

Growing Up

A NEWSLETTER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



TEEN PARENTING

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Growing Up

Growing Up is published quarterly in Lagos by Action Health Incorporated (AHI). AHI is a non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to the promotion of adolescent health and development. We serve as an advocate and a catalyst for change in the present poor status of adolescents' well-being by increasing public awareness and implementing innovative education, health and youth development programmes.

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TEEN

"In Nigeria, teenage girls account for over 1 million births annually (United Nations Foundation: Teen Pregnancy linked to High Maternal Mortality 2000)" ...

Halima

Halima, who is 14 years old, had just resumed for third term JSS 3. She was looking forward to sitting for the Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination (JSSCE). Lessons soon started and the focus of all the teachers was the upcoming JSSCE. Hardly had the term gotten into the second week when one afternoon, at about 12.20pm, just before the usual short break, Halima's father and two uncles walked into Halima's classroom in the middle of an English class, claiming they had the permission of the school's principal to excuse Halima from the class for a while. Politely, Mallam Usman, the English teacher, allowed Halima out to attend to her father and uncles. That was the last time Halima attended a class in school. Halima's father and uncles had come to take Halima to be married off to one Alhaji Garba, who was 56 years old. Alhaji Garba had earlier paid a beautiful sum as dowry to Halima's father with the intention of marrying Halima as a fourth wife. All these pre-arrangements were done without Halima's knowledge

In spite of Halima's resistance, she was bundled to Alhaji Garba's house to resume as a fourth wife. That night, Alhaji Garba consummated the marriage with Halima, and about two months later, Halima discovered she was pregnant. The age gap between Halima and her husband did not make it easy for her to open a discussion on the pregnancy with him. The presence of the senior wives even complicated issues the more, as any attempt by Halima to open up a discussion with her husband on any issue was viewed as discourteous. Alhaji Garba was not aware of Halima's pregnancy until she started taking ill constantly. Even at that, Alhaji Garba saw no need for medical attention as he said, it's normal for women to take ill when they are pregnant. Thus, Halima did not attend any antenatal session while she was pregnant. Then came the D-day when Halima was to be delivered of her baby. Indeed, it was a terrible experience as Halima's pelvis was not well developed, and thus, she experienced obstructed labour, during which an abnormal opening was created between her bladder and the walls of her vagina, a condition referred to as vesico-vaginal fistula; VVF. It is now two years after, and still, Halima has not recovered from that bitter experience. She urinates involuntarily as she can no longer control the discharge of urine and sometimes faeces. This has made Halima isolated from people as she constantly stinks. She has become repelling even to her husband, Alhaji Garba. She can not participate in social events. It is an understatement to say that Halima is living an unhappy life.

Chinenye

When Chinenye was in SS1 at the age of thirteen, a new student came into their school. His name was Emeka and he was cute, tall, dark and had a certain swagger in his walk. He was intelligent and good in sports. It wasn't long before all the girls in Chinenye's class including Chinenye began falling over themselves because of him. One afternoon after school, Chinenye's mother didn't come for her as usual, so she had to walk to the bus stop to join the bus home. On her way, she met Emeka who started a conversation with her. He eventually walked her home and they both had fun getting familiar with each other. Two weeks later, Emeka asked Chinenye to be his

PARENTING

By Mervis Emelife



girlfriend and an enthusiastic Chinenye gave him a big YES! After a while, Emeka began putting pressure on Chinenye to have sex with him. Chinenye felt having sex would consolidate their relationship and would make her have Emeka for keeps. Well, just about five months into the relationship, Chinenye discovered she was pregnant and became desolate when Emeka told her he wasn't going to accept responsibility for the unborn baby. Before Chinenye could decide what to do, her mother had realized she was pregnant. . Chinenye's parents disowned her, and due to stigma and lack of finance, Chinenye had to withdraw from school. Chinenye eventually had a set of twin boys and she had to begin fending for the babies herself, but this has not been easy at all. Chinenye is now an apprentice tailor, and she and her babies live from hand to mouth on a daily basis. Besides, she has no money and experience with which to care well for the children, a reason for the constant illness of the twin boys.

Tunde

Tunde, a 17-year old boy, thought life was easy and that he could get away with anything. He was the first son to a subsistence farmer and he had five siblings. Tunde was however a handsome boy, and so, girls loved to flock around him and he enjoyed all the attention. His parents merely struggled to see him through secondary school. Immediately after his secondary school education, he met Tinu on his way to his father's farm. Her beauty captivated him and he fell deeper for her when he heard her talk. Tinu felt someone looking at her and turned round to see a very cute and charming guy staring at her. That marked the beginning of a blissful relationship until Tunde's father summoned him one evening. As he walked to the balcony where his father sat, his heart was in his mouth because judging by his father's tone of voice, he was in big trouble. On getting to the sitting room, he was face to face with Tinu, her parents and his own parents who all looked very angry except Tinu who was in tears. After all necessary deliberations, Tunde's father gave his judgment. Since Tunde had decided that he was old enough to have sex, then he was old enough to bear the consequences of his actions. Tinu was already 3 months pregnant.

Tunde would have to forget the possibility of his parents supporting him through further education, and would have to fend for himself, Tinu, and the baby. Six months later, Tinu was delivered of a baby girl. Tunde had to suffer for about six months before he got a menial job where he was paid N300 daily. This of course was not enough to feed him, Tinu, and the baby. Besides, Tunde became frustrated from being constantly teased by his friends as 'daddy'. Soon, Tunde began to take hard drugs so as to get temporary relief from his seeming woes. Today, Tunde is a drug addict; Tinu has been left alone to care for the baby. Really, Tunde needs help and rehabilitation. What a cost!

Worldwide, there are over a billion teenagers; half of these are girls. Annually, 13 million children are born to teenage girls worldwide with more than 90% of these births in developing countries, the highest rate being in sub-Saharan Africa. In Nigeria, teenage girls account for over 1 million births annually (*United Nations Foundation: Teen Pregnancy linked to High Maternal Mortality: 2000*). In Northern Nigeria alone, 73% of girls between ages 13 and 19 are married, and most of the time, are put in the family way as soon as the marital union begins, thus making them teen parents.

Factors that give rise to teen parenting

Data supporting teen parenting as a social issue gives various factors as being responsible for the current trend. Some of the factors are;

(a) Adolescent sexual behaviour: According to the Guttmacher Institute, sex by the age of 20 is a normal trend in most parts of the world. A study carried out recently showed that 29% of teenagers have serious pressure to have sex, 33% of sexually active teens reported being in a relationship where they felt things were moving too fast sexually, 24% also confessed to have done something sexual that they didn't want to do. So far, peer pressure is a major factor that encourages young boys and girls to have sex but alcohol and drugs use can also encourage unintended sexual activity.

(b) Sexual Abuse: About 20% of teen parents got their babies as a direct result of rape as about 60% of teen mothers had unwanted sexual experience preceding their pregnancy. 60% of girls who had sex before age 15 were coerced by males who were about six years older than them. In many countries, sex between an adult and a minor is not considered as consensual but seen as statutory rape as a minor is considered to lack the maturity and competence to make an informed choice and decision about engaging in consensual sex with an adult. 20% of teen fathers also admitted to have forced girls to have sex with them and 70% of teen mothers said they were molested as children.

(c) Poverty: Poverty has often being linked with teen parenting as relatively poor countries such as Niger and Bangladesh have far more teen mothers than countries like Japan and Switzerland that are richer. In some countries in the UK, it is said that teenage mothers get pregnant and have babies to get benefits, welfare and housing. In Nigeria, most teenage mothers admit being lured into sex by the enticing effect of money and sundry goodies.



Others say, they had to have sex in order to get money to help themselves or their families. It is also common knowledge that young girls who are involved in petty trade are prone to getting pregnant and having babies.

(d) Childhood environment: It has been proven that females who were exposed to abuse, domestic violence and family problems in their childhood are more likely to become teen mothers as a study showed that 1/3 of teenage pregnancies would be prevented if abuse, family strife and violence could be eliminated. Most girls whose fathers left the family early in life tend to have an early exposure to sexual activities and adolescent pregnancy. This is because they are always in search of father figures and easily fall prey to males who are always on hand to take advantage of their innocence and naivety. It is also said that a girl is likely to give birth in her teens if her mother or older sister were/are teenage mothers.

(e) Cultural factors: Till date, most cultures in Nigeria especially in Northern Nigeria where adolescent marriages abound. Following tradition, large numbers of teenagers are married off by their parents with or without their consent. Such early marriage of girls undermines a number of rights guaranteed by the Convention on rights of the Child to which Nigeria is a signatory.

