

Planned Parenthood educators asked teens across Michigan specific questions relevant to this session's topic. The following reflects a sample of responses from over 100 teen peer educators and teen participants who participated in a Planned Parenthood program between November 2014 and February 2016.

*Responses written below reflect the specific language teens used.*

**Sexuality is:**

**Who you are**  
*The expression of love*  
**Being you, being comfortable**  
*Gay, straight, rainbows, pride*  
**Not what you were born as,**  
**but who you go by**

**What it's Like Being a Teen Today**

**Hard!**  
*Confusing*  
**Drama**  
*Pressure*  
**Misunderstood**  
*Stressful*  
**Judged**  
*Depression*  
**Fun**  
*Chilling*  
**Blessed**  
*Lit!*

**Sexuality Education is:**

**Life-long understanding**  
*Awareness*  
**Complicated**  
*Should be positive*  
**Broad**  
*Scattered*  
**Not accepted**  
*Non-existent in schools*  
**Needed**  
*Responsible*  
**What you need to know to be healthy**  
*Understanding sexual health*

**Underestimated**  
*Easier than for those before us*  
**Stereotyped**  
*Have to adapt*  
**Live up to expectations**  
*Annoying, tiring, rough*  
**Like never getting a break**  
*Probably just as difficult as it is being older*  
**Trying to find ourselves**

**What Teens Want Teachers to Know**

**What it's like to be a teenager today**  
*We need your support and wisdom*  
**Half of their students (in high school) are sexually active**  
*A lot of students are having unprotected sex*  
**Students struggle with STDs/STIs and have no help**  
*A lot of students don't feel as though adults will be open to talk about sex*  
**They shouldn't treat their students differently based on sexual orientation**  
*No matter your sexuality, everyone is equal*  
**Most students are not educated about what is inside them or how everything really works**  
*Some students will appreciate learning from you, a trusted adult, but may not say/act it*

### *What I (as a teen) want you (as a doctor) to know... (when I visit you)*

- That every teen goes through something and not to judge
- Emotional instability is common
- How to communicate my feelings about health and life to others
- I am NOT a “child” or “kid” – please don’t use those words, it feels like it diminishes my identity as a young adult, please don’t talk to me as if I am not capable of understanding what you have to say
- I do *actually* care what you have to say!
- Ask us too (not just our parents)
- I come to you for unbiased medical information, please don’t make the experience any more uncomfortable than it already is for me
- Sex is a thing among teens, be open to talk to me about different methods of protection
- Don’t assume to know my reasons for using a certain birth control method or asking about sex or birth control methods or for wanting to get on the patch or the pill
- Some schools have horrible sex ed and/or some parents don’t talk about sex, so don’t just blame us if we don’t know or don’t do something

### *Do’s and Don’ts (for doctors) when seeing me (a teen) for a visit*

#### **Do’s:**

1. Be open and realistic
2. Be sensitive
3. Explain
4. When in doubt, check it out
5. Take our questions and concerns and pains seriously
6. Use inclusive language
7. Ask preferred pronoun, use “partner” language
8. Ask me about STDs
9. Ask if I’m aware of birth control options
10. Ask about social life and sexual relationships
11. Put up a sheet when doing a pelvic or prostate exams
12. Make friendly conversation
13. Tell me facts and your professional opinion
14. Make me feel more comfortable
15. Be caring and concerned, but not overbearing
16. Ask leading questions so I don’t have to bring everything up
17. Continue giving lollipops and candy
18. Ask me if I want to take my clothes off
19. Ask if I want to have my parents in the room
20. Give health care

#### **Don’ts:**

1. Judge me
2. Condescend
3. Brush off my questions
4. Be surprised by my answers
5. Assume I am sexually active
6. Use or think in clichés
7. Say “down there”
8. Use scare tactics (“If you have sex, you will get...”)
9. Be/act nervous or show if you are uncomfortable
10. Tiptoe around questions
11. Be creepy, its already scary enough
12. Talk to my parents about me behind my back
13. Talk directly to my parent when I’m in the room, look at and address ME
14. Don’t be too intrusive with questions
15. Have my parents in the exam room while doing the exam
16. Make a face after I say something you find shocking
17. Don’t ask whether I’ve talked to my parents about this
18. Ask about my sex life in front of my parents because I will lie
19. Underestimate my intelligence and my lived experience
20. Touch a lot