



THE DANCING QUEEN FINDS HERSELF WITH A SITUATION

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Bristol Palin, "Dancing With the Stars" star and oh, yes, Sarah Palin daughter, recently teamed up with "The Situation," the iron-abbed stud from "Jersey Shore," to do a video on sexual abstinence.... sort of. It's confusing, I know...but so is the message they are sending to teens.

"Pause before you play" is the theme of the video. The message... or shall we say messages seem to be:

1. Sex is simply "play." Just use a condom so that, heaven forbid a baby does not result.
2. Sex produces babies and that is terrible. Bristol should know. She is choosing abstinence in the future...."for real...for real...for real." We're not clear why.

Conclusion? Poor Bristol must suffer...not for having sex but for having it without a condom. She has now chosen a sexless life because of some personal commitment to an old set of morals that make no sense at all.

"The Situation" on the other hand seems to have it right. He will continue to thrill lots of ladies... he'll just wear a condom so that no baby is forthcoming. The perfect solution. Or is it?

The message of the video is certainly congruent with Barack Obama's statement during the Presidential campaign. He said he was supporting explicit sex education because he didn't want his daughters to be "punished with a baby."

I don't believe for a moment Bristol Palin feels her little son "Tripp" is a punishment. If anything, this little child has provided a way of redemption...some joy in the midst of the sorrow and a deep and meaningful lesson...learned a very hard way. But I don't think kids watching this video will get that.

It serves well the half measured strategy of preventing teen pregnancy. All angles are covered; don't have sex...but if you do, use condoms. This is what "Comprehensive Sex Ed" in public schools is all about. Many in our culture believe that teen sex is not the problem... only pregnancy is.

It is true that teen pregnancies produce more welfare recipients...stunt personal growth and achievement...create more poverty and crime out of single mom parenting... and often result in a cycle of more unwed pregnancies.

But abstinence proponents have a deeper concern. There is more at stake with the nation's teens than preventing pregnancy. Sex is a powerful force that when entered into too early under the wrong circumstance can do great harm...even if no pregnancy results.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that 19 million new STD infections occur every year. And, even more alarming, nearly 50 percent of these new cases happen to young people

between the ages of 15 and 24. The American Social Health Association (ASHA) reports that half of all new HIV infections occur in teenagers. It is unclear how really effective condoms are in preventing these new strains of STD and especially controversial whether they do anything at all to prevent HPV, which can lead to cervical cancer. A high percentage of male teen suicides can be traced to rejection after sexual involvement. Kids who enter into sexual relations lose their focus (as we all do) preventing them from full emotional maturity. Their gifts and interests are thwarted...their energies sidetracked when sex becomes the overpowering focus of their young lives. Academic pursuits suffer...natural areas of giftedness are neglected...in short; it interferes with their growth and development and endangers their health.

Sex brings powerful emotions...rejection...heartbreak. It can be devastating to mature adults...much more so to adolescent teens.

You can put a condom on their bodies, but who will protect their hearts? This should be the message to all teens. Waiting is worth it. And it is good for you. And sex will be much more rewarding and satisfying if you wait until it is right.

Adults promote "safe sex" because they say they don't believe abstinence is possible. I think they promote "safe sex" because they themselves don't

want to have any sexual boundaries. If it were possible to control oneself, they'd also have to make hard choices. A lax culture on sexuality appears easier for us all. Self-control is a thing of the past...except when it comes to eating. Consider this:

What if sexual gluttony were something you could see? What if each out of control encounter were marked on our appearance? We find obesity unattractive because it represents out of control personal indulgence. What if we could see out of control sexual behavior manifest itself the way over eating does?

Here's the deal; we can't see it, but the effects are still there on the inside. It manifests itself in the inability to commit to marriage...to enjoy sex and intimacy with one partner. It produces guilt...restlessness...and lack of discipline in other areas. Sexual indulgence takes its toll in many ways besides pregnancy. And often a consequence...pregnancy...brings sobriety and clarity as it has for Bristol Palin. Abstinence-Plus, Pause before you Play proponents want to remove the obvious consequence without changing the harmful behavior. They want to remove one consequence while ignoring the equally egregious rest of them.

The move to simply prevent pregnancy is a half measure...preventing the necessary awareness that sex is meaningful, powerful, often producing one of the great mysteries of life in the process...new life. It is NOT play.

The "Situation" looks like the smarter one in this video, but

fast-forward ten years and I'm putting my money on Bristol Palin. Hard choices and self-control bring great rewards...just not quickly. One day Mr. Jersey Shore will want something deeper and more meaningful but it may have escaped his grasp. People who lack self-control don't just say, "I do" and have it. People who "play" with sex get burned eventually.

Pause before you play...yes. But pauses don't prevent consequences, hard choices do.