Challenges for teenage mothers

Coping with changes that come with puberty is difficult, handling the dramatic changes of adolescence is tasking. Most times, being a teenager and being a mother can conflict with each other and so the teen mother ends up failing at one or both of them.

Teen mothers are often too immature to properly nurture their children. Adolescents are usually self-absorbing and it becomes a problem when a teenage mother cannot distinguish between her needs and that of her baby. In actual fact, teen mothers are still emotionally dependent on their mothers and can't effectively cope with having another individual dependent on them.

Asides that, there is always a feeling of isolation as a teen mother would look around for someone in her shoes and when she doesn't find any, she feels like she is the one in that situation; this could lead to depression.

The fact that the baby wasn't planned for doesn't help matters as the teen mother wouldn't have enough time to learn the basics of how to take care of a baby.

Most teenage mothers drop out of school in order to take care of their babies, thus they lag behind academically and may not go back to school. They are also faced with financial problems as they are usually not financially buoyant enough to take care of diapers, baby food, medications etc. Even when they get financial help, there is a problem of how to prioritize financial needs.

Challenges for teenage fathers

Most people think teenage fathers do not face any challenge especially as they do not have to look after the baby or drop out of school. Well, I thought same until I heard Sammy's story. *'I never thought I was going to have a kid at 18. It kind of changed my life; I stopped spending time with my friends and constantly woke to the sound of a baby crying. It felt absurd to be a dad at that age and I was endlessly teased by my friends. I wasn't prepared for what I got and I ended up frustrated at the end of the day. Imagine my daughter crying and I have an assignment to do and her mother is not around. I try all I can to make her stop and only end up getting my shirt dirty while she cries harder'*. Most teenage fathers are older than the mothers but are also not financially ready for a baby. They expect criticism and blame for fathering a baby at a young age and often do not accept responsibility for the ones they sired. They are however faced with a longing to be part of the life of their child and try all they can to make up for their mistakes.

Intervention for teen parents and their young children

To reduce the high mortality rate and to also help teenagers, a number of interventions are to be provided to assist teen families. These interventions include:

(a) Programmes that provide pregnancy prevention information, counseling, life skills training, educational and vocational preparation should be put in place. This would help to prevent a reoccurrence as it is now common to see teen mothers having more babies in quick succession.

(b) Also, teen parents through the vocational and educational preparation could be given a new lease of life and could earn money to support their families.

(c) Furthermore, prenatal care and parenting education should be provided in order to prevent premature births, still births and to also help teen mothers with guidelines on how to raise babies.

(d) Finally, there should be provision of child care to reduce the number of repeated pregnancies and to help teen mothers complete their education.

Conclusion

Everyone has a part to play in helping teen parents get back on their feet. Parents should offer financial support while friends should offer moral and emotional support. Instead of mocking a teen parent, offer advice and help out if you can. You can help change diapers, feed the baby or do something to assure the teenager that you understand what he/she is going through.

Remember that no one is above making mistakes, so do not stigmatize a teen parent or a child raised by teen parents.

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POEMS

NOW THAT I HAVE MY BABY

I have my baby, but as a child
I am not alone, but lonely
My friends desert and stigmatize me
Sometimes I do menial work
To feed my honey
I hold my head high despite the sneer
Sometimes I feel like crying
But my baby gives me joy.

Gentle songs I sing
Love and affection are her needs
Food and attention I give to her
Like a mom that I am
Who is not missing in action.
My only regret is dropping out of school
By God's grace, I will return
And make something out of my life.

Chika Alumona (19 years old)

HUSH! SLAVERY AGAIN!

Let loose from the cruel shell of life
They move from North to South
And East to West
Looking for whom to devour
What a life of sorrow

From around the world
Where is the beauty
Here lies the land of fate and death
Alas! The buyers are here
Taking people away for slavery

Human trafficking! Human trafficking!
The people are sold from end to end
For the world is filled with hatred.
The love of money, the root of evil
Dignity of humans, thrown to the dust.

By Idowu Taiwo
Angus Memorial Senior High School, Lagos
SSS2A

A WASTEFUL LIFE

Children say life is hard
Parents say times are tough
I don't like hard life or tough time
But, its harsh reality of life

That makes some prefer
To sell others, selling young girls to get cash
Trafficking people from one place to another
People are dying as a result of this snare

But, there is hope
For we can conquer tough times
With hard work and patience
Oh! Human trafficking what is your gain?
The wrath of God is against the traffickers
Stop it now!!

By Okusanya Kehinde Yetunde JSS2
Morocco Comprehensive Junior High School,
Igbobi, Yaba, Lagos.

NO TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Oh, watch and not slumber
Traffickers are on the prowl
Looking at them, tears fill my heart
Why, human trafficking?

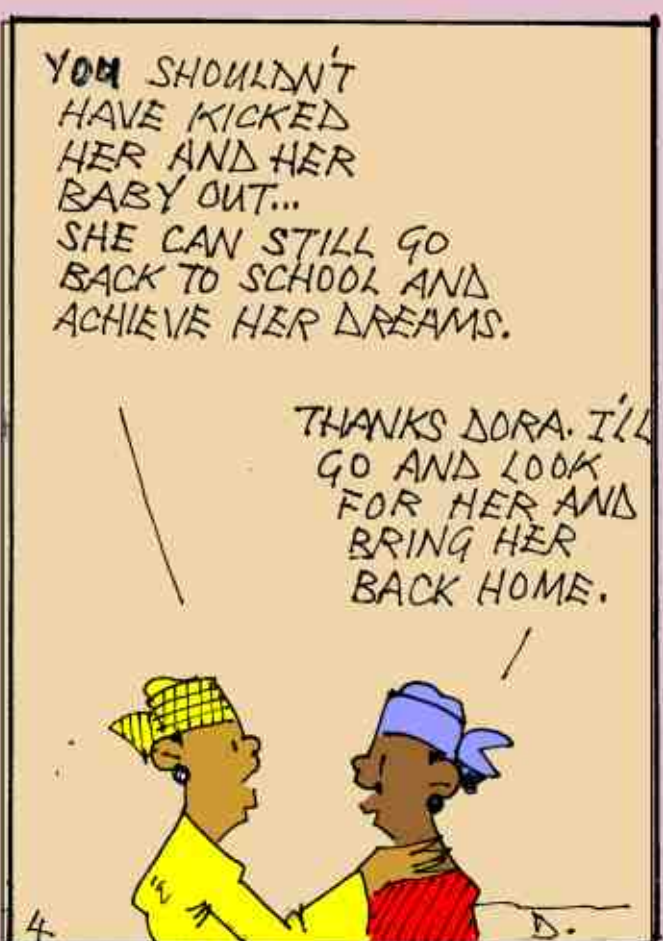
But there is hope
Stand firm and say "No" to this evil
That destroys our generation
"No" to human trafficking

Our destiny lies in our hands
Resist this evil, let it flee
The time to fight is NOW!
Human trafficking is bad.

Do something, our parents
Leaders, arrest this situation
Give us education not slavery
For becoming great is our goal.

By Njoku Christiana.
Morocco Comprehensive Junior High School,
Igbobi, Lagos.

Cartoon





INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING

The International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking was marked at Action Health Incorporated (AHI) on June 26, 2009 at the AHI Youth Centre. The event which attracted 150 young people aimed at bringing out the health and legal implications of getting involved with illicit drugs with a view to discouraging them from the harmful effects of these substances.

In an interactive session, facilitated by the AHI resident doctor, Dr. Abdul Salaam titled, "SAY NO TO DRUG ABUSE", the commonly abused drugs such as Opium, heroin, cocaine, alcohol, valium, marijuana and codeine. Various signs exhibited by those who abuse drugs were also highlighted during the programme to include possession of drugs, dilated pupils, unhealthy appearances, loss of confidence, short temper, poor judgment and reduced motivation.

The facilitator also brought to fore, the reasons why young people abuse drugs and the consequences of these on young people include; having problems in schools, increased risk of serious injuries, being prone to violence, long term health problems such as brain damage, hypertension, liver damage, and cancer. Others include loss of control, HIV/AIDS infection, premature death, depression, misconduct, crime, imprisonment and expulsion from school.

Various questions were asked by the participants which were duly answered by Dr. Abdul Salaam. The event also featured song renditions, drama presentations, riddles and jokes.



PUPILS OF OCHAD SCHOOLS VISIT AHI

The students and staff of Ochad schools, Gbagada on September 3, 2009, paid a learning visit to Action Health Incorporated (AHI).

On arrival they were taken round the various units of the organization. This was followed by a brief discussion on their dreams, goal setting, decision making as well as negotiation and assertive skills.

