

SEXUAL EMPOWERMENT 101

Committing to a sexually empowered lifestyle means deciding you matter, your desires matter, your boundaries matter and your sexual health matters. Man or woman, sexually active or not, sexual empowerment is an essential component of creating a community with zero tolerance for sexual violence.

Make your sexual health a priority this includes regular check-ups, communication and practicing safe sex. Taking responsibility for your sexual health and well being means regular sexual health exams for you and for your partner(s) and being honest about your results. Your sexual health appointments should be at least an annual soiree.

Communicate with your partner. If you are not able to discuss sex with someone then you should not have sex with that person. It is important to talk about your sexual health, method of protection and birth control before sexual intimacy not after. For the right partner, this is a turn on.

Practice safe sex. For optimal protection use birth control (pill, patch, ring, etc) to prevent pregnancy and a condom to prevent sexually transmitted infections. Asking your partner to practice safe sex does not mean you do not trust them it means that your sexual health and theirs is a priority and if they can't respect that then they don't respect you.

Define your personal standards and commit to them, it's that simple. A.M. or P.M. your personal standards should be first when it comes to sexual relations. You owe it to yourself and the lucky individuals you choose to share your body with.

Be comfortable and confident in who you are and the choices you make and this starts with taking an honest look inside yourself and determining who you are, what you stand for and what your personal boundaries are. There are no right answers; you simply must be willing to be true to yourself, commit to your personal standards and stand behind them in all situations. Whether you choose to abstain from sex or

have multiple partners it is all about making the right choice for you.

Engage in sober encounters. Mixing alcohol or other drugs with sex can be a disastrous combination. These substances can alter your ability to make good decisions. Giving consent while under the influence is not necessarily legally recognized consent. If you want to get intimate its best to do it when you are sober.

Use sexually empowered speak. The words we use to talk about sex frame the way we feel about sex. If you talk about sex using violent or shameful language with expressions like screwing and banging or beer goggles and the walk of shame then you are not contributing to a sexually empowered world. Replace potentially damaging lingo with positive language and help create a more safe and confident culture.

Respect for yourself and others. You must also be willing to support and respect all people, even when their values and choices do not mirror your own. This means having a zero tolerance for sexual violence and respecting survivors when they come forward. This is the ultimate act of sexual empowerment.

If you are a survivor of sexual assault seeking assistance, please contact your Campus or Community Rape Crisis Center, Campus Advocate or Counseling Center or contact one of these national resources:

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)
1-877-739-3895