FEBRUARY 14, 2023 | VOLUME CIV | ISSUE XIV
HOT & NORMAL SINCE 1918

THE UBYSSEY

RECLAIM NORMALCY

The Ubyssey Sex Issue

The Ubyssey

February 14, 2023 | Volume CIV | Issue XIV

EDITORIAL

Coordinating Editor
Charlotte Alden
coordinating@ubyssey.ca

News Editors
Nathan Bawaan
& Anabella McElroy
news@ubyssey.ca

Culture Editor
Tova Gaster
culture@ubyssey.ca

Features Editor
Paloma Green
features@ubyssey.ca

Opinion + Blog Editor
Iman Janmohamed
opinion@ubyssey.ca

Science Editor
Sophia Russo
science@ubyssey.ca

Sports + Rec Editor
Miriam Celebiler
sports@ubyssey.ca

Visuals Editor
Mahin E Alam
visuals@ubyssey.ca

Photo Editor
Isabella Falsetti
photo@ubyssey.ca

Video Producer
Diana Hong
video@ubyssey.ca

BUSINESS

Business Manager
Douglas Baird
business@ubyssey.ca

Account Manager
Forest Scarrwener
advertising@ubyssey.ca

Web Developer
Keegan Landrigan
k.landrigan@ubyssey.ca

Web Developer
Brittany Sampson
b.sampson@ubyssey.ca

Web Developer
Mei Chi Chin
m.chin@ubyssey.ca

Social Media Manager
Shereen Lee
social@ubyssey.ca

President
Jalen Bachra
president@ubyssey.ca

CONTACT

Editorial Office:

NEST 2208
604.283.2023

Business Office:

NEST 2209
604.283.2024

6133 University Blvd.
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1

Website: *ubyssey.ca*
Twitter: *@ubyssey*
Instagram: *@ubyssey*
Facebook: *@ubyssey*
TikTok: *@ubyssey*

STAFF

Aditi Mankar, Aisha Chaudhry, Amanda Dekker, Amanda Yee, Annaliese Gumboc, Anya Anber Ameen, Bea Lehmann, Bernice Wong, Bessie Guo, Brendan Ngo, Bridget Meehan, Caleb Peterson, Charles Brockman, David Collings, Elena Massing, Farzeen Ather, Fiona Sjaus, Gloria Rahgozar, Harry Sadleir, Helen Shen, Himanaya Bajaj, Isabella Maggiore, Isa S. You, Jackson Dagger, Jasmine Cadeliña Manango, Jasper Dobbin, Jerry Wong, Jocelyn Baker, John Chen, Julian Forst, Kaila Johnson, Keren Kozlov, Khushi Patil, Lauren Kasowski, Lester Lin, Lucas Ortolano, Makyla Smith, Manya Malhotra, Maria Radivojevic, Marie Erikson, Matthew Asuncion, Maya Levajac, Polina Petlitsyna, Rachel Marr, Shanai Tanwar, Shane Atienza, Shubhreet Dadrao, Shereen Lee, Shruthi Chockkalingam, Sidney Shaw, Solana Pasqual, Spencer Izen, Tamia Shen, Tatiana Zhandarmova, Thomas McLeod, Tina Yong, Ximena Gordillo Cruz, Zoe Wagner

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to acknowledge that we work, learn and operate this paper upon the occupied, traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and səlilwətaʔɬ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh).

LEGAL

The Ubyssey is the official student newspaper of the University of British Columbia (UBC). It is published every second Tuesday by the Ubyssey Publications Society (UPS). We are an autonomous, democratically-run student organization and all students are encouraged to participate.

Editorials are written by *The Ubyssey*'s editorial board and they do not necessarily reflect the views of the UPS or UBC. All editorial content appearing in *The Ubyssey* is the property of the UPS. Stories, opinions, photographs and artwork contained herein cannot be reproduced without the expressed, written permission of the Ubyssey Publications Society.

The Ubyssey is a founding member of Canadian University Press (CUP) and adheres to CUP's guiding principles.

