

High Risk Females | Marnie C. Ferree, M.A.

Introduction: The majority of teenage girls have positive relationships, exhibit appropriate behavior, and make healthy choices. Some, though, have experienced difficult life events that are heartbreaking to consider. These girls are deeply troubled and are at high risk of acting out their pain in a variety of damaging ways. While sometimes their dramatic actions are easy to spot, many girls suffer silently, and the adults around them are unaware of their struggles. Armed with a realistic understanding of these hurting girls' behavior and the factors that drive it, compassionate adults can make a difference in their lives, facilitate healing, and equip them to make healthier choices.

I. Introduction

- A. Some girls are thriving: increase in sports, religion, and community. 45% of teens say that parents are their most important role models.
- B. Those who aren't come from all strata: stressed; emotional and physical problems; abusive relationships

II. High risk behaviors: Jesus demonstrated a heart of compassion esp. to the women of his day.

- A. Violence committed by females: the rate is steadily increasing while the males is remaining the same.
- B. Eating disorders and issues of weight and body image: 45% of girls are on some kind of "diet"
- C. Alcohol and drug use
 - 1. Girls' use as compared to boys': teenage girls are starting to use marijuana more than boys of their same age; Teenage girls have surpassed boys in their use and abuse of prescription drugs.
 - 2. Connection between alcohol & drugs and risky sexual behavior: out of 1 of 4 girls have used alcohol/drugs in their last sex encounter.
- D. Sexual activity
 - 1. Positive trends: the last decade sexual intercourse is declining; # of sexual partners is declining; condom use is rising; pregnancy rate is decreasing
 - 2. Alarming sexual activity: Pressure to be sexual & incidence of sexual activity among teenage girls. 1/3 of girls (13-16yrs old) feels extremely pressured to have sex. ½ of all high school students have had sex before their graduation.
 - a. "Hook-up" scene: casual sex – oral sex. Many teens do not count oral sex as sex. "friends with benefits". "1/4 of females teens who are sexually active report that they have had a least 4 sexual partners".
 - b. Teen girls with older male partners
 - c. Teen girls and sexually transmitted diseases: 1 in 3 of the girls will be pregnant by 20 years old.
 - d. Internet pornography and sexual activity:
 - i. 13-17 year olds largest consumers of Internet porn
 - ii. Females' access of adult websites: 1/3 of visitors to adult sexual websites is a female.
 - iii. Sexual chat rooms: False sense of intimacy; sharing pictures at rates that they would not do otherwise. They are in greater risk than their male counterparts.
 - e. Impact of girls' sexual activity:
 - i. Regret: the majority of teens wished they have waited longer before having sex (63%)
 - ii. Depression: seen as a cause and results.

III. Risk factors for high risk behaviors

- A. Disadvantaged community: esp. those raised in poverty or those raised in a single-mother household.
- B. Physical abuse: statistically puts a young women at high risk (hitting, slapping)
- C. Sexual abuse
 - 1. Definition: "When a child of any age is sexually exploited by an older person for that individual's own sexual satisfaction, ignoring the maturity level of the child and their ability to make a conscious choice"
 - a. Can be overt (fondling, oral sex, etc)
 - b. Can be covert (exposure of sexual activity)
 - c. All of these creates a premature sexual awaking; confuses sex & love; perverts beliefs about self, relationship and God ("I'm going to hold it in and keep this inside; I'm a horrible, terrible person"); happens in "Christian homes" as well – creating high-risk females.
 - 2. Incidence: 1 out of 3 girls
 - 3. Damage:
 - 4. False core beliefs
 - 5. Survivor's comments
- D. Family failures; unhealthy family.
 - 1. Abusive environment: physical/sexual abuse
 - 2. Parental absence or impairment
 - 3. Unhealthy parenting

IV. Identifying high risk girls

- A. Signs: watch for young girls that are in one of the high risk categories.
 - 1. Changes in behavior, appearance, friends, school, etc. A sudden something that is "not right"; missing school; increasing secret about her possession or things; watch for a drastic change in appearance
 - 2. Specific evidence of alcohol, drug use, or sexual activity; finding birth control
 - 3. Mental health alerts like withdrawal, anger, expressions of hopelessness or suicidal thoughts "I can't take this anymore...I feel hopeless".
- B. Barriers: maybe because we don't want to see the signs "This is MY student, daughter". Maybe we're confused. Maybe it's misplaced home. Maybe we're comparing my high-risk female to others.

V. Helping high risk girls

- A. Intervention
 - 1. Education
 - 2. Talk and listen
 - 3. Take initial actions: be specific; don't make excuses – and tell the truth.
 - 4. Provide resources: counseling; programs and organizations. Sometimes you need a formal intervention.
- B. Protective factors
 - 1. Caring adult: It is the most important factor.
 - 2. School success: her grades and commitment to school and school activities.
 - 3. Religion: religious involvement and spirituality is helpful.

VI. Prevention

- A. Create healthy environment: we must help our teens find healthy, low risk peers
- B. Change cultural norms

Soul Care Notes:

John 4: 1-26 Woman at the well

John 8: 1-11 Woman caught in adultery

Proverbs 18: 14 Crushed spirit

Study Questions:

1. What are some high risk behaviors among teenage girls?
2. Explain the connection between alcohol or drugs and sexual activity.
3. Discuss teens' hook-up scene and their Internet sexual activity.
4. What are the risk factors for problematic behavior?
5. Describe the impact of childhood sexual abuse.
6. Name five indicators that a girl is engaging in high risk behaviors.
7. What are some protective factors?
8. Describe some steps of a positive intervention.