

The Salem Leader
Educationally Speaking
03/03/08
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Sex offenders are bad...most of the time

I'm about to take a very unpopular opinion on something very important. Here goes: Sex offender laws are sometimes a little harsh.

I know, I know; but let me be very realistic about this entire subject matter. For just one moment put your religious beliefs, your moral beliefs and what you wish people would just do aside for a moment.

First, let's all agree that people really like sex. While I agree with most people that intercourse between two consenting adults is likely healthier, we can't deny that it happens outside of marriage or close relationships. We have to agree that sexual relationships are a part of human existence – plain and simple. You can't argue with that. Sex is a natural part of biological life and living things have to repopulate. For those of you reaching for your Bible, God seems cool to me with “going forth and multiplying”. But everyone and everything, even God evidently, has his limits.

Second, let's all agree that teenagers are human. So, to recap: people like sex. Teenagers are people. Therefore, teenagers like sex. Follow me so far?

Third, let's all agree that some teenagers have sex. I know that many people, particular those of stringent faith, would say that they're being sinful and evil but let's realize that most teenagers know the risks. Anyone that goes through an American high school today can't possibly be unaware of the risks. Teenage people have sex, often with other teenage people. If you doubt that, get your head out of the sand and look around.

Now, allow me to make my position on this issue very clear because I don't want to be misquoted next week in the Town Crier. When a 26-year-old female teacher has sex with her 13-year-old male student – that's wrong. Although, worse could happen to a kid (like, say, watching a parent die in a car accident).

When a 24-year-old college student has sex with a 14-year-old girl – that's wrong. When an 18-year-old high school Senior has sex with anyone drunk and not in his or her own mind, that's wrong. When a 13-year-old boy has sex with a 13-year-old girl, that's probably not a good sign.

However, when an 18-year-old boy has sex at his 15-year-old girlfriend's house – that's not wrong, that's natural. When the police arrest that same 18-year-old boy because he had sex with someone who is technically a minor and under the age of consent, that's wrong, too. In fact, some states considered passing legislation that

realizes this fact and reduces penalties if the two are consenting and are within four years of age to each other. Clearly States are realizing 19 and 20-year-old people having sex with someone who is one week shy of turning 16 are clogging their sex offender registries.

My point is this: Sometimes when a 19-year-old gets in the heat of the moment and mentally doesn't have the ability to say "no" because, after all, he is 19 years old, he or she run the risk of being unfairly treated for the rest of their life if charges are pressed. Sex offender laws serve a purpose to defend children and harshly punish offenders that commit grievous offenses. So when their parents catch that 19-year-old and charges are filed because he or she had sex with what society has deemed "not an adult", give them a break.

Yes, they may have made a stupid mistake. That's debatable. But, if the two consented, have been around each other for a while and it's not someone they just met 20 minutes earlier, we have to realize what's really going on. If they used protection, hooray for them – at least some messages are getting through.

Let's be judicious in passing judgment on teenagers who have sex with someone a few years younger than they are at the time. More often than not, it's the fault of the parents for not knowing where their kid was and what he or she was doing. Granted, it's impossible to always know what your kid is doing at all times but there is a way to get through to children from the get-go and still be a respectable parent.

Don't get me wrong, what teenagers may do to those under the age of consent deserves a reprimand – we can't send the message to young people that they're free to have intercourse with just anyone. But we have to have more flexible boundaries for young people and for the adults that punish them. We have to remember to observe the situation at hand like rational people and not push artificial boundaries on when a person "technically" becomes an adult. Life isn't that cut and dry. Neither is the opposite sex.