

What they DON'T tell you at graduation

“Why are you always laughing?”

It was Jason the sports editor who had asked me the question. Every Tuesday evening all of the other editors and I were shut up inside the cluttered office full of papers and pizza boxes to put together the campus newspaper.

Why was I always laughing? I always enjoyed my time there when I took on the role of arts and entertainment editor during my junior year of college. It was my haven; the place where we spent hours carefully crafting each page... although we probably spent more time developing our wit and sarcasm.

When I graduated from high school, my classmates and I heard a dozen speeches telling us we could do anything we

wanted if we believed in ourselves. While there's a lot of truth in that statement, there's something those people are forgetting to tell you. Allow me to explain...

My freshman year in college was “the time of my life,” just like everyone said it would be. My roommate, Carrie, became my best friend. I went to movies, tried ice-skating, and went to Florida during spring break. I also went to Guadalajara, Mexico the following summer.

None of those things could have been possible if I had gotten pregnant or contracted an STD. And the only 100% way to prevent those things is to choose abstinence.

I took a summer class at the community college in my hometown right before my sophomore year. When I was getting ready to return to my college for the fall semester, Lynda, 23, said to me: “I'd give anything to be back in college in a dorm with a bunch of girls. But I had to drop out because I got pregnant.”

In contrast, my sophomore year brought hiking trips, bonfires, and concerts. I went with a group of students to Northern Ireland, where I witnessed sites so beautiful they took my breath away.

I am 21 years old and I am a virgin. I am waiting until I get married to have sex. And I have no regrets. Even if you aren't a virgin, you can stop having sex and putting yourself at risk for STDs and pregnancy. This message goes to guys too: There are plenty of beautiful, smart girls out there who will respect a guy who is a virgin. Ask yourself if you are ready to be responsible for a child. If not, you're not ready for sex. And girls, if you become pregnant, you have options, but why face making an agonizing decision if you don't have to?

Purity is a gift and an honor, not something to be ashamed of. Success is not only a result of believing in yourself, but of making good decisions. I am absolutely convinced that the best things come to those who wait.

Truth and Consequences

When it comes to sex, you've heard about AIDS and you know about the possibility of pregnancy, but did you also know that being sexually active puts you at risk of being exposed to more than 25 other types of sexually transmitted diseases? For instance...

Chlamydia

- Because the disease often goes undetected – 75% of women and 50% of men who are infected have no symptoms – it can lead to serious consequences, such as pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility and serious birth defects.
- Women with chlamydia are three to five times more likely to contract the HIV virus, if exposed.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

- People who've had more than four sexual partners are almost certain to be infected.
- Certain types of the virus have been tied to cervical cancer in women.

Genital Herpes (Herpes Simplex Type 2 or HSV-2)

- The herpes virus often results in painful red ulcers on the genitals. However, most people with herpes have no symptoms, making it all the more likely that they will pass the disease along.
- Symptoms can be treated, but the infection cannot be cured.
- Those with herpes are at a higher risk of contracting HIV, if exposed.

Source: Centers for Disease Control

Think using birth control will prevent pregnancy? Consider the odds...

CONTRACEPTIVE METHOD	FAILURE RATE
Sponge	26-40%
Spermicide	26%
Diaphragm	20%
Condom	14%
Birth Control Pills	1-13%
Abstinence	0%

