

There's more to sex awareness than the birds and the bees



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"Women need to be able to talk about what's important. People, relationships and bodies get hurt if we don't. It's not healthy keeping quiet and it's not helping anyone. Friends are a place to start. Partners are the next step. By no means is this a female-only issue either: men have their share of sex-related touchy subjects."

This week is Sexual Awareness Week, so let's talk about sex. After all, everyone loves to talk about it. Right now, all around Edmonton, people are relating with a knowing smile what exactly they did last night. Who, what, where, why, when—and how.

No longer off limits, sex saturates the mainstream. Female sexuality, and the idea that women are empowered by being sexual, is everywhere. We've got it covered. We're open, we're informed, we're aware—or are we?

In the 1960s, there was a radical movement to encourage women to share their experiences with other women. In these organized "Consciousness Raising" groups, women began doing the unthinkable: they talked. Not small talk. Not chit-chat. Not gossip. Up-front and political discussion of issues that affected their lives: gender roles, relationships, careers, parenting, vaginas. Women started talking, and didn't stop.

Since that time we've replaced Tupperware parties with fantasia nights. Meg Ryan faked an orgasm during dinner. Samantha Jones taught the world how to fuck—or buy a vibrator. It almost makes you think there's nothing left to blush about.

When was the last time you talked about a non-sexy topic? Even if we

have no problem bringing up sex toys in the library, chances are many women still don't feel comfortable speaking about the dark crevices of unmentionables that remain.

Domestic violence, sexual dysfunctions, female masturbation, sexual assault, abusive relationships, depression, sexual health, eating disorders, abortion, homosexuality: how many people talk about how these issues relate to them personally? In a non-hypothetical sense, I mean.

We may profess to be non-judgmental, but no one wants to be "that girl"—the one who got knocked up mid-semester, who didn't know she could get herpes from oral sex, who questioned her sexuality, who throws up after meals, who has to take pills. And while we may have overcome the idea that good girls don't do bad things, we've still got sexual hang ups.

Empowered sexual women aren't supposed to have questions; they're not supposed to put up with abusive relationships, unwanted sex or sexual harassment. They're supposed to know better than to sleep with chauvinist pigs. They're supposed to have safe sex. They're supposed to be okay with their bodies. They're supposed to stop judging themselves after casual sex. And they're supposed to orgasm.

But sometimes, they don't. Just because female sexuality stopped being taboo doesn't mean that everything is out in the open. Maybe it's just made the blind spots harder to pick out. Sometimes we're still a guilt-ridden, anxious, insecure and uninformed bunch. And maybe we wouldn't be if we felt more comfortable admitting that. After all, sex ed didn't end in high school.

Women need to be able to talk about what's important. People, relationships and bodies get hurt if we don't. It's not healthy keeping quiet and it's not helping anyone. Friends are a place to start. Partners are the next step. By no means is this a female-only issue either: men have their share of sex-related touchy subjects. But talking to each other can only happen after we admit things to ourselves. We've come a long way baby—but there's no sense in stopping now.

So let's start talking and listening. Let's stop holding sex against ourselves and each other. Let's keep enjoying the good stuff and stop hiding the bad stuff. Sexual awareness can't be airbrushed; the discussion we all need won't be found in the pages of Cosmo. It might even happen over brunch—as long as no one loses their appetite.

THE BURLAP SACK

Yesterday's National Day of Action to lower tuition hosted by the Students' Union didn't spark too much interest in me. I acknowledge that tuition is high and it forces a lot of students into debt, but my personal lack of being in the red made it a wholly inconsequential event.

However, the promise of free food drove a few of my Gateway cohorts and I out of the office and into a lineup that stretched out of SUB's north doors towards the Alumni Room. We would soon learn that the food was indeed free—but at what cost?

We were first met with a brutally slow line. In all honesty, I would have finished this Burlap Sack earlier, but the

SU made me wait 20 minutes for food. What is this? The Great Depression? Why can't we teach the SU some Keynesian economics?

The second disappointment was encountered when we finally made it to the front of the line—outside in the cold. But as chilled as we were, the allure of free barbecued goods kept our spirits relatively high. That is, until the rumours of no-money down hamburgers were dashed, as SU VP (External) David Cournoyer announced to the line, "the hot dogs are almost ready!"

Hot dogs? What the hell!? I just waited in a long line for a fucking hot dog? The SU is now officially a bunch of commies.

If higher tuition means I don't have to wait in the cold for a hot dog and can maybe score myself a free hamburger in the warmth of a building, then here's an extra loonie per semester.

Hell, if an extra ten bucks means I can jump to the front of the line and enjoy a nice free-market hot dog instead of a Karl Marx Brand Generic Tube-Meat, it will be worth it.

The SU is too busy fighting a losing battle against rising tuition. They need to focus more on the important things of university life, like throwing a good free barbecue that doesn't feel like sitting through a political philosophy lecture.

So into the sack with the SU and their pinko dogs. It's time for my boot and I to have our own day of action.

RYAN HEISE

The Burlap Sack is a semi-regular feature where a person or group who needs to be put in a sack and beaten is ridiculed in print. No sack beatings are actually administered.

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