



THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN TO ME

Don't worry... We only had sexual intercourse once

She quickly walks down the aisle of the local drug store, the aisle that most girls feel embarrassed or uncomfortable in. As she looks at the various boxes, she fumbles as she grabs a pregnancy test and casually walks to the check out counter. She can't look the cashier in the eye because she knows exactly what he is thinking, "How could you be so irresponsible and immature to have made this decision so young?" She pays him, grabs the bag, and walks out of the drug store.

As she sits at home nervously waiting for her results, she wonders, "Why me...? We did everything to prevent this. There is so much I wanted to do with my life, I am supposed to go to college... How did this happen to me? Only a few seconds left until she will discover her fate...5...4...3...2...1..."

It is a nightmare that many sexually active young girls are forced to go through. Am I preg-

nant or not? Who would have ever guessed that having sexual intercourse once or twice could truly change someone's life forever.

The fact is that sex can do just that. To some, it is just a game teens play. The results, whatever they may be, have the potential of dramatically affecting their family, their goals, and most importantly, their lives.

"Getting caught up in the moment isn't worth the mess that it causes," said one high school student.

So why has sex evolved into such an important and crucial priority among teenagers? Whether the act of sex results from pressure, the need to feel grown up and mature, or the need to feel loved, it seems as though everyone is "doing it." And for most, while they are finding themselves caught up in the act, the risks of pregnancy or STD's escapes their mind.

According to familyfirstaid.org, 34% of young girls become pregnant at least once before they reach the age of 20. Also stated is that only one-third of teenage mothers receive their high school diploma, and only 1.5% receive a college degree by the age of 30. Furthermore, 80% of unmarried teen mothers end up on welfare.

Would one night with someone really be worth changing the plans, goals, hopes and dreams for

the rest of one's life?

The bottom line is that most teenagers are not mentally mature enough to deal with all the consequences of sex. Along with the risk of being emotionally hurt comes all of the physical hazards. While most sexually active teens live with the attitude "That would never happen to me," the reality is that these consequences could happen to anyone who has sexual intercourse, leaving them with crucial decisions they will be forced to cope with forever.

A life-changing experience

"I pretty much thought that my life was going to be over when I first found out I was pregnant. We didn't really know how to handle it at first and didn't know what we were going to do.

At the time we were both irresponsible, and it wasn't until the sixth month of my pregnancy that we decided on what we were going to do.

It was really helpful having my boyfriend by my side during the first few months because he was the only person I felt that I could talk to at the time."

A Teens Story...

The consequences of driving drunk

"The average teenager, hopes attend to college, and dreams of a successful career, all that can be put in jeopardy by one irresponsible night on the road, under the influence of alcohol.

"I was just going to go home and go to bed. I didn't expect anything to come of it. I wasn't looking for a ride in a cop car. Sure I was drinking but it was only a few."

It was late October. Clear quiet and peaceful. Few cars were on the road early Sunday morning. "I was driving down the street, on

my way home from a party maybe 20 minutes from my house. I was almost home, then I saw lights in my rear view mirror. I didn't think they were for me, I was so close to my house, what was I doing wrong?"

Pulling off the road, the squad car pulled up behind. Starting to get a little nervous, he had been drinking, nonetheless, playing it cool.

"The officer asked for my license and registration. I gave it to him, he said that I was speeding. He asked if I had been drinking, -be-

ing underage and scared of getting caught- I said no.

I was nervous and didn't know what else to say. If I said yes it'd be all over right then and there. After all I wasn't 21 yet.