The Ubyssey accepts opinion articles on any topic related to UBC and/or topics relevant to students attending UBC. Submissions must be written by UBC students, professors, alumni or those in a suitable position (as determined by the opinion editor) to speak on UBC-related matters. Submissions must not contain racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, harassment or discrimination. Authors and/or submissions will not be precluded from publication based solely on association with particular ideologies or subject matter that some may find objectionable. Approval for publication is, however, dependent on the quality of the argument and *The Ubyssey* editorial board's judgment of appropriate content. Submissions may be sent by email to *opinion@ubyssey.ca*. Please include your student number or other proof of identification. Anonymous submissions will be accepted on extremely rare occasions. Requests for anonymity will be granted upon agreement from four-fifths of the editorial board. Full opinions policy may be found at *ubyssey.ca/pages/submit-an-opinion*.

It is agreed by all persons placing display or classified advertising that if the UPS fails to publish an advertisement or if an error in the ad occurs the liability of the UPS will not be greater than the price paid for the ad. The UPS shall not be responsible for slight changes or typographical errors that do not lessen the value or the impact of the ads.

Editors' note

The Ubyssey's annual sex issue isn't just about fucking (although it's not not about that).

It's also about body image, Queerness, all the funny and frustrating experiences of 'hookup culture' and more. This year, our theme is reclamation — learning to engage with sex, relationships and identity on our own terms.

Reclamation implies growing around and beyond the values instilled by family, politicians, religious norms or other social scripts. Reclamation is about how patriarchy, racism, sex negativity and culture may shape us, but how they don't have to define us — especially in the bedroom.

Some writers reveal shame, stigma and trauma. Processing these unfortunately common experiences is crucial to reclaiming your sexuality. By sharing their vulnerable stories, these writers help destigmatize difficult and under-discussed aspects of sex.

While sex can be serious business, reclamation can also be joyful. There's nothing immature about laughing about sex, and some of the pieces in this issue tell stories of hilarious hookups and jumpscare encounters with bedroom floor condiments.

This issue also delves into sexual wellness as a UBC student, including getting STI tested and accessing PrEP and reproductive health resources. Informed access to health care is important for sexual autonomy, and these resources can help.

We hope that the diversity highlighted in pieces from your student community reveals that when it comes to sex, there is no 'normal.' There's only the responsibility to act with the care and safety of yourself and partners in mind. Your experiences are nothing to be ashamed of. Reclaiming your sexuality doesn't need to follow any preset plan — your reclamation is yours and can be as joyful, flirty and fun as you make it.

— Tova Gaster & Sophia Russo
Sex Issue editors

photos by **Isabella Falsetti**
design by **Mahin E Alam**

Models
Amy Zeng
Anna Houghton
Kevin McKay-Barona
Mackenzie Burley
Seb Bepke Ten Westenend
Sirajul Momin Mustafa
Rhea Beauchesne

Statistically, this guy fucks: *Ubyssey* Sex Survey Results 2023

by **Sophia Russo**

I know what you're thinking — sex is great and all, but have you ever modeled sexual trends using data and sophisticated visualization techniques?

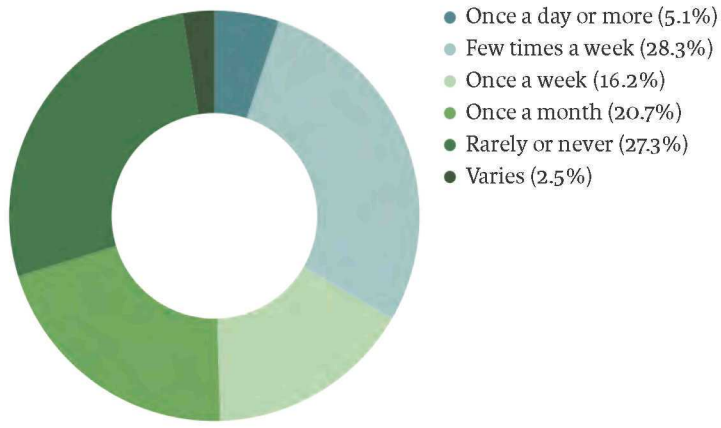
Yeah, we get it. There's nothing hotter than someone with fire spreadsheet skills and a basic knowledge of statistics. We think data is sexy — and apparently, many of you do too!

This year, *The Ubyssey*'s sex survey got 200 responses from the campus community. You answered questions about partnered and solo sexual behaviour, your desires, your anxieties and more.

