

Staff Editorial

We should re-examine dating booklets

No matter how you slice it, the issue regarding dating booklets is complex. On one hand, the assignment presents a productive opportunity for students to explore the subject of relationships: how do we build them? What am I looking for in a partner? What activities would I enjoy doing?

On the other, it unintentionally forces queer students who aren't out to either out themselves or fabricate a booklet containing false reflections to receive credit.

The problem is not necessarily with the idea of creating a dating booklet itself. As described in the feature piece on the recent Netflix show "Sex Education," students are in need of comprehensive instruction that addresses the nuance of relationships.

And while it might appear conclusive to argue that the fabrication involved in a dating booklet is no different than what is involved in not being out in the first place, in actuality, the assignment is sanctioning a forced confrontation. This is harmful because ultimately, it should be up to an individual when and how they decide to confront and reconcile with their own understanding of their sexuality.

To some, the dating booklet provides this opportunity for self-reflection. However, the booklet is mainly done in class. Sitting on cold metal chairs above the gyms and reflecting upon one's sexuality don't necessarily go hand-in-hand.

While the goal of the assignment is to instigate thoughtful reflection on relationships, this is stymied when students who are questioning their sexuality get put into this position. To truly evaluate one's feelings, it's best to be in a comfortable environment. Sophomore year health class just doesn't fit the bill for most people.

This reflection should be an autonomous choice--one the school should not require.

In a perfect world, 'coming out' would never have any ramifications.

But we don't live in this world; in ours, there is still a lingering external stigma and, in many circumstances, the possibility of danger. In ours, there is internal weight in the perception of external ramifications, creating an internal turmoil.

While unintended, the discomfort that students who aren't out feel while being forced to confront this in their booklet reinforces the internalized stigma and perpetuates the internal turmoil. The minutiae of everyday living as a person who isn't out doesn't as directly involve the degree of fabrication that the booklet would require.

There's no denying that we need to be able to learn this. The knowledge and reflection gained through the activity is invaluable, but there are other activities, and other places for this activity to occur, that could create this opportunity.

I'm vegan for the environment



by Danielle Kurensky

I'm vegan and I have been for almost two years now: and to be honest I've pushed off writing about veganism for a long time. I wasn't sure what the reaction was going to be and I didn't want to hear snide comments about my choices.

Although I believe that's still likely, I feel the need to talk about the environmental impacts animal agriculture causes.

Before I continue I want to make one thing incredibly clear, I don't think you are a bad person if you're not vegan, nor do I believe that I am superior due to my choice.

I am deciding to talk about this, despite my discomfort, because the majority of us don't know the truth about the environmental impact of animal agriculture and I believe we might make different choices if we did.

I am not trying to make you vegan, I am just sharing information so you can make an informed choice. But if you don't agree with me that's fine, and if you believe the facts I share aren't true then I encourage you to do your own research.

My only hope is that you can make an informed decision rather than doing something out of habit

and because it's a societal norm.

Due to the recent United Nations statement about the state of the environment, it's pressing now more than ever to make sure we are taking care of our planet and trying to decrease or eliminate the things that are destroying it.

When people talk about global warming the conversation is often about oil and electricity. So besides using public transportation or switching to LED light bulbs, it can feel like there isn't anything an individual can do.

On the contrary, according to the UN, animal agriculture produces more greenhouse gases than all forms of transportation combined. So by removing animal agriculture from our diet, it would remove more greenhouse gases from the environment than all cars, planes, and buses combined.

Additionally according to an article in the "Princeton Review," the greenhouse gases produced from animal agriculture have a higher quantity of methane compared to transportation emissions. Methane's ability to trap heat in our atmosphere is at least 25 times higher than the ability of carbon dioxide.

Recently there has been a big shift in western culture regarding our view of single-use plastic straws. Many people are trying not to use plastic straws after learning about how they pollute our oceans or maybe seeing a video of a straw being pulled out of a turtle's nose.

While I do believe that it is important to significantly decrease

our use of single-use plastic, it is interesting that many people were compelled to decrease their straw usage to stop polluting the oceans to save sea life.

Think about that for a moment. Isn't it strange that we will stop using straws to save fish and other sea creatures but we won't stop eating fish to save fish?

While you might think you are removing straws from your diet to save the turtles and that turtles aren't harmed by eating fish, you are not alone.