The visit afforded them the opportunity to ask questions on some of the challenges young people face. Such questions like, ***'If a student in her final year in the university is asked for sex by her lecturer, should she give in or not considering the fact that she risks an extra year if she refuses? Does HIV lead to death? Is it wrong for a girl between the age of 13 – 16 to use make ups? Is it wrong to be in a relationship with the opposite sex without being sexually involved?'*** These were duly answered by AHI Programme staff.

A total of 17 students comprising 5 boys and 12 girls along with 5 teachers were in attendance and they expressed their gratitude for the opportunity given them to learn.



WORLD POPULATION DAY

Action Health Incorporated (AHI) joined the rest of the world to commemorate the World Population Day on July 12, 2009.

The programme which was attended by 209 young people representing various schools such as Mainland Senior High School, Fadeyi, Eletu Odibo Senior High School, Abule – Oja, Ajayi Crowther Senior High School, Bariga, National College, Bariga, Eva Adelaja Girls Senior High School, Bariga, Jibowu Junior High School, Angus Memorial High School, Angus Memorial High School and Saint Luke's Senior High School all in Lagos centred on gender equality, human rights as they affect young people as well as poverty alleviation.

The major activity of the day was a panel discussion based on the theme **“Fight Poverty, Educate Girls”**. It was aimed at enlightening young people on the need to educate girls. The panelists bared their minds on the gains of education as they affect the girl-child and how the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved.

Also, a motivational talk titled **“You are a Champion”** was given to galvanize young people to always believe in themselves no matter the challenges.

The resident doctor, Dr. Fausat Sanni called on girls and women to join the anti- poverty movements to sensitize communities on the benefits of girl-child education stressing that 70% of the world's absolute poor are women. Other activities at the event included song presentation and riddles and jokes.



JAMBOREE 2009

138 young people from various secondary schools in Lagos State on Friday, August 21, 2009 converged at the AHI Youth Centre to celebrate the annual Jamboree/ Teens' fiesta. Out of school youth were not left out either as the theme, **“Take the Lead - Youth Making a Difference”** was all-embracing.

The event provided participants with information on sexuality and reproductive health issues as well as to prepare young people for the new academic session.

Some of the challenges of growing up such as time management and peer pressure were discussed. The session was facilitated by, Mrs. Josephine Muyiwa- Afolabi of AHI . She informed participants on the need , importance and the benefits of good time management, setting goals and achieving them at specified period of time.

A motivational talk by Mr. Ekpenyong Bassey (Keppy), a popular Nigerian actor and motivational speaker rounded up the event. Tips on how young people can be successful in life; bring honour to their families and country were expatiated. He gave an example of Mary Slessor who helped to stop the killing of twins in Calabar, Nigeria through her ability to hold unto her belief and her fearlessness. He therefore, enjoined young people to cultivate the habit of reading and researching so as to be well informed. At the end, questions and answers followed which he duly answered.



INTERACTIVE SESSION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ON CAREER CHOICE AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Action Health Incorporated (AHI) on July 24, 2009 organized an interactive session for young people drawn from various secondary schools in Lagos to interact with Professor Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, a professor of English, University of Lagos.

The multiple award-winning author of several Nigerian literary titles as well as the author of "*Trafficked*", a book which raises several social issues in our environment discussed some challenges young people face including career choice; poverty and human trafficking.

She advised young people to always be focused and hard working in order to achieve success in life. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions on growing up issues such as what it takes to be a writer; what is human trafficking; why are girls more vulnerable to trafficking; effects of poverty on girl child education as well as what the government is doing to eradicate human trafficking. These were duly answered. She further admonished young people to report and expose traffickers to the media and the Police.

The event also featured a poetry competition won by **Idowu Taiwo of Angus Memorial Senior High School, Lagos**. The second prize went to **Njoku Christiana of Morocco Comprehensive Junior High School, Igbobi, Lagos** while the third prize went to **Okusanya Kehinde Yetunde of Morocco Comprehensive Junior High School, Igbobi, Lagos**. They were all given various prizes ranging from copies of Professor Akachi-Ezeigbo's publications to souvenirs.

More than 173 students representing the following schools; Mainland Senior High School, Fadeyi; Lagos City Senior College, Sabo Yaba; National College, Bariga; Baptist Senior High School, Obanikoro; Jibowu Junior High School; Angus Memorial High School 1; Angus Memorial High School – 2; Saint Luke's Senior High School and Morocco Comprehensive Junior High School, Yaba took part in the event.



The Ministerial Dissemination of the Assessment of the National Response to Young People's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Nigeria

Over the last ten years, there has been increased commitment by government and stakeholders at all levels in addressing the sexual and reproductive health challenges of young people. Unfortunately, a wide gap still exists between policy formulation and programme implementation in meeting the sexual and reproductive health needs of young people. It was in this light, that the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) in collaboration with Action Health Incorporated (AHI) decided to undertake an assessment of the national response to young people's sexual and reproductive health in Nigeria. The assessment which included a desk review and field visit to six states (one per geopolitical zone) and FCT was aimed at optimizing the health and development of young people in Nigeria.

The assessment report of national response to young people's sexual and reproductive health was launched by Prof. Babatunde Osotimehin, Minister of Health on Tuesday, 7th July 2009 at the Abuja Sheraton Hotel and Towers. Participants at this public presentation included key officials of the FMOH; representatives of various development partners including UNICEF, UNFPA, Packard Foundation, MacArthur Foundation; Adolescent Health and Development Focal Persons from states across the federation; religious bodies; representatives of CSOs/NGOs, media as well as young people.

Goodwill messages were delivered by representatives of UNICEF, UNFPA and the Executive Director of Action Health Incorporated (AHI), Mrs. Nike Esiet. In her address, she congratulated FMOH on the public release of the assessment report and expressed her hope that the findings as well as recommendations from the assessment would chart the way forward, adding that committed leadership, backed with funding, coordination and partnership at all levels of programming are required for advancing young people's sexual and reproductive health. In conclusion, Mrs. Esiet pledged AHI's commitment to join other youth-SRH stakeholders in ensuring optimal development of young people in the years ahead.



Keynote address by the Minister of Health, Prof. Babatunde Osotimehin

Synopsis of the assessment findings and recommendations are:

Findings:

- Several supporting policies and frameworks for programming on young people's SRH are available;
- The FMOH has not developed a nationally costed plan on young people's SRH;
- The FMOH has limited working collaboration with other Ministries, Departments and Agencies who are significant in the improvement of young people's SRH
- Many of the existing programmes are focused on young people in school and very few programmes target out-of-school, married adolescents girls, young people with disabilities and those in rural areas.
- No budgetary provision is made for programming on young people's SRH at all levels
- Some SRH donor organisations in Nigeria have supported young people's SRH programming over the years and many CSOs have been involved in programming activities;

Recommendations

- FMOH should take the lead in mobilizing a national multi-sectoral response to young people's SRH;
- Governments at all levels should lead the way through the provision of statutory budgetary allocation for AHD annually as the key index of government responsibility and commitment to young people's health and development in Nigeria;



The Executive Director, Action Health Incorporated (AHI), Mrs. Nike Esiet giving her goodwill message

- All federal health agencies and facilities must prioritize the provision of Youth Friendly Health Services;
- FMOH's Adolescent Health and Development Unit should be strengthened to discharge her functions;
- FMOH should coordinate the development of a national costed programme of action including a monitoring and evaluation plan;
- FMOH/National Planning Commission to coordinate all donors supporting young people's SRH



Hon. Minister arriving at the venue of the event

A short drama skit was presented by a drama troupe from Lagos City Senior College, Lagos. The drama provided thoughtful insight from young people to the proceedings at the event. The young people made a clarion call to parents, community leaders, religious leaders, opinion leaders, and government at all levels to respect the rights of children and youths by creating enabling environment for their growth and development.



Hon. Minister and dignitaries on the high table

Delivering his keynote address, The Minister of Health, Prof. Osotimehin said that, "It was not an acceptable norm to be married out at age 14, rape women and deny them healthcare" but that it all boiled down to responsibility and dignity.

The minister noted that budgetary allocation for young people' SRH should cut across ministries. While addressing findings from the report, the Minister called for the integration of Youth Friendly Services at federal and state levels including primary health care centers nation-wide. Furthermore, he emphasized the need to address young people's SRH as a means of combating HIV/AIDS pandemic. He said that a synergy between policy formulation and programme implementation was imperative for the country to significantly move towards achieving the MDGs. The minister reiterated that the Federal Ministry of Health is committed to her leadership role of achieving the MDGs 4 and 5, and called on states, LGAs as well as development partners to play their parts accordingly.