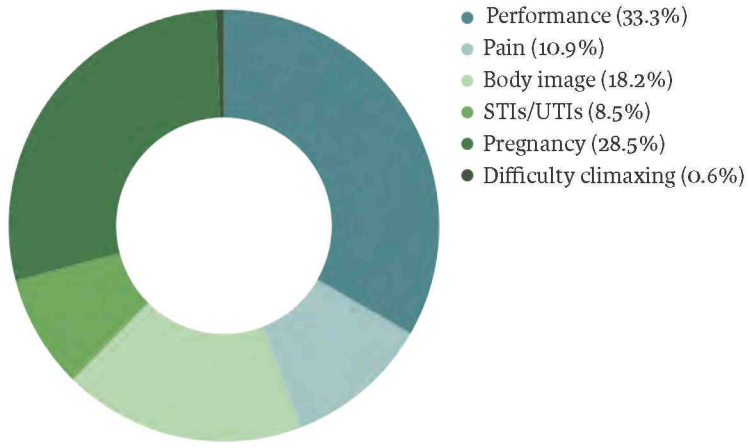
In this short summary, I've taken some of the sexiest pieces of data for you to assess at your pleasure.

The full set of hot hot data can be found at ubyssey.ca.

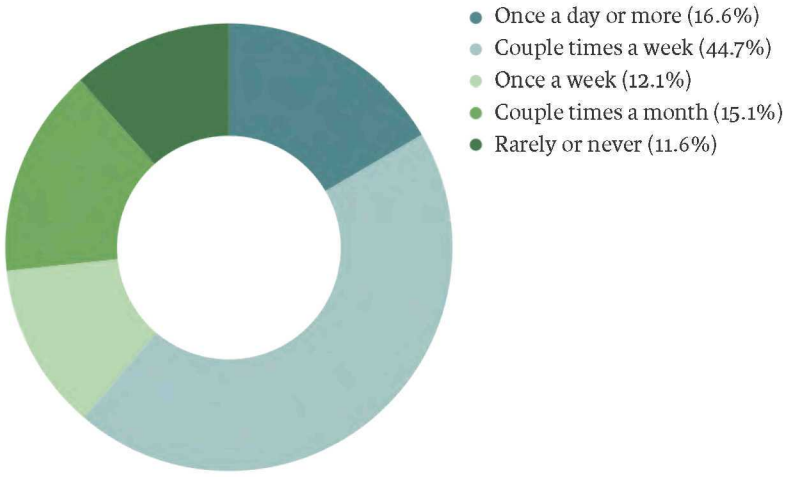
HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU HAD SEX OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS?



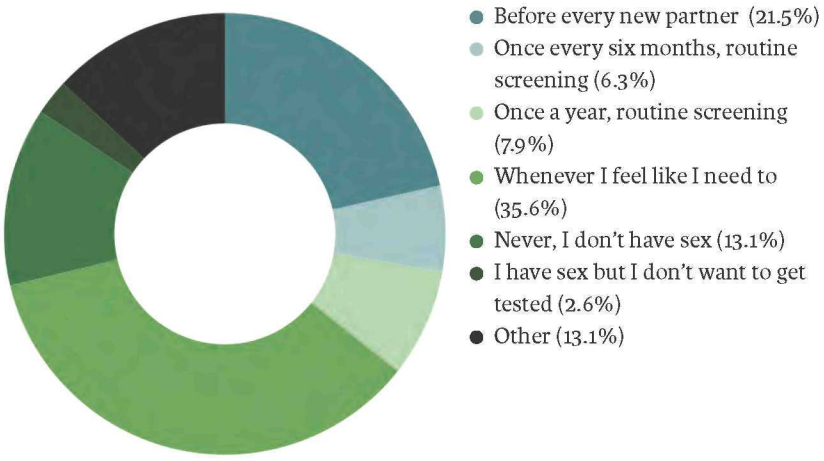
WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST CONCERN DURING SEX?



HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU MASTURBATED OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS?



HOW OFTEN DO YOU GET TESTED FOR STIs?



Bangers: A review of Sex Survey music responses

by **Tova Gaster and Gloria Klein**

Pausing a date to scroll frantically through Spotify in search of an appropriate soundtrack is a universally stressful experience. It can inspire doubts: *Will they judge me for this? What are they into? Am I cool enough?*

So what are you putting on? In *The Ubyssey* Sex Survey, we asked what music you like to get your groove on to and you answered. Here are some of the most common and noteworthy selections.

