

What in the Tik Tok!? Addressing health information from social media

NEW MEXICO ALLIANCE FOR SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CARE

Jen Robinson, MS, WHNP-BC, CNM (she/they)
Adolescent Health Clinical Consultant
NM Alliance for School Based Health Care

Thank you for contributing to this presentation!



ARIELLA ROGAHN-PRESS
STUDENT INTERN

NEW MEXICO
ALLIANCE FOR
SCHOOL-BASED
HEALTH CARE

Disclosures

Jen Robinson MS, WHNP-BC, CNM
Nexplanon trainer – Organon



Learning objectives

01	Review common claims adolescents may encounter online about sexual and reproductive health
02	Describe how to build trust while addressing adolescents' concerns based on online health misinformation
03	Share online resources that provide evidence based, trustworthy information about sexual and reproductive health for young people

Get into groups of 5ish

What have young people told you they have seen/heard

on social media

about health information?

What health information have you seen on social media?



P.S. Please include the most unhinged info

Taking concerns seriously

1) Express empathy / Normalize / Validate
2) Be curious: explore beliefs
    - Examples!
        - Safety concerns
        - Side effects
        - Impact on future fertility
3) Provide an individualized response



Rocca & Harper, 2012







What are young people seeing on social media re: sexual and reproductive health information?

Some ways misinformation misleads

- Claiming that evidence-based interventions were associated with unattributed risks. (33%)
- Make medical recommendations that do not align with professional guidelines. (23%)
- Smaller numbers of claims and narratives:
  - exaggerated risks of medical interventions
  - discouraged evidence-based interventions
  - directly undermined medical trust
  - proposed inaccurate biological mechanisms

John et al 2025

Inflation of risks associated with medical interventions



- Side effects supported by the medical literature disproportionately emphasized relative to benefits
- Example!
  - Potential mental health harms of hormonal contraception frequently discussed
  - Minimal info about oral contraception as treatment for premenstrual dysphoric disorder

Image: Nicole Xu, NPR

A call to action for health care workers: Build trust and exhibit trustworthiness

- "The medical field owns so much of why people are going to these forums and Reddit and Tik-Tok for information and are really buying it because…we have failed them."
- "We have either brushed off their concerns [and] oftentimes they might be met with, 'that's not a real side effect.' We have a huge role in this."

---Dr. Jennifer Lincoln



Image: https://www.drjenniferlincoln.com/

Quote: https://www.npr.org/2025/10/27/nx-s1-5535839/population-shift-birth-rate-misinformation

More than just TikTok!

- Other social media
- Movies/tv shows, peers, friends
- Family
- Community members, etc.

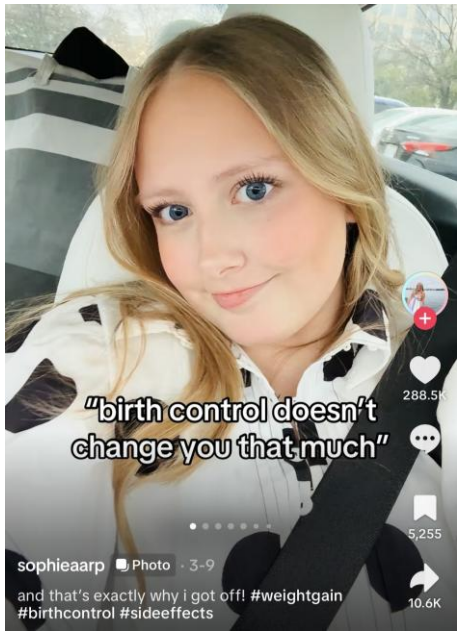
- Unrealistic expectations
- Discordance with their own lived experience/reality
- Can lead to stigma, emotional turmoil, stress, and self-consciousness.