Cross section of dignitaries on the high table and participants



Participants at the event



Hon. Minister addressing the media



Young People and the Millennium Development Goals:

Creating Opportunities for Involvement

Special Guest of Honour:

Hajia Amina Mohammed Az-Zubair

Senior Special Assistant to the President
Millennium Development Goals

Categories - Music, Poetry & Drama

Rules

1. Each school can only submit one entry per category and each entry (script) must be typewritten. The school principal must certify all entries.
2. The music, poetry and drama entries must be original and reflect the theme of the event.
3. All music entries must be accompanied by the script and the CD/Tape on which music is recorded.
4. All entries must have the name of the scriptwriter on them.
5. All participating schools must attend a one-day training workshop on 1st and 2nd June, 2009 at the Multipurpose Hall, Action health Incorporated.
6. Participation in the workshop is a prerequisite for participating in the competition
7. Submission of Entries closes on Monday, 31st August, 2009.
8. Entries will be short-listed and short-listed schools will be notified.
9. A panel of judges will select winners in each category.

Eligibility: The competition is open to all secondary schools in Lagos State

The Millennium Development Goals

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

Grand Finale

Saturday
November 14, 2009

Venue

Main Auditorium,
University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos

Time

8:00am
Prompt

For further information, please contact: TFL Planning Committee, AMI Youth Center - 17, Lawal Street, Off Oweh Street, Ibeju, Lagos. Call: Nelly on 08028279185 or Derin on 08023270809 or 08025185295; Email: info@actionhealthinc.org

Dear Diary



MONDAY

I woke up with so much enthusiasm because I knew that the whole school would hear about our success at the poetry competition and that we would be called upon during the morning assembly to recite the poem. Just as I thought, the Principal called us out and told the school to applaud us for winning the competition. Getting to class; our class teacher announced that Aminat was no longer a student of our school. She said that her father had decided to give her out in marriage to someone she had been betrothed to from birth. That drove my mind to what Amarachi told me yesterday but I was still pondering that, when Mr Ashaolu came in to teach geometry.

TUESDAY

On Sunday, Amarachi told me that her cousin who got pregnant last year had given birth to a bouncing baby girl. I was happy for her; at least she survived the operation without any complications and for a sixteen year old girl; that is definitely something to thank God for. During break, Ozoma asked how Nkechi (Amarachi's cousin) was coping with motherhood considering that she herself was still a young person. Amarachi then replied that her mother was taking care of the baby for her so that she can continue with her education. She also added that Nkechi has changed; she is more withdrawn now and seems to have lost some of her self esteem. Ozoma thought she would get over it because it was just a post-natal thing but I was of the opinion that it was the emotional pain that comes with teen parenting. We began arguing until we remembered that we had an assignment on Digestive System to complete.

WEDNESDAY

Gosh, I woke late today and got to school when Mrs Okonji was already in class. Luckily she didn't punish me but asked me questions all through the period. Mercy and her best friend, Tina quarreled during break today as Mercy alleged that Tina was trying to snatch her boyfriend, Austin while Tina said she met the guy before Mercy and that Mercy only forced herself on him. The funny thing was that this guy was in the Chemistry lab trying to practice titration! Ozoma wasn't in school today and Amarachi and I went to check up on her after school. It turned out that she was down with malaria and we prayed that she recovers as soon as possible.

THURSDAY

After school today, my friends and I went home to read up something in government and we were surprised to see mum was back. She said she closed early today because she was fagged out. Ozoma then brought up this issue of teenage mothers. Mum then started a speech on teenage mothers and fathers. She said 'it is not easy to be a parent when you are not yet an adult and sometimes the fathers are also as psychologically affected as the mothers. As a teen parent, you are robbed of growing at a normal pace as you get catapulted straight from

childhood to adulthood missing out on adolescence which could affect the mental, social, psychological and sometimes physical health of the person (s) involved. Sometimes, these young people are looked down upon which makes their emotional trauma greater'. She then enjoined us to be empathetic towards teen parents as the love and care they get would help them bounce back. It was quite a lecture, right?

FRIDAY

In the assembly today; the principal announced that all SS2 students must wait behind after school for a brief meeting, so after school; we all gathered at the school eagerly waiting for the principal. When she climbed the podium, it was obvious that all wasn't well. Our principal started by telling us that our set is the worst set she has ever had to work with. The long and short of the whole announcement was that an SS2 science student had impregnated a fellow SS2 Art student. He probably thought that his knowledge of chemistry and biology would put him through when he decided to perform an operation (or rather experiment) on the girl so that she would lose the baby. They were caught in the biology lab at 5pm yesterday, luckily no damage had been done to both mother and baby. Amarachi wondered why the girl would submit herself to such a suicide mission with Ozoma saying they probably lacked money to consult a doctor. They were both expelled from school and the girl is now under 'house arrest'.

SATURDAY

Today, I told mummy about the two students who were expelled yesterday and she was alarmed. She was of the opinion that the rate at which young people were going was quite alarming. She compared her own knowledge at that age to that of the girl who got pregnant. She was still talking when I saw my cousin on TV! Yes! The reality show- Gulder Ultimate Search is back and my cousin Chucks is one of the contestants. They are ten of them in Osun State who are in search of the Horn of Valour. I hope Chucks wins oh! The winner takes home a brand new Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) and seven million naira in cash. If Chucks comes out tops; I am assured of new sets of clothes and shoes!

SUNDAY

I went to Washington DC in America and I entered the White House, I was offered a seat to wait for Mr President as he was in a meeting. Michelle and Sasha came out to talk to me and we had a great time together until I was told

that Mr Obama would be with me soon. I adjusted my cloth and then he stepped out smiling and just as I was about to take his hand in a handshake, Mummy wakes me up! Grrrr, so it was all a dream? Well, I prepared and went to church with my family. After the service, we were heading for the car park when Mr Sani accosted my dad and the next I knew, Daddy screamed and what he told us made us all gasp. I will tell you in the next edition.

Timing of Births

(1) **Becoming pregnant before the age of 18 or after the age of 35 increases the health risks for both mother and child.**

- ® Every year over half a million women die from problems linked to pregnancy and childbirth. Most of these deaths could be prevented by acting on today's knowledge about the importance of planning pregnancies.
- ® For health reasons alone, no girl should become pregnant before the age of 18. A woman is not physically ready to begin bearing children until she is about 18 years of age. Babies born to women younger than eighteen are more likely to be born too early or to weigh too little at birth. Such babies are more likely to die in the first year of life. The risks to the mother's own health are also greater.

All girls should be allowed the time to become women before becoming mothers. In societies where many girls marry at an early age, couples should use family planning to delay the first pregnancy until at least the age of 18.

- ® After the age of 35, the health risks of pregnancy and childbirth begin to increase again. If a woman is over 35, and has had four or more previous pregnancies, then another pregnancy is a serious risk to her health and that of her unborn child.

(2) **The risk of death for young children is increased by about 50% if the space between births is less than two years.**

- ® For the health of mother and children, parents should wait until their youngest should be at least two years old before having another baby.
- ® Children born too close together do not usually develop as well physically or mentally, as children born at least two years apart.
- ® One of the greatest threats to the health and growth of a child under the age of two is the birth of a new born baby. Breastfeeding stops too suddenly, and the mother has less time to prepare the special foods a young child needs. Also, she may not be able to give the older child the care and attention he or she needs. As a result, the child often fails to grow and develop properly.
- ® A mother's body needs two years to recover fully from pregnancy and childbirth. The risk of the mother's health is therefore greater if the next birth follows too closely upon the last. The mother needs to give herself time to get her strength and energy back before she becomes pregnant again.

- ® If a woman becomes pregnant before she is fully recovered from bearing a previous child, there is a higher chance that her new baby will be born too early and too light in weight. Low birth-weight babies are less likely to grow well, more likely to fall ill, and four times more likely to die in the first year of life than babies of normal weight.

(3) **Having more than four children increases the health risks of pregnancy and childbirth.**

- ® After a woman has had four children, further pregnancies bring greater risks to the life of and health of both mother and child.

Especially if the previous births have not been spaced more than two years apart, a woman's body can easily become exhausted by repeated pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding and looking after small children. Further pregnancies usually mean that her own health begins to suffer.

- ® After four pregnancies, there is an increased risk of serious health problem such as anaemia ("thin blood") and haemorrhage (heavy loss of blood). The risk of giving birth to babies with disabilities, or with low birth-weight, also increases after four pregnancies and after the mother reaches the age of 35.