"SZA's SOS album"
"Kill bill by SZA"

When SZA said, "Now I'm ovulating and I need rough sex" some of you took that not just as a lyric, but as an instruction manual. While I might judge, I can't blame. This album absolutely has some orgasmic moments, but I fear it will end in tears. So lean into it! Get sad! Get toxic! Get horny! Get angry! Guys LOVE it when you threaten to kill your ex while on top of them! Unhinged? Obviously. Hot girl behaviour? Unquestionably.

"The Soviet National Anthem"

This is why people say history majors can't fuck — stop giving all of us a bad name.

"The Weeknd never misses"
"Two Feet's more popular songs, album ANTI by Rihanna, and the weekend (😐)"
"Contemporary R&B generally hits the spot. Think D'Angelo, SZA, Summer Walker, The Weeknd, even Doja Cat"

A staggering number of you are having sex to The Weeknd, or at least claiming to enjoy having sex to The Weeknd. That makes it the de facto basic choice, so make of that what you will. I like where this last response is coming from though — R&B is sometimes the safest bet, and *ANTI* is a great album in literally any situation.

"WAP"

There's something unacceptably hilarious about having sex to music that's explicitly, obviously, on-the-nose about sex. It's like eating a grilled cheese sandwich while looking at the Google Images results for "grilled cheese sandwich." I appreciate the commitment to an immersive sandwich experience, but maybe focus on the meal at hand. Yeah, you dealin' with some wet-ass pussy. Like... yes, you are! Look at you go!

"S&M, by Rihanna lol"

Same as above. I just can't imagine listening to "S&M" by Rihanna for anything but the most mid vanilla missionary... but maybe you're built different.

"I don't like having sex to music but "Candy" by Doja cat goes hard in the bedroom."

Doja Cat is a popular and solid choice — rhythmic, sweet and sensual enough to set the tone, but not so in-your-face about sex that it supersedes the sex that you're actually having.

"Little playlist: Breton - The Commission; Bon Iver - Perth; Matt Van - Andromeda; Tom Odell - Another Love; Sigur Ros - Glosoli"

This is an atmospheric set of slow ambient indie that I can imagine is great for exactly 25 minutes of intensely stoned, pensive boning. This is the lo-fi beats to study and relax to of sex playlists, and you know what? There is nothing wrong with maintaining a consistent state of deep focus for studying, relaxing and doing it. Thank you for sharing!

"raw by LOONY, telepatía by Kali Uchis, I Am by Jorja Smith"

Another short selection of curated sex jams, this one with more of a smooth silky R&B vibe for a cool female manipulator. You cannot argue with Kali Uchis.

"frank ocean"
"Anything by frank ocean or Daniel Caesar"

Are you also going to absolutely rock my world and then leave me high and dry for the next seven years?

"Earfquake, Careless Whisper, Wii music"

While this sequence of songs is criminal, I respect a sex playlist that tells a story:

We start off with "EARFQUAKE," with its rose-coloured lyrics of first love soundtracking the infatuated early stages of the night. Playboi Carti's incomprehensible baby voice isn't the first thing I'd want to hear while making sweet sweet love, but to each their own. You've made it to the bed, the drinks are flowing and the vibes are right.

Enter a run of luscious sax (not to be confused with sex). What?

While "Careless Whisper" is a classic, George Michael's song about pain, loss and cheating — not to mention its status as a certified meme — are an odd choice, your partner thinks to themself. The mood has been jeopardized.

"Maybe we should just play Wii Sports instead?"

"i'd rather be able to hear my partner breathing"

I'm sure this is cute in context, but I am scared of you.

How reclamation starts and ends with education

by **Sophia Russo**

When Carlie McPhee visits schools across the province as a sexual health educator, she focuses on empowering youth through education and giving them tools to navigate sexuality, gender roles and boundaries. McPhee is the founder of sexual health company the Whole SHEbang, and a former sexual health project coordinator of the UBC Centre for Gender & Sexual Health.

Though McPhee prides herself on creating safe spaces for students of all backgrounds, this is not necessarily the norm for sex education. According to McPhee, there is only one consistent theme when comparing sexual health education across Canada — and that's inconsistency. Some sexual health curricula can make people who do not conform to traditional Western norms of sexuality and gender feel erased, unseen and unsure of themselves.