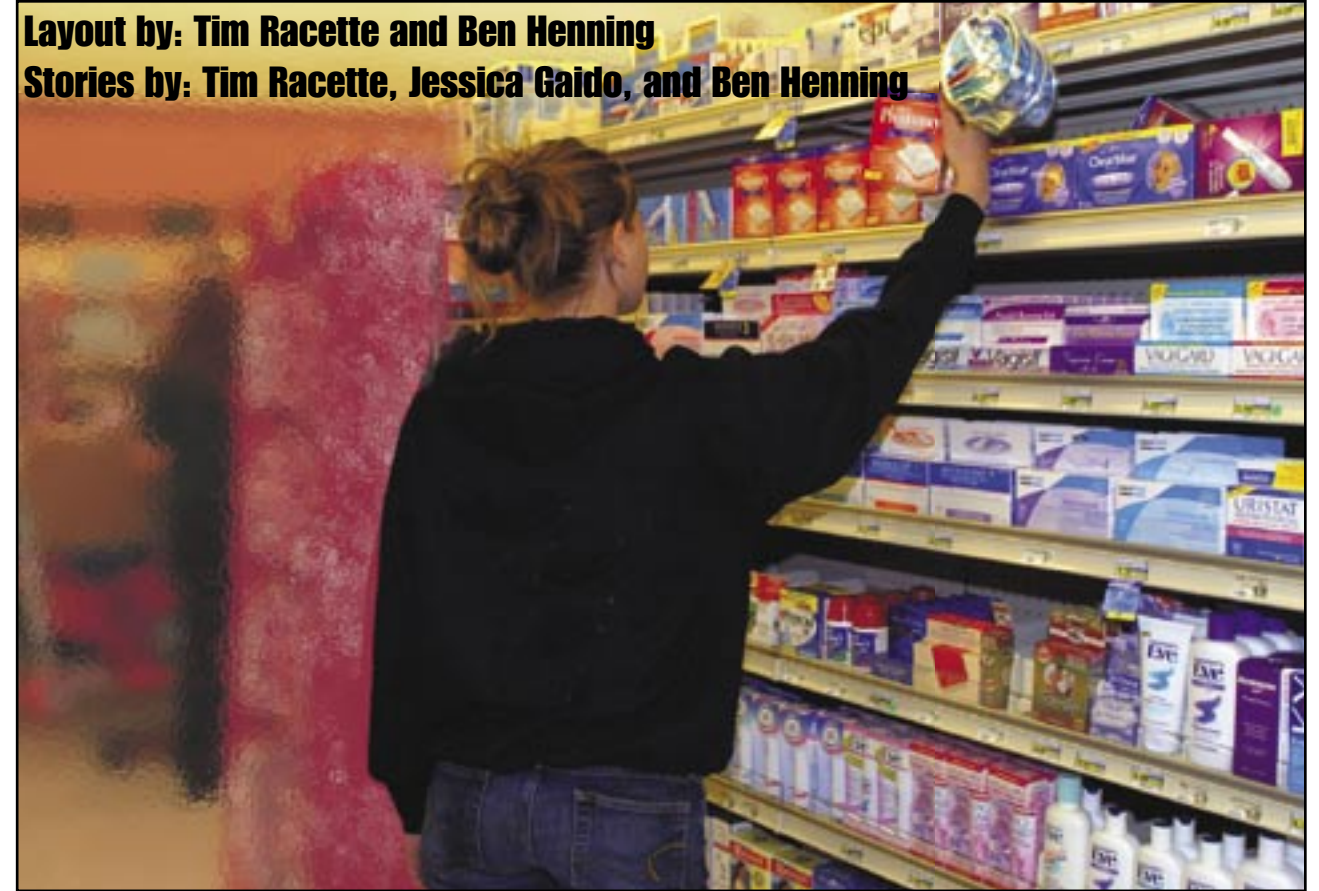
The officer followed by saying, so if I gave you a Breathalyzer test you'd pass. "Yes" I said, knowing if he gave it to me I'd be in a world of trouble. Still nervous, still not sure of what was going to happen. Would I get off with a warning for speeding? I was hoping.