(4) **Family planning gives couples the choice of when to begin having children, how many to have, how far apart to have them, and when to stop.**

- ® Most health services can provide several methods of safe, effective family planning. NO one method of timing births is suitable for, or acceptable to, every individual. Couples should ask for advice on the most suitable means of family planning from the nearest trained health worker or family planning clinic.
- ® Spacing births at least two years apart, and avoiding pregnancies before the age of 18 and after the age of 35, can help to ensure that each baby is born healthy and strong.

Reference:

Facts for Life', a publication of UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO in partnership with many of the world's leading medical and children's organizations.

Dear readers, it is important to know that we have painstakingly developed this column to increase your knowledge on things that you need to know or already know but would want to clear your doubts on. We hope that you would be able to make good use of the information provided, in this edition, we would be discussing things we need to know about sex which can lead to teenage pregnancy.

For teens, the mere thought of sex can be overwhelming. There is so much to think about, so much to worry about, and so much that can go wrong. Whether you are sexually active or not, knowing the facts about what sex is, and what it is not, is very important.

IT IS INTERESTING TO KNOW THAT SEX IS...

- both physical and emotional in nature
- risky; you can get pregnant, catch a sexually transmitted infection, have your heart broken or your ego bruised, or feel let down and disappointed when it is over
- a milestone; you only get one chance to lose your virginity
- sensitive; be sure that the timing is right for you and your partner
- not to be taken lightly or treated as recreation
- best when it is a personal expression of caring between two people

IT IS USEFUL TO KNOW THAT SEX IS NOT...

- a way to make somebody love you or make a commitment to you
- a test of your love for your partner
- a measure of how mature or grown up you are
- a good way to get back at your parents or assert your independence
- a leisure activity
- always fun or enjoyable, sometimes you will wonder if it was really worth it

Remember, when you have sex for the wrong reasons you hurt yourself!

Must Know Facts about Sex

(1) Unless you want to get pregnant, and you shouldn't want this if you are a teen, because there are a lot of consequences which you will not be able to bear.

(2) The only protection against sexually transmitted infections (e.g. H.I.V) for sexually active people is a barrier method like a condom. This is a safe sex must even if you are using something else for birth control.

(3) Oral sex is still sex and some sexually transmitted infections, including HIV and AIDS, can be transmitted orally. A barrier method, like a condom or dental dam, must be used for this type of sex as well.

(4) If your partner is under the age of consent, intoxicated or under the influence of drugs, pressured or threatened in any way, or asks you to stop at any point, you CAN NOT legally engage in sex. Any or all of these scenarios could result in your being charged with rape.

(5) You can get pregnant or catch an STI the very first time you have sex, even if you use protection. It is always a risk.

(6) In case of sexually active teen's birth control and STI protection must be used properly to be effective. Missed pills and doubled up condoms are the most common misuse of birth control and can result in pregnancy or STI transmission.

Abstinence is about the safest and most reliable means of prevention of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections and it is 100% effective.

Reference:

www.about.com/theknowcolumn/teenadvice
(Accessed 04/09/2009)

QUIZ.

(1) Which of the following is true about having sex?

- A. you will never forget it
- B. you don't need to use a protection
- C. it won't tell as good as you think it will
- D. you can get pregnant or catch an S.T.I

(2) What is the totally effective form of birth control?

- A. the pill.
- B. abstinence
- C. condom
- D. condom and the pill

(3) Which of the following is a bad reason to have sex?

- A. you care deeply about your partner
- B. you want to share yourself with the other person
- C. you are in love
- D. everyone else is doing it

(4) Which of the following is not true about H.I.V the virus that causes A.I.D.S?

- A. only gay people and druggies get it
- B. you can get it through tainted blood transfusion
- C. you can get it through unprotected sex with an infected partner
- D. you can get it through protected sex with an infected partner

(5) What type of contraception BEST protects against H.I.V and S.T.I'S?

- A. a condom
- B. 2 condoms used at the same time
- C. diaphragm
- D. withdrawal before ejaculation



Youth Skills Development Programme

The Youth Skills Development Programme was initiated by ACTION HEALTH INCORPORATED to afford young school leavers awaiting admission into institutions of higher learning, the opportunity to work within the organization and acquire skills in the following areas:

- *Micro-computer Operations
- *Office Administration
- *Public Speaking
- *Community Development Activities
- *Personal Health Management
- *Self-Organization & Time Management

Participants in the programme will have an opportunity to work for one year by the end of which, they will be more equipped to plan and take charge of their lives. Certificates will also be issued to successful participants at the end of the programme.

REQUIREMENTS

- Applicants should be between 16 - 19 years
- Should have passed their SSCE with a minimum of five (5) credits including Mathematics and English Language.
- Must demonstrate creativity and ability to use their initiative
- Must be committed to working full-time from November 2009 - November 2010
- Membership of the Health and Life Planning club while in Secondary school will be an added advantage

To apply, write "Youth Assistant" on the top left corner of the envelope and attach photocopies of your credentials, a letter of reference from your school principal, and your application letter. Submit on or before 30th October, 2009

SEND YOUR APPLICATION TO:
 The Executive Director
 Action Health Incorporated
 17 Lawal Street Off Oweh Street
 Jibowu, Lagos.
 P. O. Box 803, Yaba, Lagos.



Dear Aunty

(A) *My boy friend wants to have sex with me. He said if I don't have sex with him, it means I do not love him, I asked my friends and they say I am foolish not to. What do I do?*

Don't start sex to keep up with the crowd. Don't listen to friends who boast about what they do with their boyfriends or girlfriends. Sex in a loving relationship is a private matter. It concerns you and your partner- no one else. If you don't want to have sex with your boyfriend, then don't. Your boyfriend must respect your wishes. If he can't, then maybe he doesn't love you. Speak to your boyfriend again. If he doesn't listen, then you both should start looking elsewhere.

(B) *Please, I really want to know what it means to be a virgin.*

A virgin is any one (male or female) who has never had sexual intercourse. Girls have small piece of skin called hymen, which partly covers the opening of the vagina. Long ago people believe that the hymen could only be broken during sex but today we know some girls may have their hymen broken without having had sex. Lots of exercise may break it. Lots of teenagers think there is something wrong with them if they are still virgins. There is nothing wrong with being a virgin.

(C) *I am a 17 year old girl and no guy has ever asked me out on a date for a relationship. My friend says that I am under a curse and that it is abnormal. Is this true?*

You are perfectly normal and should not focus on what other people might think of you. There are many other girls like you who are not in any relationship. Nevertheless, here are a few tips that can help you in making friends; be interested in others, be yourself, be a good listener, and don't try to be someone else. You are unique and special and assured you will find a right match someday.

(D) *I am a 17 year old boy. My friends are having sex and they make fun of me for not doing the same. I really don't want sex yet, but I feel like a fool among my peers. What should I do?*

You do not need to have sex to keep up with the crowd. Don't listen to Friends who boast about what they do with their girlfriends or boyfriends. Some of them actually lie about it. Sex in a loving relationship is a private matter it concerns you and your partner and no one else. If you don't feel you are ready to have sex. Then don't. If you engage yourself in sexual intercourse before you are ready to, you probably won't enjoy it and may regret it. You owe no one any explanation about your private life. Once you have made your decision, stand by it and refuse to be pressured by any one.

(E) *I am a 16 year old girl and many boys want to have a relationship with me. I am scared because of the consequences of engaging in early sexual intercourse. I have tried many times to discourage them but I have not been successful. I stopped wearing make up for over a year now but to no avail. I am so confused, what should I do?*

It's natural for boys to want to date a girl they find attractive. If you are not ready for this, make your stand known politely and let your own body language and action convey your decision. Many boys feel that girls mean "yes" when they say "no". But once you communicate your stand to these guys, let them know you are serious and don't pay attention to them. Keep yourself engaged in positive activities and they will soon respect you and your stand. Boys feel that girls mean "yes" when they say "no", but once you communicate your stand to these guys let them know you are serious and don't pay any attention to them. Keep yourself engaged in positive activities and they will soon respect you and your stand.

(F) *At what age can you start having sex?*

You may be ready for sex if you have positive responses to most of these questions; am I ready to have sex? Is my partner the person I want to have sex with? Am I sure I won't regret later? Am I prepared to deal with the conflict this may bring to my relationship with my parents? Am I ready to be a mother or a father? Am I certain neither of is carrying a sexually transmitted disease including H.I.V? Don't rush into a decision.

(G) *How many times must you have sex before you get pregnant?*

It only takes only one egg and one sperm to make a baby. If you only have sex once, there is a chance that you may get pregnant. Even if you have sex for one minute.