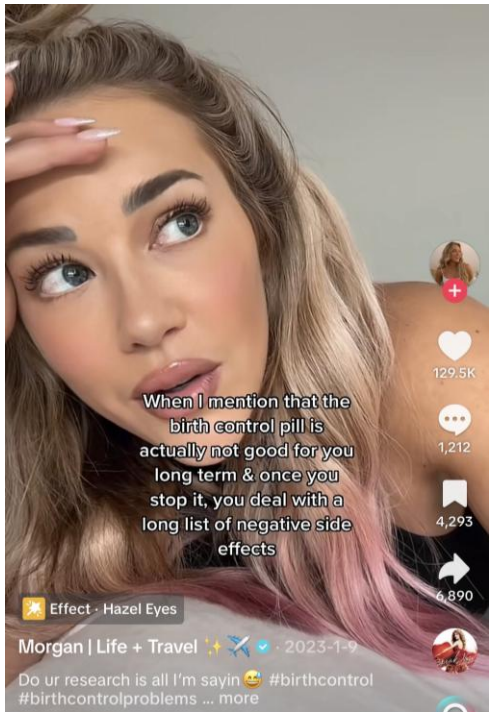
Misinformation around birth control



Before and after videos for birth control saying birth control will cause excessive weight gain

Trending thread that tampons and pads cause heavier and more painful bleeding

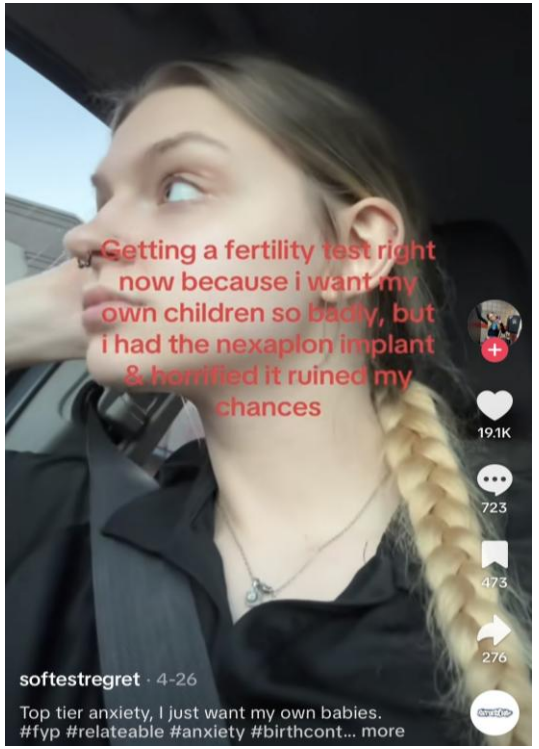




Posts claiming birth control causes cancer and other permanent, negative side effects

Lots of videos on all the cons of birth control telling people not to get it





Fears around birth control causing infertility

Emma, age 14 (she/her)



- Has had heavy menstrual bleeding
- Had a birth control shot a week ago to help with heavy bleeding

"How do I reverse the birth control shot I got last week? My aunt said that birth control makes it so you can't have a baby in the future, and I saw on TikTok that birth control makes you gain weight."

Which best builds trust when an adolescent brings up health-related misinformation?

A. “I see Dr. TikTok has entered the chat”
B. “Thank you so much for bringing this up today.”
C. “That is just not evidence-based, let me tell you actually correct medical information.”
D. All of the above



Taking concerns seriously

1) Express empathy / Normalize / Validate
2) Be curious: explore beliefs
    - Examples!
        - Safety concerns
        - Side effects
        - Impact on future fertility
3) Provide an individualized response



Rocca & Harper, 2012

Taking concerns seriously



"I'm so glad you came in, I have heard this concern before!"

"I'm just really freaked out because I don't want something unnatural in my body making it so I can never be a mom!"



1) Affirm:
Express Empathy/
Normalize/
Validate



"Tell me more about your concern that the birth control could cause you to not be able to get pregnant in the future.

- When do you think you might like to get pregnant?
- How important is it to prevent pregnancy right now?
- How happy/upset would you feel if you got pregnant right now?

2) **Ask:** Be curious, explore beliefs

Callegari, et. al 2021

Emma says…

"I don't really want to be pregnant right now… But maybe next semester I might want to start trying to get pregnant… So I guess maybe I do want some kind of birth control that's more natural"



Provide a response and resources based on what is shared. Check in about how much she wants to chat further



3) **Share:** Provide an individualized response that addresses the specific concerns directly

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF BIRTH CONTROL?

