



graphic by Gemma Hill

ME, MYSELF AND I

Female masturbation is seldom acknowledged due to the widespread notion that female sexual pleasure must come from a male partner

BY ANONYMOUS*

“Yes, I masturbate,” I said to my friend, turning my hot, probably beet-red face away from hers during a game of truth or dare. At 16, this was a sentence I had never uttered aloud and never thought I would. Masturbation was supposed to be something secret, ignored. Even the word is weird. “Mas-tur-ba-tion,” makes you uncomfortable, doesn’t it? Guys have ‘jerking off,’ ‘beating the meat,’ and even ‘wanking it,’ you get the idea. Girls only have ‘masturbating,’ which sounds like something you do to prepare a turkey. It’s not — for lack of a better word — sexy.

I began masturbating when I was pretty young, but, until eighth grade, I didn’t actually know what I was doing. In fact, up until that point, I thought that only guys masturbated. I assumed girls just couldn’t or didn’t.

When I was younger, a friend vaguely mentioned something about being able to get pregnant even if you hadn’t gotten your period yet — which is false by the way — and I, with my complex understanding of the female reproductive system, took that to mean I could get myself pregnant just by touching myself. So I stopped out of fear, but soon started again. In my mind, I was risking pregnancy every time.

But I never told anyone, until that fateful game of truth or dare. After I answered yes, my friends shared that they too masturbated, much to my relief. As we sat there with flushed faces, we learned that other girls, in fact, all of the girls in the room, did too. In the conversations that followed, I found that I had friends that used their hands. Friends that used electric toothbrushes, back massagers and shower heads. Friends who had tried but couldn’t orgasm. Friends who watched porn, friends who read it and friends who didn’t.

While it is important for us to have had this conversation, it shouldn’t have taken so

long. Since middle school, I had witnessed boys talk openly at school about masturbation. Guys in my seventh-grade class would compare their favorite porn stars and discuss their weekend jerk sessions like they were a huge accomplishment.

Books, movies and TV shows constantly have jokes about left hands, lotion and tissues. I distinctly remember sitting in art class and overhearing a table of boys talking at full volume about masturbation methods (socks were the most popular) and how they dispose of their cum. Guys would talk about how horny they were and which girls gave them erections. For them masturbation was

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The double standard that begins in classroom conversations creates an expectation that is reinforced by the media — just Google sexism in movie ratings. Movies and TV shows often fall into the same pitfalls that my middle school experience did. Girls are only ever portrayed expressing desire for a relationship, not for sex itself. The normalization of male sexuality and the lack of female desire perpetuates a never-ending cycle of that erases female sexuality almost completely.

Luckily, things are changing. Hollywood is beginning to, rather timidly, address masturbation on “teen” platforms. Movies like “Ladybird” and “Booksmart” depict main characters masturbating and talking about it with their friends. TV shows like “Dear White

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People” and “Sex Education” discuss masturbation in detail, presenting it as equally or more satisfying than sex. This kind of content makes room for and invites conversations like the one I first had at 16.

I wish I hadn’t waited until that sleepover to share my “secret.” Had health classes addressed female masturbation, I probably would have talked about it sooner. Eight-year-old me could have enjoyed myself instead of stressing over childhood pregnancy. 16-year-old me could have felt comfortable in my sexuality, instead of hiding it. We don’t have to let this stay a “secret” issue. No, you don’t need to broadcast your habits in a public forum or talk about it with every new person you meet, but please talk about it with your friends. Demystify it.

exciting, for me it was shameful.

My observations follow a national trend. According to the 2016 National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior conducted by Indiana University, out of 14- to 17-year-olds, 74% of boys said that they masturbated, while only 48% of girls said the same.

These statistics feed a greater issue. If girls are not masturbating and taking authority over their own sexuality and bodies, they will not be able to advocate for themselves when they begin having sex. In heterosexual relationships, men are placed in a position of power and are expected to be more sexually versed. Both parties are taught that male pleasure comes before that of a woman and that women can only achieve sexual fulfillment through men, not themselves.

In addition to being heteronormative, this dynamic gives men power over women in one of the most intimate ways two people can connect. How can we expect to achieve full equality between men and women when their

Due to the nature of this content, The Roar has decided to publish this article as an anonymous submission to protect the student’s privacy.