



## **WAKE UP MOMS AND DADS! YOU KNOW FAR LESS ABOUT YOUR TEEN DAUGHTER THAN YOU THINK, ACCORDING TO A NEW WE TV POLL**

**Almost Half (47%) of Teenage Girls Say They Have Never Spoken With Their Parents About Sex, Drugs, Cigarettes, or Alcohol, and Over One-third Say They Can't Talk to Their Parents About Anything**

**New Survey of Girls Aged 14-18 and Their Parents Timed To Coincide With March 10 Premiere of Docu-Series, *High School Confidential***

New York, March 10, 2008 – It is hardly shocking that teenage girls today suffer significant anxiety and stress, but according to a recently released poll commissioned by the cable network WE tv and conducted by Harris Interactive®, many are struggling with a much bigger issue—poor communication with their parents.

The poll, released to coincide with the March 10th premiere of the docu-series, *High School Confidential*, indicates that many parents who think they are staying in close touch with their teenage daughters' lives may be operating under an incorrect assumption. Although over three quarters (78%) of parents are sure that their daughters can talk to them about anything, only slightly more than half (54%) of high school girls surveyed agreed that they could chat about anything with their parents. In addition, 34% of teens disagree with the statement "I can talk to my parents about anything." As a result, parents may be surprised to learn they are far less informed than they believe. While a whopping 73% of parents report that they know much of what is happening in the lives of their adolescent daughters, only 45% of the teenage respondents concur that their parents know a great deal about what is *really* going on with them.

### **ON PARENT / TEEN COMMUNICATION**

Parents and teens also have vastly different perceptions of their conversations with each other. When it comes to sex, only 6% of parents say that they never discuss sex with their child, but almost half (47%) of teenage girls polled indicate never having conversations about sex with their parents. Parents also may not be attuned to what issues are most important to their teen daughters. Although three-quarters (74%) of high school girls say they personally know someone their age who has been pregnant, teen pregnancy hardly tops the list of parental concerns. In fact, only 21% of parents say it is a major concern that their daughter might get pregnant—and just 30% consider their daughter having unprotected sex to be a major concern. Similarly, while most girls (87%) are stressed by the way their body looks, half (52%) of their parents are not at all concerned that their daughters might develop eating disorders.

While teen girls report talking most to their parents about school, friendships, and hopes and dreams, they far less frequently discuss issues such as drugs, alcohol, smoking cigarettes, romantic relationships and sex. The avoidance of these potentially controversial topics may be why girls are less likely to seek their parents' advice. Although most (84%) parents say they trust their children, nearly twice as many teens polled say they would definitely ask their friends for opinions about problems (42%) rather than absolutely turning to a mother or stepmother (23%) for advice. Yet, parents should know that teen girls value their parents' guidance; over half (52%) report that when they do get advice they almost always listen to it.

Parents who want to improve their communication with teen daughters and learn more about what is actually going on in their lives should take note of this finding: Nearly half (45%) of high school girls polled say they would like to spend more time with their families.

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### ON TEEN STRESS

Today's teenage girls are busy; 96% are involved in at least one extracurricular activity, more than half (54%) of all high school students volunteer, and 41% of juniors and seniors have part time jobs. Teen girls know they should be getting more sleep. Fourteen to 18-year-olds estimate that they need 8.4 hours of sleep per night, but typically get an average of only 6.8 hours. That means teen girls miss a total of 8 hours of sleep, or a full night, over the course of each 5-day school week.

Yet their stress stems from more than their current commitments and lack of sleep; almost all 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders (97%) say that preparing for their future (getting into college and getting a job) and earning good grades (95%) cause them at least some stress. Specifically, 71% of girls report the most stress ("a great deal" or "quite a bit") coming from preparing for the future, 66% from getting good grades in school, 42% from parents, and 41% from the way their bodies look.

Parents underestimate how many of their teens binge or purge to lose weight; while only 4% of parents believe their teenage daughters have engaged in these behaviors, three times as many (12%) girls admit that they have binged or purged in an effort to lose weight.

### ON PEER PRESSURE

Peer pressure may be less influential than parents think. While 64% of mothers and fathers believe their daughters are pressured to have sex and 56% perceive they feel at least some stress from pressure to drink, do drugs, and smoke, only 25% of girls report pressure to have sex and 21% to smoke, drink or do drugs. Teenage girls also admit to about half as much cigarette smoking (7%) than their parents report (15%). In fact, instead of feeling social pressures to use substances and have sex, far more teenage girls say that they experience stress related to relationships with their parents (87%) and friends (83%).

"The gap between parents' perceptions of what is happening in their teen daughters' lives and what girls actually report should be a wake-up call, encouraging mothers and fathers to start talking—less about school and friends, and more about girls' worries about their future; their feelings about their bodies, romantic relationships; sexuality; and temptations to use substances. Through these conversations with parents, teens are best able to refine the thinking, values, and skills they need to make smart decisions in their social lives," said Roni Cohen-Sandler, Ph.D., author of *Stressed-out Girls: Helping Them Thrive in the Age of Pressure*.

### **Full methodology**

On behalf of WE tv, Harris Interactive® conducted an online survey with 614 high school girls, ages 14 – 18 between February 7 and 18, 2008, and 597 parents of teenage girls ages 14-18 between February 12 and 19, 2008. Teenage girl data were weighted to key demographic (grade level, age, race/ethnicity, region, school location and parents' highest level of education) variables. Parent data were weighted to key demographic (education, age, sex, race/ethnicity, region, household income) variables. Propensity score weighting was used to adjust for parent respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible

sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

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Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

#### **About Harris Interactive**

Harris Interactive is a global leader in custom market research. With a long and rich history in multimodal research, powered by our science and technology, we assist clients in achieving business results. Harris Interactive serves clients globally through our North American, European and Asian offices and a network of independent market research firms. For more information, please visit [www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com).

#### **About High School Confidential**

***High School Confidential***, is a ground breaking documentary series premiering on WE tv, Monday, March 10, 2008 at 10pm/9c. The eight-episode series follows 12 girls through four years of high school, from freshman year through graduation, capturing the good, the bad, the poignant, and the pivotal moments in their experience. The series, which features incredible transformations, both physical and emotional, goes beyond the classroom to reveal the pressing issues in today's adolescent culture including: depression, anxiety disorders, self-esteem problems, decisions on sexuality, experimentation with substances, complex family dynamics, religion and even death.

#### **About WE tv**

WE tv is the content destination where women go to indulge their curiosity with quality unscripted programming from weddings to real life stories. With programs like the hit series "Bridezillas," unique movie packages including "Cinematherapy", topical specials, and its public affairs initiative WE Empowers Women, the network supports women and appeals to their interests. WE tv is a subsidiary of Rainbow Entertainment Services, and currently is seen in over 68 million homes.

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