Most common side effects are from birth control hormones.

No Hormones


Condom


Internal Condom


Fertility Awareness



Pulling Out

May cause heavier bleeding & cramping.


Copper IUD

No hormones means these methods won't cause hormone-related side effects.

Some people experience side effects from birth control, others don't.

Progestin Hormones


Hormonal IUD


Mini-Pill


Implant

May cause weight gain for some.


Shot

Common side effects include lighter, irregular periods, bloating, mood changes, and reduced sex drive.*

Talk to a health care provider if you have side effects you don't like. They may be able to help.

Progestin & Estrogen Hormones


Ring

There are many types of pills & each can have different side effects.


Pill


Patch

Common side effects include lighter, more regular periods, breast tenderness, nausea, vomiting, and headaches.*

Not every method is a good match for everyone. Ask a health care provider about the possible risks and benefits for you.

*These are not all the possible side effects for everyone, go to Bedsider.org or talk with a health care provider to learn more.

© 2024 UCSF School of Medicine and Power to Decide

BIRTH CONTROL: WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Look inside to learn about your options.

BEDSIDER Bedsider.org

Beyond the Pill beyondthepill.ucsf.edu

Privacy | Start + Stop | Side Effects | Bleeding | Effectiveness | Fertility | EC

WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO ME ABOUT MY BIRTH CONTROL?

You might already know what's important right now, or not, and what's important to you may change over time. These common questions about birth control can help you find a method that works for you.

Go to Bedsider.org for details on all the methods, how to get them, and how to use them.

PRIVACY — CAN ANYONE TELL IF I'M USING BIRTH CONTROL?

- Some birth control methods are easier to keep private than others.
- Think about who you want to keep your birth control private from and how they might discover it.

START + STOP — CAN I START & STOP BIRTH CONTROL ON MY OWN?

- Some birth control methods require a health care provider to start or stop, others don't.
- Think about how that would work for you.

SIDE EFFECTS — WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF BIRTH CONTROL?

- Many common side effects are from birth control hormones.
- Think about what side effects are okay for you.

BLEEDING — HOW WILL BIRTH CONTROL CHANGE MY PERIOD?

- Some birth control methods can change how much bleeding you have or how often. These changes are safe.
- Think about what bleeding changes would be okay for you.

EFFECTIVENESS — HOW WELL DOES BIRTH CONTROL WORK?

- Some birth control methods are better than others at preventing pregnancy.
- Think about how important it is to you to prevent pregnancy right now.

FERTILITY — HOW SOON CAN I GET PREGNANT AFTER STOPPING BIRTH CONTROL?

- After stopping birth control, your chance of getting pregnant returns to whatever is normal for you, but it's not immediate with all methods.
- Think about if you want to be pregnant and when that might be.

EC — WHAT IS EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (EC)?

- Emergency contraception (EC) pills and some IUDs can prevent pregnancy when used up to 5 days after sex.
- Think about if you need it now or in the future.

© 2024 UCSF School of Medicine and Power to Decide

Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health | UCSF University of California San Francisco

HOW SOON CAN I GET PREGNANT AFTER STOPPING BIRTH CONTROL?

Right away



Condom



Internal Condom



Fertility Awareness



Pulling Out



Copper IUD

You could get pregnant anytime you have sex and don't use one of these methods (or another method).

Pretty quickly



Pill



Patch



Ring



Implant



Hormonal IUD

You could get pregnant within a day to a few weeks after you stop using these methods.

Give it some time



Shot

The shot may reduce your chances of getting pregnant for several months to a year.

You could get pregnant as soon as 3 months after getting the shot.

None of these birth control methods will affect your chances of getting pregnant in the future.

Your ability to get pregnant (a.k.a. fertility) will return to whatever is normal for you after stopping birth control.