According to the Director of the UBC Sexual Health Laboratory and Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaechology Dr. Lori Brotto, this lack of "comprehensive, universal, gender inclusive, age-appropriate sex education" is a key barrier to exploring sexuality. That lack sets many of us on a path to sexual reclamation — luckily, learning about sex and sexuality is always relevant, regardless of age, experience or background.

"We've seen that kind of flip-flopping back and forth around how much sex that is taught and it differs district by district and province by province," Brotto said. "The reclamation part is, 'How do I reclaim my right to have this information?'"

"Even if you're in your 20s or 30s or 50s, it's never too late to learn how to get consent, what are the parts of the body, how do you masturbate, what does an orgasm feel like? All those sorts of things [are] part of the reclamation."

THE LEARNING

For UBC students, this learning journey can begin at home, in classrooms and in research labs alike.

Dylan Nemes, a first-year medical student who wrote his undergraduate honours thesis on pornography, mental health and social attitudes, has always been interested in relationships. His upper level sexual psychology courses at UBC Okanagan "snowballed" his interest in understanding sexuality.

"Everything that I've learned has made me interested in learning more," he said. Now, Nemes said that his background in sex research has made him more comfortable supporting patients in a clinical setting with their sexual health needs.

Brotto similarly commented on the "beautiful evolution" that she sees in her graduate students as they become more open and articulate in conversations about sexuality, both in the research lab and in their personal lives.

Brotto said the theme of reclamation for this year's *Ubyssey* Sex Issue is fitting, as sexual self discovery is also inherently "proactive." It's about taking your pleasure into your own hands, learning new things and finding what works best for you.

"[Reclamation] is about very intentionally contemplating ... and experimenting with what fits and what doesn't for who you are," she said.

THE UNLEARNING

Patriarchal and heteronormative norms can have a strong influence on how we approach sexuality. For McPhee, navigating her role as a sexual health educator involved a lot of internal labour to unpack those norms.

"I first started teaching while I was still unlearning a lot of my own heteronormativity that I grew up with," she said. Since then, she's come into her own Queerness — reclaiming her own sexuality as she teaches students how to do the same.

In her sexual health education workshops, McPhee said the content is inclusive, age-dependent and sex-positive. Younger kids learn the parts of the body and puberty, while teens move on to learn about crafting healthy experiences, boundary-setting and "understanding the water we swim in in terms of gender roles."

She said she places a special emphasis on centring inclusive, gender-diverse education in a space where all students can feel safe and seen.

"I don't want anyone feeling like they have to reclaim or do work to dig out of a hole that they were put in by circumstances of not getting enough education or getting education that didn't ... include them, which I know is just many people's realities," she said.

According to Brotto and McPhee, patriarchy presents a unique set of challenges for women and non-gender conforming people.

For those who are struggling with shame or other negative feelings about sex, Brotto recommended mindfulness as a way to work on "compassionate, attention training." By slowing down and observing what's going through our mind, we can compassionately confront self-judgements and see them "not as ... a statement of who we are, but rather a byproduct of centuries of misogyny and patriarchy."

"Doing this kind of reclamation work is hard, it's stressful, it's anxiety promoting," she said. "And mindfulness is a beautiful tool for managing distress and uncertainty and fear and all of those sorts of things."

CLAIMING WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY YOURS

Although mindfulness practices can be helpful, they're not a blanket solution. According to McPhee and Brotto, true sexual health starts with funding comprehensive education throughout the nation.

Brotto called on students to vote for government representatives who "see sexual health education as a basic human right" and advocate for more standardized sexual education that isn't left to individual school districts.

McPhee stressed that the need for people to reclaim and reevaluate their understandings of sexual health acts as a sign that sexual health education has a long way to go — but she is ready to support students in that journey.

"I think as long as there's people reclaiming their identities — which I hope they do and that looks different for everyone — there's more work to be done," said McPhee.

"[The goal is] to maintain a healthy thriving sexual health throughout life. That's when we don't need to reclaim anymore, because you can claim it to begin with."

Birth control blues: Navigating sexual health care through youth clinics

by **Jasmine Cadeliña Manango and Aditi Mankar**

This article contains mention of self-harm and suicidal ideation.

