

PUBERTY & ADOLESCENCE

SEASON 2

SHIFT

WITH P. S. BLOSSOM



Narrative Change SHIFT with P.S. Blossom

The US has a complex history with race, reproduction, and class, which leads to negative health outcomes for women and other birthing people of color. Dominant public narratives surrounding these health outcomes do not always reflect the perspectives, voices, or lived experiences of women and other birthing people of color. The P.S. Blossom podcast explores issues at the intersections of reproductive justice and capital with a specific focus on the autonomy of women and other birthing people of color.

SHIFT with P.S. Blossom is a guide that accompanies each topic covered in the P.S. Blossom podcast. It provides a reproductive justice approach to controversial conversations. We encourage readers to actively participate in SHIFT-ing the Narrative by sharing personal stories and lived experiences in their communities.

Puberty & Adolescence

One of the most profound periods of change in a person's life is puberty and adolescence. It is the stage of life where most people transition from being a child to a teenager (and, in some countries, an adult) - physically, mentally, and spiritually. It is a change in the mindset of a person, how they view and understand the world, as well as navigate through it. It also means a new level of learning and approach to sexuality.

According to the National Library of Medicine, "...puberty follows a predictable pattern of onset and sequence. However, due to differences in each individual, including environment and genetics, puberty may proceed in a less-than-predictable way. Issues of concern related to puberty include, but are not limited to delayed puberty, early puberty, development of male characteristics in females, premature breast development in girls, and premature or delayed menarche."

Different cultures around the world raise and support people going through this process in many ways: the types of information and education they receive, and how consent and privacy show up as they learn more about the transition to adulthood. Some are harmful and perpetuate taboo topics that shouldn't be, and others help us understand the world in more comprehensive and inclusive ways.

“ When folks feel ashamed to explore their relationship to sex or explore how they feel about sex, it harms the person's own relationship with themselves. ”

—Ailea Stites

NARRATIVES AROUND PUBERTY & ADOLESCENCE

Sometimes, it is difficult to identify harmful dominant narratives since they are deeply rooted in our culture. By identifying harmful dominant narratives, we can positively SHIFT social structures and behaviors.

Here are some examples of **harmful dominant narratives** around puberty and adolescence:

- “Kids shouldn't have sex, so sex-ed doesn't need to be about sex. Focus on abstinence.”
- “You shouldn't have ‘the talk’ with your kids too early. You'll end up making them want to have sex.”
- “Girls and boys have private parts. That's all you need to know.”

Here are examples of healthier **intersectional counter narratives** that can help SHIFT harmful dominant narratives:

- Your reproductive well-being is reproductive health. You can't have one without the other.
- You have a right to learn about sex and sexuality from an open-minded, reliable, and emotionally sensitive sources.
- With access to information about our bodies (age-sensitive) and how they develop, we can advocate, empower, and protect ourselves from childhood well into adulthood.



Ailea Stites (they/them)

S2 EPISODE 1+2

[Ailea Stites](#) is the Youth Engagement Lead for the Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Innovation in Sexual and Reproductive Health (Ci3), University of Chicago. Ailea is hands-on throughout the Center, leading community engagement and providing design and operational support to the Youth Advisory Council. Driven by curiosity and seeking answers in ways that empower individuals rather than blame them for systems beyond their control. Outside of Ci3, Ailea has written articles for the South Side Weekly covering arts and culture in the South Side of Chicago. Ailea is multi-talented in acting and dancing. Ailea is excited to continue working at the intersection of academic research, health justice, and creative expression. Ailea graduated from Princeton University with a Bachelor's Degree in Comparative Literature, Global Health, and Health Policy.

“ **This generational cycle stops with me. It stops with me. I will not inflict it on the next generation because the next generation deserves to be raised by people who have the tools and support they need to love them fully and well.** ”

“ **From what young people have told us, they want to know about consent in every context; in medical situations, in situations like education, all kinds of different ways. Really, it's being able to say what happens to your body, this kind of holistic understanding of consent.** ”

ON THE EPISODE

In [The Generational Cycle \(Part 1\)](#), we speak with Ailea Stites (they/them), Youth Engagement Lead for the Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry & Innovation in Sexual and Reproductive Health (Ci3) at The University of Chicago and Brittany McBride (she/her), Associate Director of Sex Education and Training at Advocates for Youth. Today, our guests discuss what sex education is (and should be), the importance of empowering children with a sense of bodily autonomy, and how to redefine the narrative around shame, as well as the journey of sexuality that begins at birth.



Brittany McBride *(she/her)*

S2 EPISODE 1+2

[Brittany McBride](#), is the Associate Director of Sex Education at Advocates for Youth. She is responsible for strengthening the effectiveness of sexual health education instructional materials and their delivery while supporting youth-serving organizations and school districts in providing sustainable and equitable sex education. Before joining the Advocates team, Brittany managed multiple teen pregnancy prevention programs funded by the Office of Adolescent Health in Louisiana. Brittany also served as a curriculum consultant for the charter management organization Firstline Schools. She graduated from Tulane SPHTM with a Master's in Public Health and earned a B.S. in Biology/Chemistry from the Xavier University of LA. Brittany is based in New Orleans, LA.