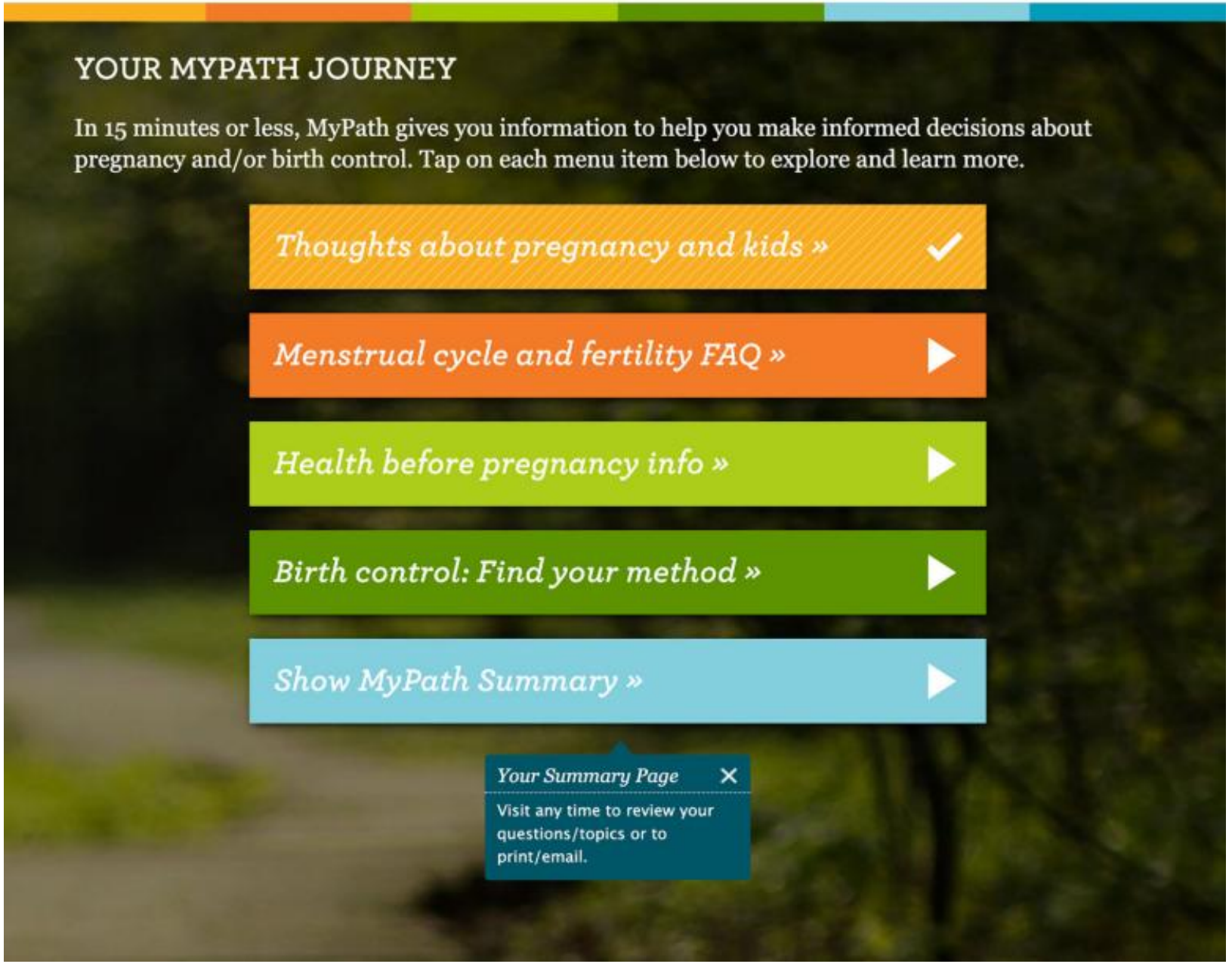
How long it takes to get pregnant is different for everyone.