The first time Kelsha Wong visited a youth clinic, she was 15 years old, scared and alone.

"I felt super uncomfortable," recounted Wong, who is currently doing a real estate trading services program at the Sauder School of Business. "I wish I had somebody who I [was] comfortable to go with."

Wong didn't feel comfortable discussing sexual health with the adults in her life, including family members and school counsellors. She didn't even feel comfortable asking her closest friends. So instead she turned to strangers.

For students like Wong, free youth clinics can be a lifesaver for accessible sexual health care, but the support they receive from the often-overextended staff can either make or break their experience. When sexual health care overlaps into mental health care, it becomes even more important.

"I think the most difficult part about accessing this sort of care is just the stigma around it," Wong said. She finds that although the general public are becoming more open about sexual health, many people are still not yet comfortable discussing and navigating their own.

Over time, she found herself feeling more at ease. The clinic provided a confidential space for Wong to ask the questions she wasn't ready to ask anyone else — about getting on birth control for the first time, and navigating its notoriously variable side effects.

YOUTH CLINICS ARE AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE

There are many Youth Clinics across Metro Vancouver, including three in the Vancouver area including the East Van, Boulevard and Knight Street Youth Clinics. The services are available for people between the ages of 12 to 24 and include free or low-cost birth control options, emergency contraceptive pills, pregnancy testing and STI testing and treatments. These services are also offered to registered UBC students by UBC Student Health Services.

Access to sexual health services — like contraceptives and STI and pregnancy tests — through youth clinics were invaluable for Wong as she explored her sexuality.

Ciara Norton, a fourth-year environment and sustainability student, does not feel as comfortable accessing campus resources due to privacy concerns so off-campus youth clinics are still critical for her sexual health care access.

Both Wong and Norton have been able to access birth control through their respective clinics. Contraceptives come in various forms, including intrauterine devices (IUDs), implants, contraceptive patches, rings, diaphragms and condoms.

Wong considered many forms of birth control, and happily settled on birth control patches. Meanwhile, Norton had a much bleaker experience with her now-removed Nexplanon implant.

THE EMOTIONAL TOLL OF CONTRACEPTIVES

Norton was "severely concerned" about the potential mental health impacts of going on birth control, but she felt that her concerns were dismissed by sexual health care providers. She felt like birth control was pushed onto her. Eventually, she opted to receive an implant after a recommendation from a friend.

Then, when she wanted to take it out, the youth clinic who gave her the implant told her that she would have to wait months for a removal appointment.

"My whole life was falling apart," said Norton.

In the meantime, her depression continued to chip away at her life. She didn't know what to do. Her confidence dropped. Her libido went down. Her relationship with her sexuality soured. And, for the first time in her life, Norton began experiencing suicidal thoughts and practicing self-harm.

The link between birth control and depression is a complex issue. A critical review of academic literature found that many studies had inconsistent methodologies, making it difficult to compare findings and establish firm evidence about the relationship between birth control and depression. However, a number of studies note a correlation between birth control and antidepressant use, as noted in a 2016 Danish study of over a thousand women. But, effects also might vary based on the type of birth control.

Despite her insistence on removal, the youth clinic where Norton received her implant required her to book an initial consultation appointment first. Even before her removal date had been set, Norton said she was already being pressured to pick a follow up contraceptive.

"I felt like they were just really trying to give women the opportunity to not have to deal with the burdens of having a kid too young — which I think in the greater picture is more impactful, more important — but it was a horrible experience for me."

Eventually, Norton was able to book an appointment at a clinic in Abbotsford. Once removed, she was able to return to a healthier mental state. Her self-confidence increased and her libido returned.

BRIDGING SEXUAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Looking back, Norton wished she had accessed some form of mental health counselling while she had her implant. Although that is a service that many youth clinics as well as UBC Wellness offer, she did not take advantage of it.

"I don't see contraceptives as being bad for mental health," said Norton. "I am seeing them as having the ability to influence mental health and I think that it's just undervalued when people are looking for reproductive health care."

Although she is no longer on birth control, Norton stays safe by accessing other sexual health resources such as physical protection. She also has experience using emergency contraceptives such as Plan B.

