Dear Reader,

Abstinence is always a topic that generates interesting debate. Abstinence is typically defined as refraining from something by one's own choice, and as denial of the appetites, such as of certain foods or alcoholic beverages. As it's currently used, abstinence generally refers to refraining from sex. But this definition of abstinence is far from cut and dry. To some, abstinence means not having any type of sexual activity or contact. To others, it means not having oral, anal, and/or vaginal sex. To some, it means not having orgasms. Sometimes people decide to be abstinent until a certain time, such as when they graduate from high school or college, or when they marry. Others choose to be abstinent from sex as a way of "fasting" - a temporary choice, perhaps between partners. People choose to be abstinent for many reasons, including religious or cultural views, personal or family values, not being ready to have sex, or wanting to wait with a particular partner.

Abstinence is a complicated, often political concept. A signifier of freedom for people is to have choices, and abstinence (before you have intercourse, after previous sexual experience, or just for a while) is an important option to have.
Many organizations have web sites that provide information about abstinence, including Go Ask Alice! [2](see the Related Q&A links). Some web sites provide comprehensive info about sexuality, including abstinence as an option. Others, many of which are religiously affiliated, provide information from an abstinence-until-marriage perspective. Often, abstinence-until-marriage organizations claim to provide factual and medically accurate information, however some of their information and/or links use scare tactics and reflect biases, especially when referring to sexual behavior. Some of these sites provide incorrect or misleading statistics about contraceptive effectiveness, or claim that condoms are worthless. Others argue that negative consequences of premarital sex are inevitable — including sexually transmitted infections (STIs), pregnancy, and emotional harm. The "until marriage" emphasis discriminates against people who choose not to marry, or who are in same-sex relationships, for which marriage is generally not legal. Stereotypes about gender are also prevalent within the material from these organizations.

All of this initial information is designed to help readers, like yourself, interpret and analyze the information you find. Some of the following links will lead you directly to informative discussions about sexuality, including abstinence:

I wanna know, sponsored by the American Sexual Health Association

Sex, Etc.: A Web site for Teens by Teens [3], sponsored by Answer (Rutgers University)

Planned Parenthood Federation of America has a wealth of information regarding sexuality and teens.

Scarleteen

For more sites, entering "abstinence" in a search engine will provide you with additional links. In keeping with the theme of choice, The Abstinence Clearinghouse [4] provides links to many abstinence-until-marriage organizations.

Each of these sites can provide you with more information, and perhaps more insight related to the issues surrounding abstinence, and may help you, or someone you know, make some important choices.

Alice!
Category:
Sexual & Reproductive Health [5]
Sexual Questions [6]
About Abstinence [7]

Related questions

Abstinence is not the safest sex, or is it? [8]
Abstinent and horny [9]
College student sex stats: Am I the only one not doing it? [10]

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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.

Source URL: http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/where-can-i-find-information-about-abstinence#comment-0

Links