(H) *My friends said that couples who are H.I.V-positive should still use condom during sex. I think there is no reason for this since both of them are infected and there is no risk of one partner infecting the other. What do you think?*

Yes both married and unmarried infected couples should use condoms each time they have sexual intercourse because they may be infected with different types of the virus and they may introduce other types to each other. Also more viruses can be transmitted which may accelerate the onset of full blown AIDS.

Cartoon?

It's indeed a great honor and privilege for me to be addressing you guys today...only a few years back, I was in your place with someone advising me on abstinence, HIV and pregnancy, but I turned a deaf ear to these and regretted it



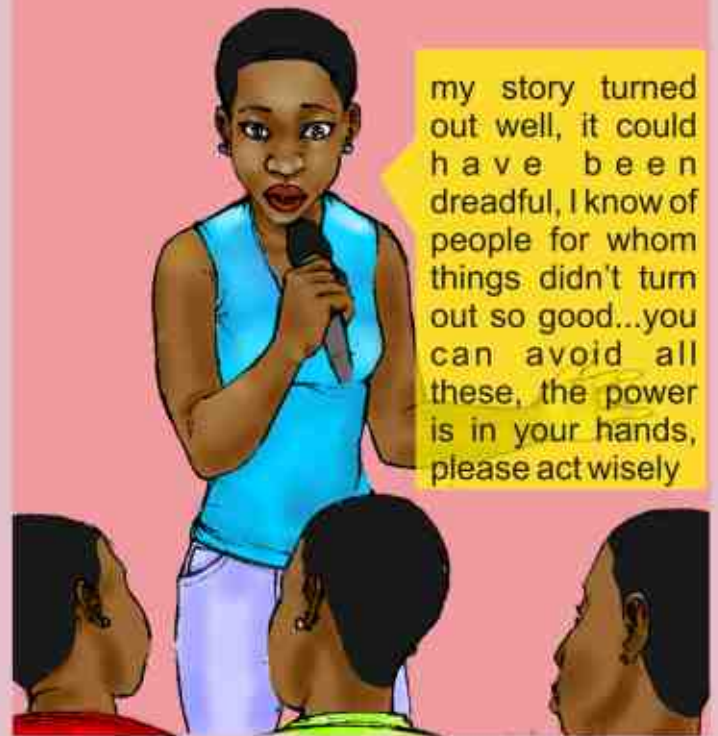
...I got pregnant and my world seemed to just come to an end, I was kicked out of school, teased and mocked, my parents were very close to kicking me out as well...



...but thanks to the likes of AHI, now I'm back in school, working part-time and earning an income to feed my baby...and also the privilege of addressing you guys



my story turned out well, it could have been dreadful, I know of people for whom things didn't turn out so good...you can avoid all these, the power is in your hands, please act wisely



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure." - Colin Powell

True Life Story

My choice, what a choice!

I write my story in hopes to enlighten and potentially warn others of the consequences of some simple mistakes. My story begins just a few years back in SS2, when I made a decision that changed my life for the worse.

In the beginning I was very happy with my life, running around with any friend who was free to go. I tried to stay out of my house as much as possible because it was like a prison living with my father. I used to call him, 'The Colonel'. Aside from his extremely strict ways, I had three square meals, an education and a place to lay my head (as long as I stayed out of trouble and did well in school). School had never been an issue for me and I excelled in every subject. With good grades on my side, my siblings tended to get more of the heat from 'The Colonel' while I continued to cause trouble out with my friends.

One of my childhood friends, Jeremiah, usually came out with me and my other girlfriends. We knew each other very well, and had begun to develop a more intimate relationship as we grew together in the years. Inseparable, after a while we began to spend more and more time together away from my other friends. I knew I wanted to marry him, and he told me we would be married once we finished our aspirations in school. It sounded like a perfect plan for me, and 'The Colonel' was sure to approve of Jeremiah and I marrying after we finished schooling.

Now, I've always heard around school about abstinence and the whole AIDS issue, but I don't think I ever got the whole picture. Because one fateful day, Jeremiah and myself decided that since we loved each other, planned to marry and stay faithful, that we could share each other wholly through sex. ***This is where I made my mistake.*** I didn't have birth control or any condoms, because that would be evidence of me being sexually active. So, we used the withdrawal method (pulling out right before he ejaculates). Thinking that I shared a wonderful moment with my honey, and that everything went well. I went about my life happier than ever.

A few weeks later, I began to notice something off about my body. I wasn't quite feeling well; nausea was affecting me every so often. Thinking it was just some bad food, I continued my days as any other. I started to become fatigued more often than usual and abnormally emotional. Although I was nearing exams, it may have been from the stress. I tried to ignore it and focus on my work, until I missed my period. Panic set in. I was in a state of denial, and

decided to wait and see if my next period would show by some way of a fluke.

One month went by. Two months. Three months. I felt like I was dying inside. Finally I had to talk to Jeremiah about me being pregnant. There was no more denying it. I had just turned 16 and he 17, we were about to become teen parents. Jeremiah was initially in shock, and questioned me if I was sure it was his child. I nearly fell over in agony. To my relief, he came to his senses and embraced me and prepared for 'The Colonel'. What were my options? Abortion? Adoption? Or keep my child? I knew I had to keep my child. But what would 'The Colonel' do in reaction to this news?! I was slightly scared for not only my child's life, but for mine as well.

With much caution and preparations as possible (not that that would help anything), we came to 'The Colonel' to inform him of the circumstance. As suspected, he was furious. He lashed out at me and I ran to protect this innocent thing I was carrying within me. When things calmed, he told me that I had shamed the family with my 'deviant' act. 'The Colonel' made it clear that my only option to not be shunned from his family was to marry Jeremiah before the child was born. And so it was.

My pregnancy was not a joyous time. By the fifth or sixth month, I could no longer hide that I was pregnant. I was soon kicked out of school, and my friends slowly became scarce. Jeremiah left school about the same time as I did to find work to support his new family. Towards the end, all I had was Jeremiah to stand by my side. We struggled to survive, and 'The Colonel' tried to help us at times, but he had his own family with financial burdens. Times only got harder, and I became anemic. I was not getting enough nutrients for my child or me. Over time, I was only getting weaker and I worried that neither of us would survive the labor. I ended up having an emergency cesarean and nearly lost my life. By the grace of God, we made it through.

I do not resent having my child and I love my husband. But I am sad that it happened at such a young age. Jeremiah and I made a mistake of rushing things, and in doing so lost our futures. We had to set aside our dreams, in order to provide for our new family. Jeremiah can only get physical labor jobs, while I work in a salon braiding hair. Work is demanding, and the pay is minimal. I wish I could have continued school, and maintained my friends. Struggling daily is not what I wanted of my future. If I could do it all over again, I would change that one fateful day and would have obtained knowledge to know and wait.

GOOD FOR THOUGHT!

"Whatever you vividly imagine, ardently desire, sincerely believe, and enthusiastically act upon must inevitably come to pass!" - Paul J. Meyer



You can go to your parents for advice and support. You can talk with each other often about many different topics – including serious issues.

Just do it

Talk to your parent everyday. Tell them about your day. Make it a point to tell them about one interesting, funny, sad, frustrating, silly, or strange thing that happened to you. Then ask them about their day. Even if you don't feel like it, come out of your room and have a ten-minute conversation with your parents each night. Try this for a week and see if it makes a difference.

Talk about their favorite subject.

Most people love talking about themselves. Talk with your parents about their growing-up years. Ask a lot of questions. Examples: "what did you think of your parents when you were teenagers?" "What are some of your best memories of your parents?" "What did you talk about in your family?" "What do you wish you had talked about?" "What did you like best about your family?" "What do you think of the way your parents raised you?" Afterwards, think about your experience. How did it feel to ask your parents these questions? Did you learn anything that surprised you? Do you understand your parents a little better now?

Write it down.

Write a letter to your parents about a topic you really want to talk about but don't feel comfortable bringing it up. You can decide later if you want to give your parents the letter; for now, just write it. Afterward, think about how it felt to write your letter. What do you think would happen if you actually gave it to your parents? What's the worst thing that could happen? The best?

Accept their limitations.

Some parents simply can't discuss certain things with their children. They'd rather be boiled in oil than talk about s-e-x, or they're too uptight to talk about feelings, alcohol and other drugs, HIV/AIDS, violence, gangs, depression, teen suicide, and other issues you really need to talk about with someone. If this describes your parents, find other trusted adults to talk to.

Be there for siblings who want to talk.

Build asset on the home front by making yourself available to your pesky sister and batty brother. (Tip: watch for hints. A child who hangs around usually wants to talk.) What if you're in the middle of something? Arrange a time when you can talk- soon. Then really listen. Never label a child's opinions, beliefs, feelings, or experiences silly, stupid, babyish, lame, or wrong; it's demoralizing and hurtful.

