go to your site and read information she found offensive.

I have looked over your site and found it to be informative and that sensitive questions have been handled with sensitivity and tact.

I would like to include an answer from this service along with the answer I will give her. Do you have an answer you would like to pass along?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking some time to review Go Ask Alice! before giving it a thumbs up, or a thumbs down. With an estimated 6,000 new home pages uploaded every day, cyberspace can be an overwhelming place.

Alice has worked for six years building an archive of more than 1,500 replies to real inquiries on everything from dry scalps to dry sex. A thorough review of selected Q&As in all of the seven topic areas is the best way for readers to evaluate Go Ask Alice!'s usefulness and appropriateness for themselves and their children. It's important for browsers to read the questions and replies in full because their titles alone rarely tell the whole story. Go Ask Alice! answers affirm, define, explore options, and give resources for help, such as parents, teachers, clergy, and social service organizations. Ideas on how to improve communication with family, doctors, and friends are a staple in replies as well.

Alice wishes that parents and others would surf the web with their children, offering their opinions and guidance along the way. For example, a parent could say, "I disagree with this information on drugs, but these answers about getting less stressed when taking a test make a lot of sense." Discounting an information resource because some of its content is "offensive" is similar to saying, "Don't ever go outside because the wind might mess up your hair." What about the flowers, sunshine, and fresh air? Go Ask Alice! offers parents and their kids opportunities to learn together, and to practice safer surfing, if they so choose.

But let's face it, parents can't always be there when their children are on-line, watching television, at the movies, in the library, hanging with their friends, or out on the streets. Some
parents worry that their children will be influenced by what they read on the Internet, rather than what they have learned from their family. Others may be concerned that their kids will do whatever they read about, giving in to curiosity and disregarding their family's values. In reality, it's more likely that if children read something that their parents find objectionable or that they don't understand, they'll make no connection between themselves and what they're reading or they'll think it's boring, stupid, or gross... and then they'll move on. If they're stuck, parents, teachers, and other trusted adults can use the experience as a chance to discuss the issues, sharing their views and opinions.

In fact, a 1997 research article, "Sexuality Education and Young People's Sexual Behavior," published in the Journal of Adolescent Research, reviews the results of 47 studies that asked questions about the impact of sexuality education on the behavior of young people ranging in age from twelve to twenty-four. Surprisingly to some, abstinence, delays in first sexual experiences, and more responsible sexual activity were the likely products of sex education -- including the explicit variety.

Perhaps most helpful to your upcoming conversation would be past, supporting comments about Go Ask Alice! from parents, grandparents, and other readers. Here's a small sample (NOTE: some comments have been edited for length and privacy):

"Just wanted to let you know that as a parent, I appreciate Alice! My daughter isn't yet a teenager but when she is, and when she has questions, I'll be happy to use Alice as one source for her."

"I have two children, three and ten. My wife and I supervise ALL Internet access of my ten year old. I may choose to restrict my children's access to certain books and explain to them why. I do not expect to make that decision for other responsible parents. Many children who visit this site may be getting conflicting messages from family about sexuality. I find nothing in Alice's answers that is pornographic or titillating. The information is objective and responsible. Would you rather that children were receiving this information from their peers?"

"I'm a grandmother, so I speak with authority. Kids need to be able to ask embarrassing questions and get honest answers. It is their parents' job to teach them morals, not yours (or the library's). I think you are performing a service. Keep up the good work."

"In the Asian society, where sexuality still remains a taboo, you are doing a very good job."

"I am an advisor for a youth group of juniors in my volunteer ambulance department, and although it is not my responsibility or necessarily my desire to answer questions about sex, drugs, and life, I often find myself in that position. I think your program is an excellent resource for my kids who truly have nowhere else to go for answers."

"I depend upon you G.A.A. to help make the world a little less confusing. Thank you. Signed, you never answer MY questions but 'that's OK.'"

"I am a Pastor and lately I've heard a lot about this site. I surfed around and searched it extensively. This is a great site and an awesome service/resource that you are providing. Theologically, I am conservative. But, that is my issue. Most of the folks who I minister
to (18 - 25 years of age) are looking for options; that you offer. I will recommend your site to my counselees.”

The majority of public comments about Go Ask Alice! since its launch in 1993 have expressed similar sentiment. Alice welcomes feedback (via the Comments and Corrections box [2], please), positive and negative, as it only helps to improve the quality of this service.

So, here’s a summary:

- Librarians can offer to be an Internet tourguide for parents who want help getting comfortable with the World Wide Web.
- Parents and other guardians can surf along with their children to monitor use and give countering advice, differing opinions, and/or additional information.
- Reading, in full, a sampling of Q&As in all seven topic areas of Go Ask Alice!’s 1,500+ item archive will help determine whether or not Go Ask Alice! would be a useful service.
- Go Ask Alice! is unique. It covers a wide range of topics and provides an opportunity for parents, partners, teachers, health care providers, librarians, and young people to learn about health together.
- Go Ask Alice! answers include hundreds of other resources for help, and frequently suggest strategies for improving communication with parents, health care providers, and partners.
- Studies find that adolescents educated about sex are more likely to abstain, delay their first sexual experience, and act more responsibly when they have sex.
- Since its start in 1993, Go Ask Alice! has received thousands of questions and hundreds of supportive comments each month from parents, teachers, students, and health care professionals.

More information about this site can be found on the About Alice! [3] page.

Alice!
Category:
Go Ask Alice! Stuff [4]

Related questions

Erotica on the Internet [5]
Health care providers providing sex education? [6]

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Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

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