© 2024 UCSF School of Medicine and Power to Decide

Person centered decision making tool

University of California San Francisco

Person-Centered Reproductive Health Program



Callegari, et. al 2021; https://www.mypathtool.org/en/splash

Bedsider.org



Image: Bedsider.org

Emma says…



"I'd feel more comfortable without hormones"
Accepts mypathtool.org, bedsider.org resource. and condoms
Offered follow-up appointment





All members of the school health team can provide support

… even if you don’t have the answer

Combating Misinformation

American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists

Share | Print

Health care misinformation is growing increasingly pervasive online, posing real harm to patients seeking to educate themselves about their bodies, their health, and their options for care. Misinformation and myths

We have created and compiled the resources below to help people identify misinformation when they see it, combat myths, provide evidence-based information, and help clinicians talk with their patients about misinformation and communicate the facts.

JUMP TO:

Issue Briefs | Facts Are Important | Misinformation Data | News and Media | For Patients | For Members

https://www.acog.org/contact/media-center/combating-misinformation

Answer the call to action:
Be a trustworthy, supportive adult

- Building trust with the young people we support is key to countering misinformation.
- Start with validation and clarifying questions
- Reach out to us at NMASBHC for more support!



Image: etsy.com - Transpainter

Who is a "Trusted Adult"?

NetSmartzKids

Trusted adults are people whose words and actions make you feel safe.
Trusted adults act this way both online and offline.

Actions

Trusted adults...

Listen to you when you have a problem or question





Help you and make you feel safe

Respect your body and your personal space



Words

Trusted adults say things like...

I'll answer your questions.

You can tell me if you have a problem.

I care about what you think.

Some of My Trusted Adults

Draw a picture of your trusted adult in the circles.
Below the picture, add their name and why you trust this person.

Name: _____

I trust this person because

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name: _____

I trust this person because

_____

_____

_____

_____

https://www.missingkids.org/content/dam/netsmartz/downloadable/tipsheets/who-is-a-trusted-adult.pdf

#prebunking



Can people be immunized against disinformation?

Debunking lies about health and medicine is vital but often occurs too late to change the minds of those who get duped. An expanding strategy, prebunking, exposes people to disinformation tactics so they can recognize and resist false messages.

https://www.aamc.org/news/can-people-be-immunized-against-disinformation

Topics young people may want to know about… but don’t want to bring up first

Start the conversation!

- Normal menstrual cycle vs. warning signs
- Vaginal discharge
- How to clean a vulva
- Normal age to start masturbating, thinking about sex, having sex for the first time
- How to manage spontaneous erections
- Pain/discomfort during sex



Anonymous question box activity

- Clearly state ground rules
- Everyone submits a piece of paper (even if blank)
- This might be the first time they have had conversation about these topics with adults or at all
- Pre-read questions
- Can re-phrase questions



Image credit: Huffpost

Engage trusted adults and families

Parental communication around sexual + reproductive health and relationship abuse is linked with:

- delayed onset of sexual activity
- increased condom use
- decreased rates of adolescent relationship abuse victimization and perpetration



East et al, 2015; Khetarpal et al. 2022; Dittus et al. 2015; Markham et al. 2010



Image source: SBHA "Addressing Adolescent Relationship Abuse in School Based Health Care" Presentation- Slide 34

Create a welcoming space for questions that might feel embarrassing

Resources can be shared in/near:

- Bathrooms
- Waiting rooms
- Exam rooms
- Bags with condoms or menstrual products
- Take What You Need stations