Learn what positive communication is about.

Read books on communication skills. Take a class on communication, or suggest that your family take a class together. Remember that developing effective communication skills takes time and practice.

TIPS FOR TALKING TO PARENTS

1: Choose your time wisely. Don't try to start a serious conversation when your parents are obviously 1) cranky, 2) stressed out, 3) busy doing something else, or 4) asleep.

2: Be respectful. Your parents will be much more willing to hear you out if they don't feel ridiculed.

3: Speak precisely and concisely. Say what you mean and don't take forever to say it.

4: When you approach your parents with a problem, come prepared with suggestion for solving it. Why should they do all the work? (make sure that you present these as suggestion, not demands.)

5: Make genuine effort to see their points of view. Put yourself in their shoes. Try to empathize with them. You're not the only person with an opinion, a brain, or feelings.

6: Watch your body language. Glaring, turning your back, slouching, shaking a fist, pointing a finger, sneering, gagging, and rolling your eyes are not recommended.

7: Keep your voice down, please. Nobody likes to be yelled at.

8: Avoid "you statement." "You don't understand me" or you never let me do what I want" don't help get your point across. Instead, use "I statements" –like "I guess I haven't done a very good job of explaining myself to you" or "I feel like you don't trust me to make decisions".

9: Pay attention. You'll be more effective if you look your parents (not at the wall or out the window) while they're speaking.

10: Be willing to compromise. Give a little and you might get a lot.

Reference:

'What Teens Need To Succeed: Proven, practical ways to shape your own future'

By Peter Benson, Ph.D; Judy Galbraith, M.A; Pamela Espeland.



PROFILE OF A ROLE MODEL

Mrs. Taibat Olajumoke Odukoya (Lagos State Best Teacher 2008)



For Mrs Taibat Olajumoke Odukoya, a teacher's reward starts on earth and continues in heaven. It was an emotion-soaked interview. Lagos State Best Teacher for 2008, Mrs. Taibat Olajumoke Odukoya, was eager to relay her past hard-work, suffering, and determination to break the ice of poverty and become a success story. She was filled with emotion and half-way into the interview; she burst into tears as she shared her experiences of her growing up years. "I had to do all sorts of things to be able to survive and attend school", she intoned.

Mrs. Odukoya was recently awarded a car for being the best teacher in Lagos State by the Lagos State government due to her punctuality to work, dedication to duty, honesty, perfect mastery of her subject, belief in the ability of her students, bringing out the positive behavior in the students and school in general and for also serving as a role model to the students and some other teachers.

SCHOOLS ATTENDED AND TAUGHT

Mrs Taibat who presently teaches in Baptist Senior High School, Obanikoro decided to become a teacher when her husband asked her to, but says her love for children also inspired her. She sees her classroom as an extension of her home and thus takes her students as her children and this has helped her immensely to be better able to relate with the students. She attended CAC Primary School in Ibadan (1973-1974) and Gboluji Grammar School in Ondo State before proceeding to Kwara State Polytechnic Basic School (1981-1982) and the University of Benin where she obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Botany before attending the University of Lagos where she obtained her Post Graduate Degree (2003-2004). Her services have been rendered in schools like Kawaji Secondary School, Kawaji in Kano State (1990-1995), Stadium Junior Secondary school also in Kano State (1995-1996), College of Advanced Studies, Zaria where she did her NYSC and Eva Adelaja Girls Senior Secondary School, Bariga in Lagos state (1999-2008).



Mrs. Odukoya receiving her award from the Deputy Governor, Lagos State, Mrs. Sarah Sosan

GROWING UP

Her growing up years were really difficult as she wasn't born with a silver spoon. Her father was a bricklayer and mother sold food for their survival. They were illiterates and didn't have enough money to sponsor her in school, but her quest for education and determination to excel in life drove her to register herself in a school close to where she resided. She was then financially encouraged by her mother who slaved to educate her and her other siblings.

ADVICE TO OTHER TEACHERS

This mother of five (5) children whose motto is- study hard and work hard as if life would end tomorrow advises other teachers to be dedicated and try hard to bring out the best in their students academically and morally. She encourages young people who want to become teachers to be punctual, dedicated, respectful and not look for immediate reward. She has Dr. Mrs Awesu who taught her Biology in Kwara State Polytechnic as her role model because of her modest dressing, dedication and diligence to duty.

If you think, that Mrs Odukoya has had a smooth ride in the teaching profession, you better have a rethink. She lists her challenges such as lack of laboratory equipments, large number of students to teacher ratio and negative attitude of some students (such as hooliganism) but says she has no regret being a teacher as she is always sad when she has to go on holidays. Seeing her students who have passed through her doing well in the society makes her feel proud. Speaking on her recent award of excellence by the Lagos State Government, she said, **'I was elated when I was given a brand new car as a reward for being the best teacher in Lagos State for the year 2008.** I thank God for the gift because it came as a surprise and I was so excited and motivated'.

ADVICE TO GOVERNMENT AND NGOS

Also speaking on the rate at which young people are trafficked within and outside the country, Mrs Odukoya believes poverty, impatience on the part of the young people, indiscipline and lack of fear of God are the reasons of this horrible trend. Ask her what should be done to reduce the high level of teenage pregnancy and drug abuse among people; she says, **'educate the young ones and their parents, the government should also try to engage young people in vocational courses during the holidays as an idle mind is the devil's workshop and NGOs should put up behavioral change communication around schools and motor parks in our environment'**.

ADVICE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

As a parting shot, she advises young people to cultivate the habit of being good listeners, being obedient and also learn to be positive towards everything in life and says parents should compliment the work of teachers by giving their children good home and moral training. **With a brand new KIA car to her name and an award of excellence, who says being a teacher doesn't pay?!**

Personal Hygiene

TAKING CARE OF YOUR BODY

Keeping your body clean is an important part of keeping you healthy and helping you to feel good about yourself. Caring about the way you look is important to your self esteem (what you think about yourself).

Smelling clean

Have you ever walked into a classroom full of kids when all the windows are closed?

According to the experts, young kids may sweat but they don't start having body odour until they reach puberty. That's when special sweat glands under the arms and around the genitals roar into full production pouring out sweat which smells.

Clothes

Even if you're not heavily into puberty style sweating, clothes can get stained, dirty and generally grubby, so you need to change them often.

Underclothes are right next to your skin and collect dead skin cells, sweat and possibly other unmentionable stains. Overnight bacteria start to work on these stains so your clothes do not smell as nice on the second day of wearing. Stay away from cigarette smoke as the smell will get into your clothes and hair.

If you have to wear a school uniform then take it off as soon as you get home and hang it up to air before you wear it the next day.

Ask your family not to smoke in the house or the car. Besides being unhealthy for them and you, the smoke clings to your clothes and makes them smelly. Of course, you wouldn't smoke either, would you? Change underclothes often.

Shoes

You spend a lot of time on your feet and your shoes are very close to the place where a very large collection of sweat glands live – your feet.

Sweat gets into your shoes and then bacteria arrive which love the moist leather or fabric so much that 'they tell all their friends to come around and party'.

If you have one pair of shoes for school, then try to get them off as soon as you get home so that they can air and dry out overnight. If you have more than one pair then use them on alternate days to give them a better chance of drying out.

Keep your shoes clean by brushing, polishing or washing. They will look better, last longer and be less likely to smell.

Feet

Wash your feet well at least once a day.

Dry them carefully, especially between the toes where more bacteria collect than anywhere else on your skin. If the towel is too thick to get in between your little toes, then use a dry face washer (keep it for your feet only).

If you go swimming a lot or use public showers, you need to be particularly careful to wash your feet and dry them well. It is a good idea to wear thongs on your feet too. Lots of other people walk in bare feet in these places and you can easily pick up fungal infections or other problems for your feet, such as warts!

Using 'smell nice' products

If you are a bigger kid you may want, or feel you need, to start using a deodorant or anti-perspirant under your armpits. Be aware that some people have problems with perfumes, which can be a trigger for asthma or hay fever, so don't spray them around in the washroom or change-room.

Remember: Nothing smells better than clean skin. Perfumes are not a good substitute for a shower or wash. You may want to use special insoles in your shoes, which can be taken out and washed, making the shoes smell less. You may want to use foot powder on your feet and inside your shoes. This can help too. Most sneakers or running shoes will survive being washed by hand or even in the washing machine.