“ When I talk about complete sex education, I'm talking about racial justice, too. It goes so far beyond the limitations of what people really allow themselves to think about when they think of sex education. ”

ON THE EPISODE

In [The Generational Cycle \(Part 2\)](#), we speak with Brittany McBride (she/her), Associate Director of Sex Education and Training at Advocates for Youth, and Ailea Stites (they/them), Youth Engagement Lead for the Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry & Innovation in Sexual and Reproductive Health (Ci3) at The University of Chicago. Today, we continue our discussion on sex education and delve into the topics of reproductive justice, consent, adultification, Roe v. Wade, and how we can work to shift the narrative in this space.

“ Complete sex education is about making sure that we're equipped with the tools and the ability to access all of the resources necessary to use that education in a way to make sure that [young people's] bodies are healthy, safe, and exactly the way that they want them to be. ”



“ I feel like, personally, the best way is for parents to be there, making sure that your child knows that you still care, that you're there for each other. ”

Tomi Dugbo *(she/her)*

S2 EPISODE 3

Tomi Dugbo is a Freshman at the University of Illinois and a mental health advocate for youth and adolescents. Tomi is studying Communications with a minor in Public Relations. At 14, Tomi became a member of the University of Chicago's Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Innovation in Sexual and Reproductive Health (Ci3) under their Youth Advisory Council. Through her work with the council, her love for storytelling and advocating for the well-being of adolescents expanded. In addition to her work with Ci3, Tomi has shared her talents with Akuko Magazine, a web-based publication, as their social media intern, and The Balm as their Social Media Specialist and Interviewer. In her free time, Tomi enjoys reading, writing, hanging out with friends, and having conversations about culture. Currently, she is working with the UCLA Youth National Council on mental health and psychological aspects of adolescence.

“ It was nice that my parents didn't question my body. That would have made me even more insecure. ”

ON THE EPISODE

In [Growing Through Puberty](#), we hear from Tomi Dugbo, who shares her experience of early puberty and adolescence growing up. Tomi is from Chicago, Illinois, and is currently a freshman studying communications with a minor in public relations while planning to attend graduate school. She is known for her outgoing and spontaneous nature. However, it was not like that for her growing up. In this episode, Tomi shares her experience of early puberty, the impact it had on her emotional development, and how she got through it. We also hear how culture and race can impact early childhood development in different ways and the stereotypes applied to young Black girls.

“ It was so uncomfortable being sexualized, and it's just that feeling of being vulnerable, and not knowing what to necessarily do because it is your body. You can't really hide it. ”

Reflection Questions

What is sexual development to you? How do you define it?

What are the telltale signs that a child is mentally, emotionally, or physically ready for the birds and the bees talk?

At what age does a child become aware of her/his sexuality?

What are the contributing factors that led to the increase in bullying of adolescents?

What age is considered suitable for teens to have rights to their privacy and confidentiality when it comes to their parents? How do you talk to young people about internet and social media safety?

How do you talk to your children about their body parts?

How do you establish healthy boundaries around the privacy of other people's children?

How can the reproductive health and maternal health marketplace and communities address these concerns inclusively and impactfully?

What is your experience now as someone in the industry sharing the information vs. how it was when you received it growing up?

Guest Recommendations Topic

The Generational Cycle (Part 1)

- Listen to the episode [here!](#)
- Read the full episode transcript [here!](#)
- [Advocates for Youth](#)
- [The University of Chicago: Ci3](#)
- [It's Perfectly Normal by Robbie H. Harris](#)
- [Planned Parenthood](#)

The Generational Cycle (Part 2)

- Listen to the episode [here!](#)
- Read the full episode transcript [here!](#)
- [GLSEN](#)
- [SisterSong](#)
- [Amaze](#)
- [Peer Health Exchange](#)
- [SelfSea](#)
- [National Network of Abortion Funds](#)
- [Chicago Abortion Fund](#)
- [Resilience](#)

Growing Through Puberty

- Listen to the episode [here!](#)
- Read the full episode transcript [here!](#)
- [University of Illinois](#)

Follow Our Guests

Ailea Stites
[LinkedIn](#)

Brittany McBride
[LinkedIn](#)
X: [@sexed2geaux](#)

Relevant Social and Platform Links

Rhia Ventures is a social impact organization with a mission to advance reproductive and maternal health equity by intentionally leveraging capital to center the needs, experiences, and perspectives of historically marginalized people in decision-making.

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P.S. BLOSSOM TEAM

Executive Producer, Co-Host: [Victoria M. Griffin](#)
Co-Host: [Crystal Pirtle Tyler, PhD](#)
Creative Director: [Lillian Zhao](#)
Production Assistant: [Elena Morales](#)



Puberty Sex Education Adolescence Sexuality

Consent Bodily Autonomy Impact Generation

Relationships Innovation Reproductive Health

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Youth Engagement Hormones Rights to Privacy

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