

WE ARE OURSELVES !

" When we were still small children, we all played together with boys with no problems. All of a sudden when we were about 11 years we were told to behave properly and stop playing or hanging around with the same boys. Now we are nearing 20 years and are expected to be steady with a man ready for marriage. And it is the same people who see it as being wrong to be friendly with boys and call us names if we do who expect this."



This was one comment from a group of school girls who had invited SPEAK to have a discussion with them about their problems as young women. The girls talked about their own lives but what they said is true for girls everywhere.

THE GIRLS FELT THAT THEIR PROBLEMS HAVE A LOT TO DO WITH THEIR UPBRINGING

"Exactly, it is our upbringing. I once visited a house where there is a 6 year old boy. He asked me if I was a boy too, as I had jeans on, and I agreed. Immediately he started playing rough games with me. He suddenly asked why I was not hitting back if I was a boy? Already he had the idea that boys are strong", said one girl.

"We are brought up to believe that boys are superior to us and we should obey and leave them to bully us. If we fight back to boys and win fights we are seen as not being real and ideal girls. We are expected to be submissive and subservient. If a boy hits you, you are told that there must be a reason for him to do so. Our parents are the ones who encourage them."

"Some of us are locked up immediately we come back from school, and, once at home, are not able to move. The minute those who are locked up get a chance, no matter how little, they use that time to do all kinds of things and they overdo them. Obviously they can't behave like those girls who are allowed some freedom and whom their parents trust to some extent, for these with some freedom don't think of having sex with their boyfriends each time they are together, unlike those

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who are caged at home. Some of us go to the extent of pretending as if they are going to school when they know they're going to see their boyfriends.

Most parents tell us that they will throw us out of their houses and force us to leave school, should they find out that we are in love with some boys."

"Our parents don't tell us the truth about life and what happens to our bodies. They just fight and swear at us. Usually they call you when you've done something that worries them or they could have already seen you with a boy. Then, when it is already late, usually you're already pregnant, they say: 'Yes, that serves you right. You've got what you wanted from boys. Now that boy is at school and you are going to stay home and look after this baby.'"

THE GIRLS SPOKE OF THEIR PARENTS AND PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATION

Also, how did our parents meet? Does it mean that they never had relationships with one another before they married? Since they say sex is bad and terrible and if, therefore, they

didn't sleep together, how did we come to be born?

Asking our parents about sex is out for most of us. It is common to find girls much older than us, yet knowing nothing, and therefore will have to look for information, good or bad, by themselves, or find themselves in trouble. It is not all of us who are lucky".

MUCH AS THE GIRLS SAW FAULTS WITH THEIR PARENTS, THEY DIDN'T EXCLUDE THEMSELVES

" But some parents do talk to us earlier. We can't and should not put all the blame on our parents all the time - they are our scapegoats now, Some things we do because of our fault."



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Some of our mothers have told us everything and it is now up to us to decide whether to chose our mothers ways or do our own thing.

Sometimes we leave ourselves to fall pregnant to fix up our parents. Even amongst the girls who are locked up there are those who rebel and do their own thing. This is because the final decision lies with us.

There could be many causes of these problems with our parents. Our parents could be finding it difficult to communicate with us and probably we too will have the same problem with our daughters.

Some of us do not trust nor believe what our mothers tell us, they too never do.

Then those will do a thing to prove whether what their mothers tell them is the truth.

But, as our mothers are mothers, they can't rule our lives. It is not that we are rude or anything. We know that our mothers have some expectations about us, but because these are our lives, we own them, we lead the style and kind of lives that suit us and our personalities.

We, young girls, have to have strong backbones in this world to survive. We need self-control and respect. They can preach to us as much as they can, but everything finally depends on us.

Our mothers advise us sometimes about what not to do and we tell them it is O.K. But, the minute we get to our rooms, we just forget about all that because these are our lives. We've got to do what we feel like, no matter what they say. We are not our parents' image. WE ARE OURSELVES!

SPEAK would like to hear from other young girls and mothers of what they think about this debate. Please write and tell us!

