No Miss Manners

Dan Savage's down-and-dirty sex advice is not for the PG crowd

September 1, 1998 By Xaviera Hollander

As a former madam, author of *The Happy Hooker* and one of the first-ever sex columnists, I've spent many years deeply immersed in the sexual revolution. What I tried to do in my *Penthouse* sex-advice column, "Call Me Madam," is simply this: tell it like it is, and never sweep the "nasty" bits under the carpet. Sex is only dirty to those with dirty minds. Although sex came out of the closet with the pill in the '60s, the act of talking openly about it still remained taboo. As a sex advocate, my mission is to encourage people to dins a depth of pleasure in sex through honest education, which until the early '70s hadn't existed. My approach was new because I discussed all those things that we do but don't dare talk about. Now it seems everyone's an expert when it comes to sex. But who can a girl trust?

Because sex-advice columnists are a dime a dozen, we must each make our mark by creating a unique persona. Based on the praise I received from the irreverant "Hey, Faggot" Dan Savage in his new collection, *Savage Love: Straight Answers from America's Most Popular Sex Columnist* (Plume Books), it seems I've succeeded in doing so. I am pleased that my advice to the sexually curious readers of Penthouse was brought to such a rich fruition as it has in Dan and his outrageous column. His flip, funny, no-holds-barred tone has an edge that his 3.5 million readers either adore or abhor-- and keep coming back for more. Such brutally honest sex advice, though sometimes hard to swallow, is a must in the age of HIV.

[EXCERPTS]

Hey, Faggot: Is there an HIV risk to the person getting his dick sucked? I took a walk on the wild side and "swung" with a married breeder couple, and the husband sucked my cock for a few minutes. I was not wearing a condom, and did not cum. Did I put myself at risk?

First-Time Swinger

Hey, FTS: Sucking places a person at some small risk of acquiring HIV—provided he or she is sucking HIV positive cock—but getting sucked presents no risk, stud.

Hey, Faggot: I'm an HIV positive gay man with some input on the banter over oral sex and risk. Taking cum in your mouth is pretty much agreed to be "high risk" behavior, while sucking a cock

without taking cum in your mouth is considered “low risk.” Still, the risk is there, even if the guy you’re blowing doesn’t pop his load in your mouth.

When my partner and I met, he was negative. Now, he’s not. He tested negative for years, and did so after our only episode of protected anal sex (he was the “top”). His only risk for HIV exposure came after we decided that oral sex without a condom was OK, as long as there was no cum. The messages available seemed to support that the risk of spreading HIV in this manner (assuming a mouth was healthy) was virtually nil. We took that risk and now he is HIV positive. Which sucks.

We throw around “high risk” and “low risk” like we’re talking about mutual funds. If you take a cock in your mouth—even if he doesn’t cum—you take a chance. If you end up infected with HIV, it really doesn’t matter how “high” or “low” the risk was.

Unsigned

Hey, Faggot: I’m a bi girl. Let me clue you in on a few facts-o’-life among the pussy lickers. Pussy juice contains as high a concentration of HIV as jism. So I’m as much at risk when I lick unprotected HIV positive pussy as I am when I suck unprotected HIV positive cock, and the pussy can’t pull out of my mouth before it comes. Since my gums bleed if you wink at them, I’m at risk from fluids in my mouth.

Let’s talk statistics. My wife is HIV positive. In fact, she has AIDS. Say I lick her pussy three times a day for a year, using no barrier. Say during the same year I let my HIV positive boyfriend come in my mouth once with no condom and I gulp it down. If at the end of the year I test positive, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will record me as having become infected through hetero transmission because that is “more likely.”

If people assume all women are HIV negative and may be slurped with relative abandon, it will increase the chances of it being equally risky in five years as more of us [sero]convert.

Love and Pussy-Lip Kisses

Hey LAPLK: Not everyone has multiple sex partners, is married to an HIV positive person or has gums that bleed so easily. Not everyone is running the same risks you are—so not everyone needs to take the same exact precautions you do. I am not going to lie to people: “Use condoms and latex every time you have oral sex, or in five years YOU’LL ALL BE EXPOSED!!!!” That is bullshit. We’re 15 years into the AIDS crisis, and in that time the vast majority of sexually active adults in America—gay, bi and straight—have rejected latex for oral sex. Guess what? EVERYONE IS NOT HIV POSITIVE.