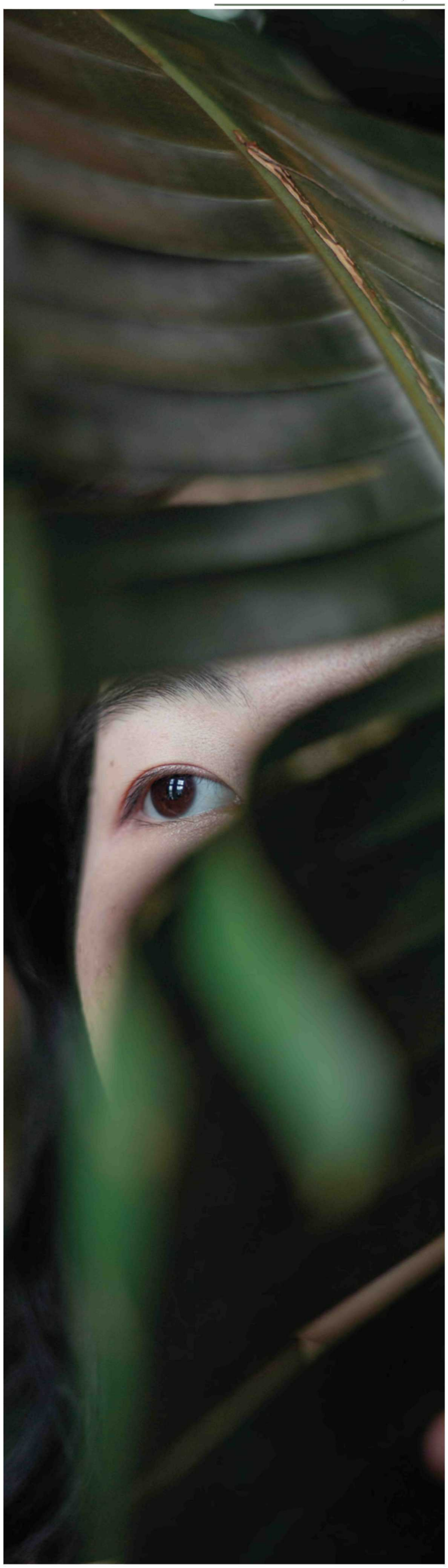
Wong said that throughout the years, she's spent hundreds of dollars on Plan B and pregnancy tests and wished that she leveraged cost-efficient resources. Youth clinics and the UBC Wellness Centre are free.

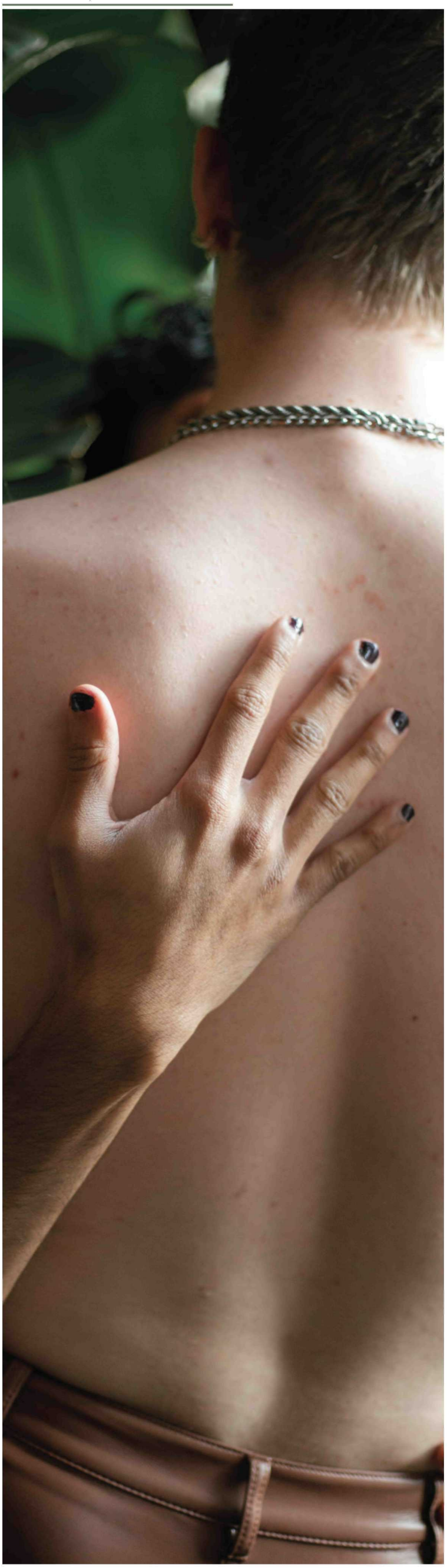
"If you're going to be [sexually] active, which is totally your choice," said Wong. "Take these steps to ensure your sexual health."

