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"Hooking Up" It's Not Just A Problem For Our Youth

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There's a new trend in the world today. It's called "Hooking Up." It's an issue that needs to be addressed in every Jewish community, including the observant world.

Over the last several months I've realized that "hooking-up" is not just limited to our youth, but individuals of all ages including our older population. This is an issue not only for the secular world, but an issue for every movement in Judaism (reform, conservative, traditional, renewal and orthodox).

According to an article published in the New York Times, "Hooking Up," by Tom Wolfe:

"Hooking up" was a term known in the year 2000 to almost every American child over the age of nine, but to only a relatively small percentage of their parents, who, even if they heard it, thought it was being used in the old sense of "meeting" someone. Among the children, hooking up was always a sexual experience, but the nature and extent of what they did could vary widely. Back in the twentieth century, American girls had used baseball terminology. "First base" referred to embracing and kissing; "second base" referred to groping and fondling and deep, or "French," kissing, commonly known as "heavy petting"; "third base" referred to fellatio, usually known in polite conversation by the ambiguous term "oral sex"; and "home plate" meant conception-mode intercourse, known familiarly as "going all the way." In the year 2000, in the era of hooking up, "first base" meant deep kissing ("tonsil hockey"), groping, and fondling; "second base" meant oral sex; "third base" meant going all the way; and "home plate" meant learning each other's names.

We all need to be aware that there are online "social networks" for Jewish adults where they meet for the soul purpose of having sexual relations with virtual strangers. I don't want to get into the moral debate regarding these issues, yet I do want to say it is a problem in every community. It's a problem that can be extremely dangerous not only because of the risk of assault on the individual "hooking-up," it's also a serious problem for their loved ones. When one "hooks-up" with another they are putting themselves, their spouse and or any future relationship at risk of contracting AIDS or any other STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease).

Over the last several months I've been speaking with individuals who are considered to be observant who are between the ages of 18 - 70. Most are single, divorced or widows/widowers, yet a few are married. Most have never thought about the fact they could be carriers of the HIV virus. Most knew very little about AIDS or other forms of STD's.

The risks are serious. It's an issue that needs to be addressed in each and household and every community. We need to encourage every rabbi, cantor, community leader, synagogue, yeshiva parent and teacher to learn as much as they can about AIDS and STD's. It's vitally important for all of us to be talking about the problems with our youth, elderly and anyone else who may be sexually active. Perhaps we can encourage every mikvah (for both men and women) to have literature available on the topic of the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. It's the only hope we have of preventing an epidemic of AIDS in your family and or community.

Remember if someone is married and having sex outside of marriage they are putting their spouse and any potential children they may have in the future at risk for AIDS or other form of STD.

The sad truth is that every child who is molested or any adult who is sexually assaulted is also at risk of contracting an STD. It's vitally important we get factual information out in a way that is not shaming or blaming. The goal is not to push anyone deeper into secrecy. The goal is prevention.