

## The Used Condom

by

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My parents never explained sex to me. My older sister told me how babies were born – not how they were conceived, the way they actually came out – but I refused to believe her. What she told me seemed impossible. I checked out a book on advice for teen girls from my Lutheran School library. It gave guidance about developing good posture (walk with a book on your head), makeup (don't wear it), etiquette (always write thank you notes), behavior (respect your elders), etc. It also had a chapter about a girl who got pregnant (It didn't describe how she got that way...); she was so disgraced that she drank lye to try to kill herself.

In sixth grade, the girls saw “the movie” about menstruation. In this stilted black and white film, the girl who started menstruating, actually told her mother and father. I remember thinking, “I would **never** tell my **father** something like that!” The day I first saw a blood stain on my panties, I told my mom. She simply showed me where the sanitary pads were and I was on my own.

When I was fifteen, I asked my mother what “making love” meant. I had seen an old movie on television in which a female character was being slapped by her mother as she repeatedly screamed, “Did you make love to

him?” It seemed pretty drastic. My mother said, “It’s something married people do.” And that was that.

The first time I saw a spot on my boyfriend’s pants after some heavy petting, I had no idea what it was and thought nothing of it. Remembering it later, after I had learned what an “ejaculation” was, I remembered those teen experiences.

My youthful sexual experiences were marked by never-reported date rape and casual encounters – it was the ’60’s. My husband confessed once that he had syphilis after a supposedly consensual encounter at a party. I was determined that my children would be well informed about sex, protection from venereal disease and pregnancy, and issues of respect for themselves and their partners.

At the tender age of six, I began to explain everything I thought they should know. I showed them illustrations from *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, a feminist, women’s health book. I told them what intercourse was as well as the use and purpose of condoms. I explained that just because a girl said “yes” or appeared to “give in” to a boy, it didn’t mean that she really wanted to. I told them they should try to find out how she really felt, talk to her about it, and respect her even if she didn’t respect herself. I never prevented them from watching movies or television shows with sexual content (well, I didn’t let them see “Last Tango in Paris”). I didn’t censor their choices of reading material. I answered all their questions, although I’m sure they could

sense that I didn't really want "personal" details. I certainly never used myself in any examples I gave.

As honest as I was with them, as modern and thorough I thought my approach had been, I was still horrified the afternoon I found a used condom on the floor next to my bed.

It was a lovely spring day, close to the end of the school year. Jesse had just turned 16 and he was finishing ninth grade for the second time – he skipped most of his classes the first time he was in ninth grade. I got home from work at about 5:30 and walked my bike around to the falling-down shed in the back yard. Max followed me, barking and wagging his tail against me: thwump, thwump, thwump. After I leaned my bike against one of the exposed studs, I patted Max on his flank as we walked together to the back porch. "You good dog, you," I baby-talked. "You are such a good dog. Yes you are. Good boy."

Pushing in the slightly off-the-hinge door, Max rushed in before me.

"Hi, Mom." Nina was cutting some vegetables on the kitchen table. "Hi, Mom." "Hi, Mom," the boys called from the living room.

"Hi. How's it goin'?"

I went into my bedroom to change my clothes and wash my hands in the bathroom that opened to my room on one side and the boys' room on the other. I didn't notice anything unusual as I sat on the edge of the bed to untie my shoes. Max came to me and put his head in my lap and I pet his head for

a few moments. “Okay, that’s enough, Max,” I said as I stood up. Max started sniffing at my feet. He acted like he had found I gopher hole. I pushed Max with my knee and said, “Get out, Max.” I looked down where Max had been sniffing and saw a condom.

“Oh, my God! What is this? How did this get here?” I bellowed.

From the kitchen where she was fixing dinner, Nina sounded startled, “What, Mom? What’s wrong? What are you talking about?”

“This!” I boomed. “This condom on the floor by my bed!”

When I looked up, Jared, Jesse and Nina were scrunched awkwardly in the doorway peering into my room. I suspect that Jared and Nina knew Jesse was responsible, but no one said a word.

“Look, I know this belongs to one of you! Someone left it here! Who?”

“It’s mine,” Jesse whispered, looking at his feet.

“You!?! You had sex in my bed?” I stormed at him, grabbing his shirt. Even though he was seven inches taller, I wasn’t afraid he would defy me.

“Yes.”

“You had the nerve to have sex in my bed and then you were stupid enough to leave a used condom on the floor? Where was your head? What were you thinking?” I was shaking.

“Mom, Mom, wait....” he stammered. “At least I used a condom!”

“Oh, ho! ‘ At least I used a condom!’ What’s that supposed to mean?”

Sheepishly, Jesse continued, "Well, Mom, you always told us to use a condom if we were gonna have sex."

I was speechless for several seconds. Then I shrieked, "You're not old enough to be doing this."

Jesse didn't say a word. Nina and Jared had silently disappeared.

"Boy, if you think you're old enough to be having sex in my bed, then you're old enough to get a job and go to a motel!"

Jesse remained mute.

"Lie down on my bed. You're getting a whipping." I hadn't spanked any of the kids since they were about ten or eleven.

"Oh, Mom, come on..." he was trying to speak as I went on yelling.

"No! Lie down!"

Jesse surrendered. He stretched out facedown across my bed, just the way he had when he was a little boy. He was so tall that his legs hung over the edge.

I yanked one of my belts out of the closet and lashed it across his jeans-clad bottom five times. It didn't hurt. He didn't even feel it. He rose and stood in front of me, blushing.

"Don't you ever do this again," I ordered. "You hear me?"

Slinking out of the room, he whispered, "Okay, Mom."

A moment later I heard some snickering from the living room where had had joined his brother and sister. Shortly, Nina finished making dinner

and I took a shower and jumped into my sweat pants and t-shirt. We sat down to dinner at the big, heavy wood table in the middle of the kitchen.

Jesse broke the rules, lied to me, and defied me many times after that, but that was the last time I spanked him. However, fifteen years after the “condom” incident, Jesse made a further confession about that day.

He had invited over a girl he had been assured would do “it.” He wanted to try “it.” When they got to the house, he asked her if she wanted to watch T.V. The television was in my small bedroom and the only “seating” was my bed. They sat there in front of the little screen for close to an hour, but Jesse never had the nerve to touch the girl, much less anything more.

After the girl left, Jesse opened the condom package to see what it looked like and how one would use it. He dropped it by mistake when he was throwing away the wrapper and I found a “used” condom on the floor when I came home from work.

Jesse didn’t want to admit that he hadn’t had sex. He would rather have a whipping for not actually doing the wrong thing than admit that he didn’t have the nerve to do it. Kids!