I’m no fan of the CDC, but according to a woman I spoke with there, they don’t “credit” one method of transmission over another when it comes to someone who falls into “multiple-risk groups.” They acknowledge they can’t be sure whether your infection was due to one hetero contact or a thousand lesbian contacts. If they were studying woman-to-woman HIV transmission

via oral sex, your case would be excluded from the study. Have these standards resulted in a slightly skewed picture of woman-to-woman transmissions? Yep. Is it a conspiracy to trick women-who-have-sex-with-women into letting down their guard? Don't think so.

Hey, Faggot: I notice a depressing trend among the lovers I encounter lately—namely, losing their erections when it comes time to strap on the old condom. I do what I can to overcome the problem (I'm a very attractive woman, and understand the delicacy of the male ego), but honestly, in my heart I'm just aching for a fully functional penis for a change. It's a problem I began noticing when I made my commitment to safe sex, after losing a loved one to AIDS. Does safe sex mean going without a lot? Or am I calling it wrong and this is just the time of life when men start losing the rampant boners of their youth? Say it ain't so!

Vertically Yearning

Hey, VY: OK, breeders, here's how fags get condoms on our dicks without losing our erections: If you treat putting on the condom as foreplay, and not an interruption of the sex act, it won't feel like an erection-busting interruption! Girls, put the condom on for him! Guys, there ain't no reason that rubber can't be on your dick for a half hour before you stick it in! The latex will heat up, your dick will get used to it, and when it comes time to fuck, you won't feel a sudden loss of sensation. Guys, if the act of putting on a condom is a turn-off, do something at the same time that's a turn-on: Make out, bury your face in her tits. Girls, after it's on his dick, play with it! Guys, it's OK to touch your own cock during sex. Stroke yourself if that's what it takes to keep going. And, finally, if you know you're going to be fucking sometime soon, open the condom packet before things get hot and heavy—before your fingers are wet and slippery. Fumbling in the dark with a greasy condom packet is always a turn-off. Plan ahead!

Hey, Faggot: This is a response to your recent criticism of the female condom. As the manufacturer and distributor of the Reality female condom, we'd like to point out its many benefits. It is the first and only woman-controlled contraceptive barrier method that also provides protection from STDs, including HIV. Approximately 40 percent to 60 percent of men and women who try it continue to use it, and most find the female condom more pleasurable than the male condom. It is less constricting and can be inserted several hours before intercourse, allowing a degree of spontaneity that the male condom can't provide. Also, a female condom is made out of thin, heat-sensitive polyurethane, which is 40 percent stronger than latex and does not irritate people with latex allergies.

Mary Ann Leeper, PhD
President, Female Health Company

Hey, Prez: My comment regarding your firm's fine contraceptive product—"yuck"—was an informed, personal aesthetic judgment, which I have an absolute right to make. When female condoms became available, my then-boyfriend and I gave 'em a whirl. While our "woman controlled" condom worked just fine—no STDs were transmitted, and no one got pregnant—it

wasn’t pretty. The female condom is basically a plastic bag with one hard plastic ring at the bottom of the bag (to anchor it in the vaginal canal) and a slightly larger, more flexible ring at the top. You work the bag into your partner’s orifice—removing the inner ring for anal sex-—and leave the flared base on the outside. Once the plastic bag was hanging out of my boyfriend’s ass, it was about as appealing as…an ass with a plastic bag hanging out of it. Then, I took my dick…and fucked the plastic bag.

Hey, Faggot: Where do you get off dismissing the female condom with a “yuck”? Your criticism is not only unjustified but irresponsible. The male and female condoms are the only effective protection from STDs and HIV. I’d hate to think people wouldn’t use the female condom because of your careless remark. As a sex counselor, it’s your responsibility to advise, not to promulgate biased, unsubstantiated opinions.

Fan of the Female Condom

Hey, FOTFC: I am NOT a sex counselor. I am an advice columnist, and “advice,” according to the American Heritage Dictionary, is an “opinion about what could or should be done.” So, dope, promulgating my biased, unsubstantiated opinions is my sole responsibility. Don’t like my advice? Get your own column.

Not that anyone would read your column. The advice you’d give, while popular with safe-sex absolutists, is near useless to anyone having sex in the real world. It’s neither realistic nor necessary to tell people to use latex (or polyurethane) barriers at all times for two good reasons: Folks don’t want to use barriers if they don’t have to; and second, lots of folks don’t have to.

People in relationships with partners whose health and STD history they’re familiar or comfortable with will sometimes assume a slightly higher level of risk in exchange for less hassle and greater intimacy. And guess what? That’s their right—they’re grown-ups. Grown-ups drive cars, ski, vote, eat sushi, take personality tests at Scientology Centers and do all manner of risky, sometimes dangerous things.

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