Hair

The hair follicles [which the hair grows from] produce oil which keeps the hair smooth. You also have sweat glands in your scalp, and dead skin cells come off the scalp. The oil, sweat and dead cells all add together and can make the hair greasy and look dirty unless you wash it regularly.

To keep your hair clean: Wash regularly with shampoo (cheap ones are often as good as very expensive ones).

- Massage your scalp well. This will remove dead skin cells, excess oil and dirt.
- Rinse well with clear water
- Conditioner is helpful if you have longer hair as it makes the hair smoother and easier to comb, but hair doesn't need to have conditioner.
- Use a wide toothed comb for wet hair as it is easier to pull through

Teeth

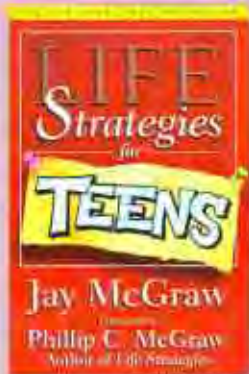
- You should brush your teeth at least, twice a day – before and after breakfast and before you go to bed.
- During the day, fill your mouth with water and swish it around to get rid of anything sticking to your teeth.

"With a clean body, clean hair, clean clothes and shoes, you will feel good and your friends will be happy to be near you. Keep your fingernails and toenails short and clean too."

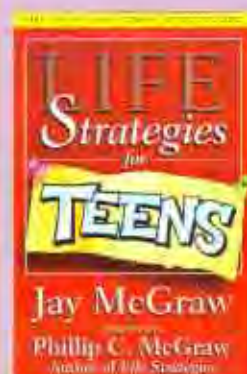
Reference:

www.cyh.com/healthtopicsdetailkids (Accessed 03/09/2009)

BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: 'Strategies for Teens'
Author: Jay McGraw
Published by: Simon & Schuster
Date published: 2000
No of Pages: 236
ISBN No: 978-07432-1546-6
Reviewer: Edidiong Esiet
No of Chapters: 10 (Life Laws)



About The Author: **Jay Phillip McGraw** was born on the 12th of September, 1979, in Wichita County, Texas. He is the son of Phil McGraw and Robin McGraw. He has one younger brother, Jordan (a musician).

He has written several books aimed at young people, based on his father's books, the well-known *Dr. Phil*. Jay has also appeared on Dr. Phil's TV show.

He is President and CEO of Stage 29 Productions in Los Angeles, a company formed by his father. He has served as Executive Producer on several prime-time "Dr. Phil" specials. Jay attended private Greenhill School (Addison, Texas), earned his law degree from Southern Methodist University, and is a graduate of the University of Texas, where he received a B.S.C. in Psychology. He is Executive Producer of the TV series, "The Doctors," which is an advice show in which four doctors discuss various medical topics.

The book talks about ten different non-written laws that will help you get on just well on life.

Life Law 1: (You Either Get It or You Don't) Talks about actually realizing what you need to do to get where you are going instead of just sitting around aspiring to be as rich as someone or trying to get the type of girls someone gets and not actually working hard to be as rich as someone or improving on your looks and personality.

Life Law 2: (You Create Your Own Experience) Tells you that it's up to you what people think of you and how people look at you. If you're wondering why people don't like you, it's because your attitude and your actions have warned people not to like you.

Life Law 3: (People Do What Works) People tend to do things because they like the end results they are getting. For Example if you take drugs and you feeling you get when you are taking drugs whether you know it's bad for your health or not, you'll do it again when there's an opportunity to do it again. But if you've never boxed before and you try it out of curiosity and you get badly beaten up during your first fight, you won't want to do it again.

Life Law 4: (You Cannot Change What You Do Not Acknowledge) Tells Teens like us that for change to happen you have to get rid of all forms of denial and accept the facts. Before President Obama became the president of the USA he promised change in America because so many things were wrong with America. Now he didn't just wake up one morning and decided that America needs changing, no he acknowledge the fact that America was in a mess and there was a lot he needed to do to change it.

Life Law 5: (Life Rewards Action) Speaks about the things that we say we are going to do but that we never do. Obama said that he wanted to be The President of the USA but he didn't just say that he actually started a campaign to get people to know what he was all about. If he kept postponing all his campaigns because he wasn't in the mood for a campaign, he will know in his heart that he wants to do a campaign but no one else would have known about his campaign and no one would have voted for him.

Life Law 6: (There Is No Reality Only Perception) This simply means that everyone has their own way of seeing a situation (One man's meat is another man's poison).

Life Law 7: (Life is managed not cured) What this is trying to say is that if you think that there is a problem with your life somewhere along the line don't go round trying to change the situation, instead try and work your way round it.

Life Law 8: (We Teach People How to Treat us) is trying to teach us that if we want to have freedom in life we have to work our way towards that freedom. One example being with our parents, if we want a later curfew, instead of complaining about your curfew try and stick to the curfew or sometimes come back a little earlier, also try and tell them where you're going and how you're getting there that way, when you ask for a later curfew, they won't be too nervous or reluctant.

Life Law 9: (There Is Power in Forgiveness) Nine is the best because it teaches you how to forgive and the importance of forgiveness. It gave a very good example about how a young girl turned thirteen and her step-dad came into her room to tell her how proud he is that she is an adult. This then led to him molesting her and eventually raping her. Now that was four years ago but the girl still feels the same way she felt four years ago. The book also said that if you are forgiving somebody, it's not for their personal gain but for yours simply because while you are sulking about somebody who hurt you a long time ago they could have the best time of their life. Now unless you forgive that person, you will not have emotional satisfaction.

Life Law 10: (You Have to Name it Before You Can Claim It) This final chapter really taught me that whatever goals I have in life, I have to be precise about it and really pursue exactly what I'm looking for. For example, I want to have a big land when I'm older and I want to have 3 plots of land when I'm older.

This book is educational really influential and inspirational if in the right hand. I would really recommend this book to just about anyone.



RESOURCES



The materials listed here are resources on adolescent development. These materials are available for use in the reference library at the AHI Youth Centre at 17 Lawal Street, Jibowu, Yaba, Lagos

Books



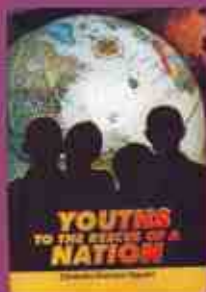
Family Life and HIV Education for Junior Secondary Schools Students' Handbook by Action Health Incorporated

Family Life and HIV Education Students' Handbook is developed for use by student at the Junior secondary School level as a supplementary text with factual information on the Family Life and HIV Education (FLHE) Curriculum. It is organized around the five key concept in the approved FLHE curriculum to help young people learn about their bodies, physical and emotional changes that occur during adolescence; presenting how young people can acquire skills including steps to take in setting sexual limit and ways of refusing unwanted sexual advances; exposing young people to issues around HIV infection and prevention and encouraging young people to discuss relationships with family and friends, as well as addressing the social and cultural environments that influence the way they learn about and express their sexuality. Where appropriate, the handbook contains stories, illustrations, pictures and cartoon that will help the students understand the topics better.



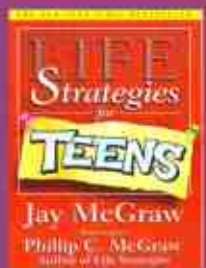
Family Life and HIV Education for Junior Secondary Schools Teachers' Guide by Action Health Incorporated

Family Life and HIV Education Teachers' Guide is a comprehensive, easy-to-understand guide for use by teachers in junior Secondary Schools who have the responsibility for classroom delivery of the Family Life and HIV Education (FLHE) Curriculum. This publication is not a textbook but rather a "how to do" guide for teachers. The guide encourages teachers to be creative, reflective and observant of the reaction and general demeanor of young people during classroom interaction, as well as creating an enabling environment for learning. Each chapter in the guide is divided into the following sections for effective delivery of the FLHE curriculum: lesson objectives, teaching aids, activities and evaluation questions. Teachers are encouraged to supplement with appropriate content-based textbooks, the FLHE curriculum and the Family Life and HIV Education Students' Handbook.



'**YOUTHS TO THE RESCUE OF A NATION**' is a book for all Nigerian youth as well as youth all over the Globe. It is a timely contribution to the socio-economic and political developments of Nigeria.

It spells out all that youths need in order to become an instrument of change in this nation. It also pinpoints several ways Nigeria can overcome obstacles that are preventing her from the realization of the dreams and aspirations of her founding fathers. The need for youth involvement in the socio-economic and political decision making processes are also highlighted.



About The Author: **Jay Phillip McGraw** was born on the 12th of September, 1979, in Wichita County, Texas. He is the son of Phil McGraw and Robin McGraw. He has one younger brother, Jordan (a musician).

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