Before I became vegan I didn't think that by eating fish I was harming turtles, dolphins or other sea-life. That was before I learned about bycatch, the catch of animals and non-targeted fish in fishing nets. According to Oceana, an ocean conservation organization, different estimates say that up to 40% of all catch is bycatch, resulting in 63 billion pounds of bycatch annually.

These are only two examples of the many ways animal agriculture negatively impacts the environment. While I could easily write for pages on this issue, after all, I did write my Junior Theme on the environmental impacts of animal agriculture, I will stop here.

If you are looking for more information on this topic, I would highly recommend watching "Cowspiracy" on Netflix.

While I do not expect people to change their diets overnight, I certainly didn't, I just hope people will be more conscious of the environmental impacts of their food.

How to be a second semester senior 101



by Ezra Wallach

"Wait, we have a quiz?????" I exclaimed as I threw up a peace sign and walked out of my seventh period math class and straight to the nurse's office.

Here I was, someone who vowed at the beginning of high school to always show the most integrity with my schoolwork, watching the nurse check for a fever that I knew I didn't have.

For the entirety of high school, like most, I have looked forward to the day where I could say that I was a second-semester senior.

I looked forward to the day where I would not only be a member of the oldest grade of all public schools, but a member of a select group of individuals on this earth whose life would no longer be controlled by school or work.

As I rattled off a few uncorrelated symptoms, I realized how unprepared I was for this way of life. And so I figured that if I wanted to make the most out of the next couple months, I would need some advice from some of peers who know this way of life all too well...

Spencer B.: "Don't open your backpack for an entire week and tell everyone about it"

Abbie K.: "Ask your teacher for an extension the day it's due."

Elizabeth J.: "Do all of your homework during passing periods"

Jack R.: "Shoot for Cs"

Daniel H.: "Take 20-minute bathroom breaks because you can."

It was at this point, after I had talked to these five people, three

of whom sit at my math table, that I realized how the spirit of being a second semester senior didn't lie just in blowing off homework, skipping classes, and showing up to school without a backpack.

Second semester senior attitude isn't just about not caring about school, it's about doing what you want when you want. It's about understanding that you are in control of your life now. So, without further ado, here are my 3 tips on how to become a second semester senior:

Tip #1: Post a lip-syncing video on your snapchat story. We are all weird and there is no denying it. If you're not weird, you're weird. So, in conclusion, everybody is still weird, and there's no reason social media can't display this side of us too.

When we act our weirdest, we often have the most fun; if we want to flex on social media, we can do it just by showing us having a good time. Sometimes the coolest side of us is that weird side, and don't we all want our social media's to make us seem like the coolest people ever?

Tip #2: Get your toenails painted pink. While getting my toenails painted didn't really make any sense due to the fact I never show my toes, or didn't really go with gender norms (which I guess shouldn't matter anyways), I still thought it would be fun to do something just to do it.

Having my toenails painted pink now literally has no direct negative impact on my life; so, we can take away two things from this: 1. We should do random stuff that might seem weird to other people just to show yourself that you are in control of your life and 2. We should stop judging people for doing things that make them happy. If someone wants to roll up to school in a pirate costume for the next week, let them do it. Hating on people makes them

feel worse about their own wants, and hating on people is wasted energy that could be used on better things.

Tip #3: Stop eating dairy. For me, as a lactose-intolerant individual, when I stopped eating dairy, I started feeling sooooo much better. It's not that I don't like the taste of pizza or mac n' cheese, but rather it's that the pain I feel from it outweighs the pleasure.

To put in broader terms, we can look to Marie Kondo's method of getting rid of things in your life that don't spark joy. With lactose, it was simply getting rid of something I could no longer tolerate (hehe).

If someone or something is bringing unnecessary negative energy into your life, understand that you have the ability to cut them off. If you notice that you have been spending a lot of time on your phone or watching TV, realize that you would probably be better off cutting down on this screen time.

These three tips might seem stupid, and they probably kind of are, but by understanding that you don't have to care about things early on, you can make of the most of your time in high school. Sadly, or not, it took me until a few months ago before I realized that the small things I did here didn't really matter.

Sure, I would make memories and others would remember me, but it turns out that high school is probably the best time of our lives to do crazy stuff too.

Even though during semesters 1-7 our grades do matter, that doesn't mean our lives need to be consumed by them too. Most of us aren't supporting a family and don't need to take care of adult stuff like taxes and a mortgage. We are all still kids--now is a special time where we can act like one while still feeling like we have the freedom that adults get too. That's pretty dope.



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