The officer went back to his car and came back short after. In his hand was a Breathalyzer. I really

didn't think he'd actually come back with it. Boy was I wrong, I blew and sure enough, alcohol was in my system, of course, I knew it the whole time. He asked me to step out of the vehicle and he arrested me. It was all over. At this point I was terrified. What would my parents think? Will my license be taken away?"

In being sure nothing would happen that night, not to him he was forced to suffer the consequences. Next time he may think twice about putting it all on the line for one good night."

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Photos by Tim Racette

The post prom party: teens and the potential dangers

High school students and parents often overlook the abuse of alcohol and drugs. Students believe that they will not go over the limit and will make sure they're safe about it.

In spite of a student's mindset to keep themselves out of accidents, few precautions are actually taken to prevent it. Students just figure that it will happen to someone else and "I won't be affected by it."

According to the Centers for Disease control, 30% of high school students admit to getting into a car with a drunk driver. People lose family and friends because of drunk drivers.

"I don't think kids realize that when they get in the car drunk that they have an effect on the safety of others on the road."

The lack of precaution from teenagers comes back to the fact that today's society has the mindset that nothing will ever happen to them. The truth is that one person every minute of every day is killed in a drunk driving accident.

Alcohol isn't the only thing that teens take for granted. Drugs such as marijuana can leave students with hallucinations and the ability to jeopardize others' lives on the road.

A teenager on drugs is more likely to make bad decisions such as getting into fights or unprotected sex. On some occasions the user may not even realize what they are doing.

"People don't draw the connection with the horrors they see on TV to the reality of what could happen to themselves."

As inattentive parents uninvolved in their children's lives, kids are more likely to do as their friends no, whether it be right or wrong. As a parent it is not only their responsibility to keep track of what their kids are doing before and after school, but knowing who they are hanging around with as well.

People react to drugs in different ways, what is tolerable for one person can be fatal to the next. While some may never feel the impact of weed or getting high, it may have a fatal effect on the next person.

many teens feel the urge to kick back and let their inhibitions down for a night of relaxation and enjoyment.

As prom approaches teens might be pushed into decisions they might not normally make. Unsupervised parties can frequently become an opportunity to experiment with drugs and alcohol and many times peers may push an unsuspecting teenager to get involved in such activities. Whether it be to impress their date or show off to their friends, there is no right answer for these underage and illegal behavior.

As teenagers prepare for these events, the parties afterward should be lingering in the backs of parents' minds if their aren't already.

While many parents and students feel that bad things could never happen to them, the truth is that they can. However, with preventative measures and parental involvement in students' lives chance of it a happening to you or someone you know can be safely avoided.

Unfortunately... In the wrong place at the wrong time

"The time was 9:45. The air was dry and the moon glistered in the night sky. It was a quiet night until... screech, pop, crack, sirens screamed out in the distance..."

"I was in the Gurnee Mills parking lot driving a 1992 Oldsmobile, 88 Classic, the thing was a boat. I was going to pull out onto the outer circle, but before I could, a Mercury Mountaineer was also leaving the mall. Pulling away from dinner at Ruby Tuesdays, a family of four, husband, wife and two kids in the back seat came across the parking lanes hit me at 55 m.p.h.

He came straight up the lanes and was struck broadside in my passenger door. One of the kids hit his head and was bleeding and screaming. It was like he didn't even see me. Their air bags went off, but mine didn't. The paramedics kept trying to tell me that I had hit my head on the windshield because my windshield was cracked, but they didn't know that for sure.

My first reaction was if everyone was alright. I was concerned for everyone in the accident, but myself.

The man said he had a couple beers at dinner when asked to blow into a Breathalyzer he was at about .07 close to the limit.

The family paid for my hospital bill and the car. I don't think I could ever drive a big car anymore after the accident. I definitely know I could have avoided it if I was in a smaller car so now I keep very close attention to everything going on, especially in parking lots."

While many students are safe drivers on the road, the fact that others may not be is a thought that many soon forget. It doesn't have to be your fault. You may be in the right and by the actions of others have it turn out all wrong."