Top hits for answering common questions

Bedsider.org

Youngwomenshealth.org

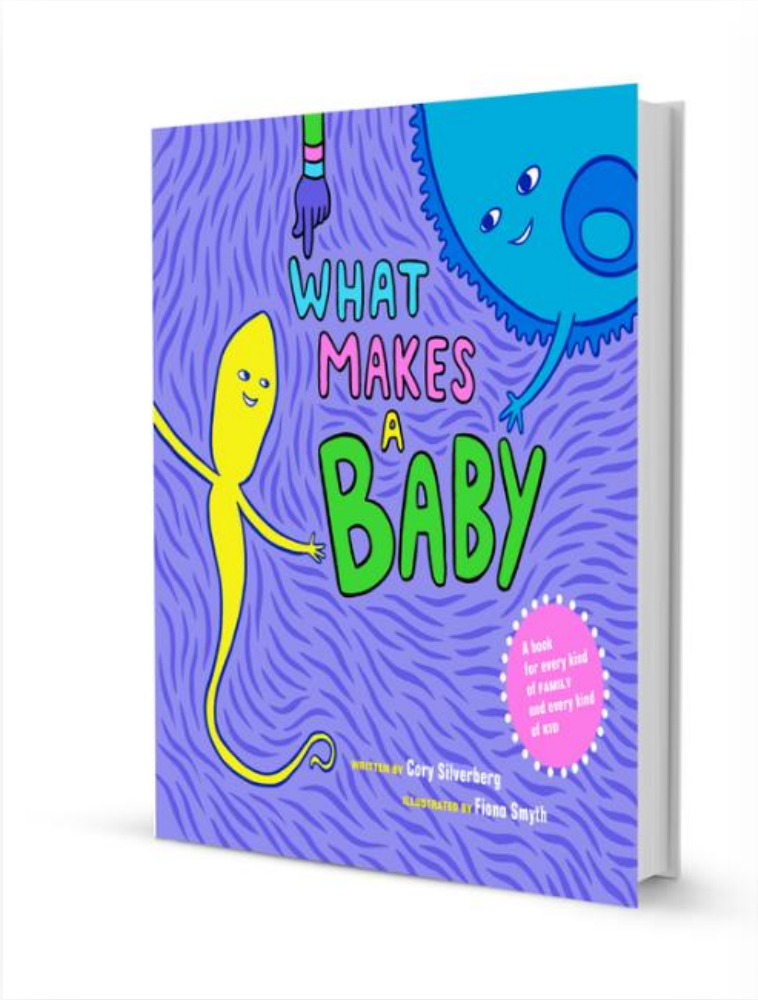
Thetrevorproject.org

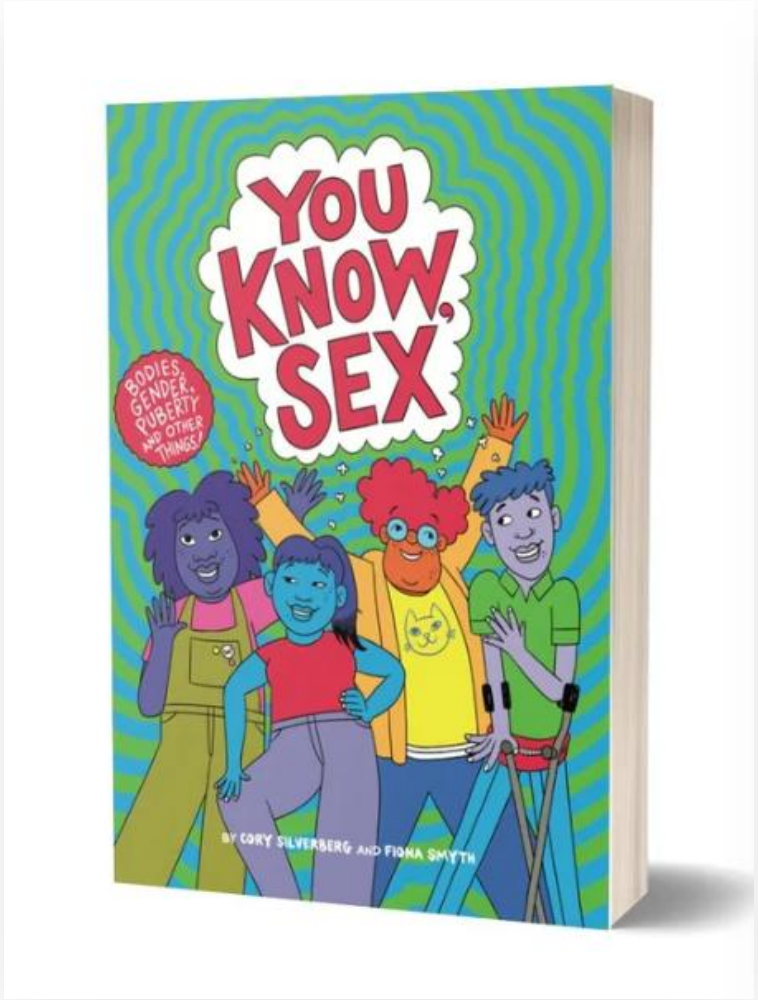
Amaze.org

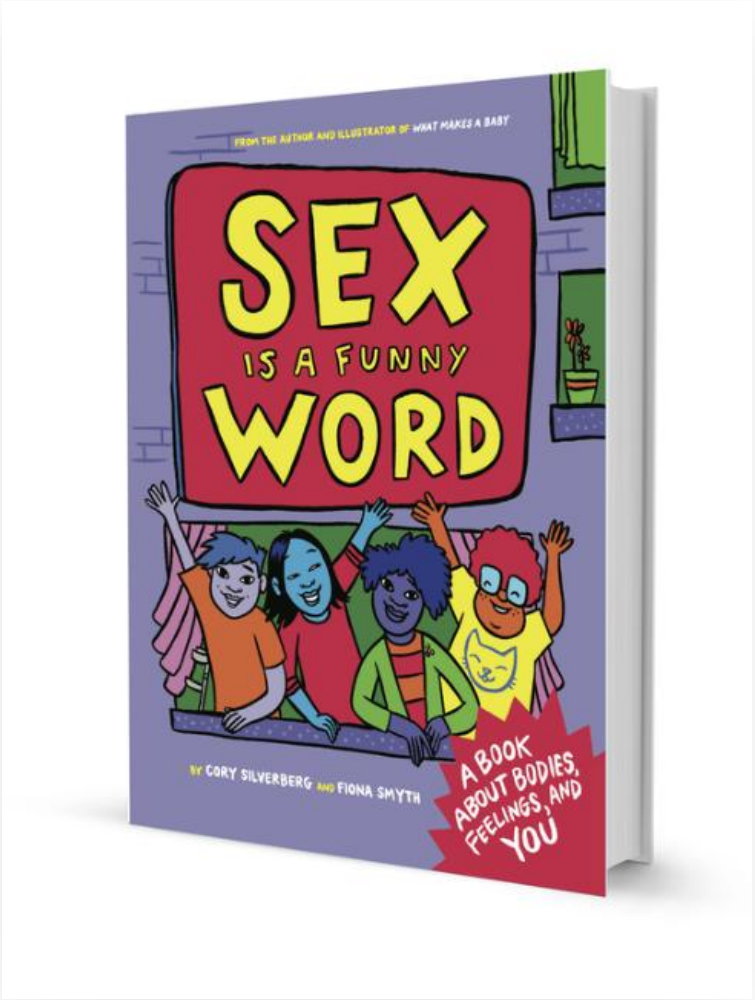
Joinonelove.org

NEW MEXICO
ALLIANCE FOR
SCHOOL-BASED
HEALTH CARE

Books by Cory Silverberg







Amaze.org

"PRESCRIBE" A VIDEO



Pregnancy and Reproduction

Choose



Puberty and Menstruation

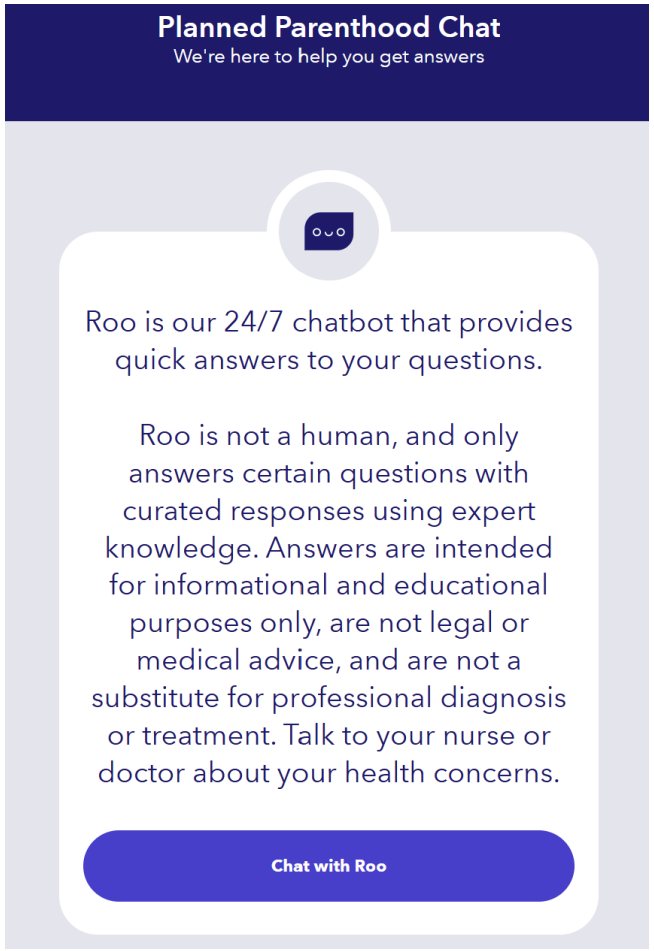
Choose



Healthy Relationships

Choose

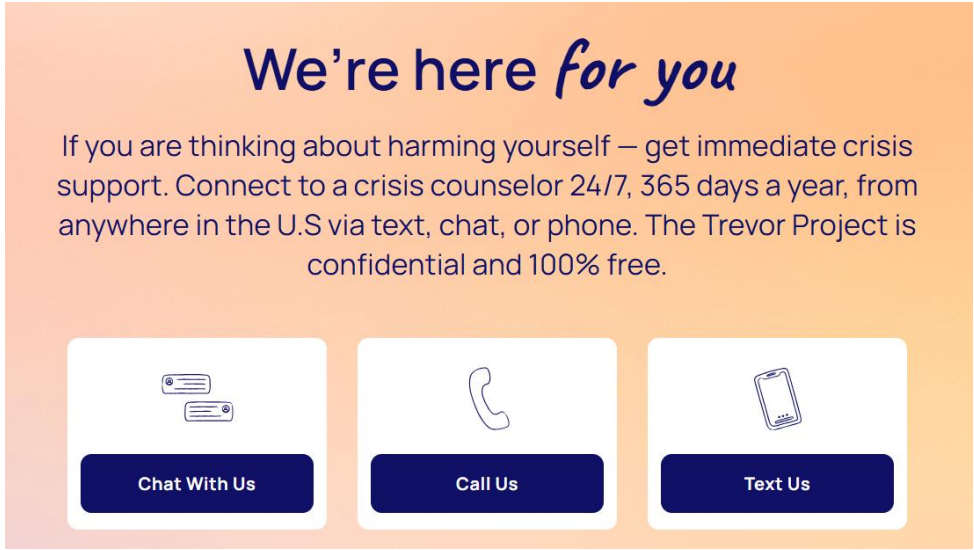
Harm reduction – trustworthy online chats that are not an AI bot



Roo- Planned Parenthood Chatbot to answer questions about sexual/reproductive health



988 – NM Crisis and Access line; you can also call **1-855-4NM-7100** for a peer-to-peer warmline to talk to professionals for behavioral health support



Trevor Project Helpline – Chat, call, or text for support, LGBTQ+ friendly helpline

THE TREVOR PROJECT

133 MEMBERS CURRENTLY ONLINE

Find your *community* at TrevorSpace.

TrevorSpace is a welcoming online social community for LGBTQ+ young people between the ages of 13-24 years old. With over 700,000 members across the globe, you can find support groups and make friends in a moderated online safe space intentionally designed for you.

Our trained counselors understand the challenges LGBTQ+ young people face and are available for support 24/7.

They will listen without judgment. When you text, chat, or call, all of your conversations are confidential, and you can share as much or as little as you'd like.

thetrevorproject.org

Don’t be a stranger!



Jen Robinson, MS, WHNP-BC, CNM
Adolescent Health Clinical Consultant
NM Alliance for School Based Health Care

jen@nmasbhc.org

For technical assistance + trainings!

NEW MEXICO
ALLIANCE FOR
SCHOOL-BASED
HEALTH CARE