Sometimes, those steps include prioritizing mental health in sexual health discussions and seeking counselling in conjunction with other sexual healthcare services.

For now, Norton is sticking to other forms of sexual health care resources but she hasn't crossed off contraceptives quite yet. They're still on the table, just as long as her health care providers are able to have a good, long chat about what it would mean for both her brain and her body. ❦

The UBC Wellness Centre Sexual Health Shop products also include low-cost condoms and pregnancy tests. Students can also redeem up to 80 per cent of eligible prescription drugs, including oral contraceptives, under the AMS/GSS Health and Dental Plan when visiting campus pharmacies. UBC Counseling Services also offers both virtual and in–person appointments as well as drop-in sessions, with up to $1,250 covered by the AMS/GSS Health and Dental Plan annually.





I don't know you, but your apartment tells me everything

by **Chris Munn**

Like many Gen Z Queer masc people, Grindr has distorted my understanding of romance. If you've never explored Grindr, it atomizes traits into a list of alienated statistics: M. 24. 6'2". So, I've learned to scrape together intimacy in the shreds that remain scattered through a hookup's apartment.

All told, a shoe rack, a bookshelf, a bedside table and a bathroom can almost make you believe you just fucked a real person. Over time, I think I've learned more about what I want in an apartment than what I do in a relationship.

The first introduction to the apartment is the shoe rack, whose lack thereof should signal a swift retreat. Hopefully the shoes are at least aligned, and if you're lucky there will be a selection of Blundstones, running shoes, sneakers and dress shoes to show the true versatility of your host.

Keys hung up near the door is an encouraging sign.

Once inside, he'll usually offer me a drink, so I ask for water and wait for my next clue of who's behind door number three. Tap is great, bottled is sadistic, sparkling is pompous, but there's no substitute for a man who pulls a chilled Brita jug from the fridge – woof.

After having a few sips and generally making small talk about careers, life stage and any other superficial information that helps us appraise each other, he'll start to direct me towards the bedroom.

Kissing ensues, followed by some degree of disrobing and body dysmorphia. As things heat up, a key moment arises: he reaches over to the bedside drawer for a bottle of lube, allowing a brief glimpse into the bedside drawer of a stranger. Typically it's various amounts of drugs and sex gear, but personality seeps out in the fancy watches or decorated boxes that lie inside. The top of the drawer itself can be scattered with photos of loved ones, retainers, books, rings, a wallet, receipts or figurines. As we move through various positions, I make note of other artifacts in the room: a dusty bookshelf, a withering houseplant, a hastily stashed pile of clothes.

In between rounds is a perfect time to further investigate the bookshelf. I wish that instead of nudes I could receive photos of their bookshelves to save myself discovering the person I've been having sex with has a copy of Elon Musk's memoir (true story). Once, I discovered a copy of *Sex Addiction 101* and pointed the irony out to my momentary partner. He said he hadn't read it.

Once the sex is over, I make my pilgrimage to the bathroom, shutting the door behind me to be left alone in a stranger's apartment.

As my gaze wanders around the surface of the bathroom sink, from used floss to an *American Psycho*-level skincare routine, I fantasize about my toothbrush taking its place in the holder next to his, or where I might place my own pill container amidst the organized chaos. I turn on the shower, hoping for more than steam and soap scum.

As I lather up, whether it's with 7-in-1 shampoo or a product worth more than my monthly grocery bill, I come to face reality and notice my hopes for connection circling the drain.

Sobered by the cold air as I towel off, I take my leave from the bathroom to collect my things from where they lay scattered around his apartment. Moving towards the door, I realize it'd be creepy to say goodbye to someone whose name I learned from a pill bottle. I hear the door lock behind me.

Guide to hookup etiquette

by **Brianna Reeve**

Hookups can feel like a minefield of potential awkward situations — do you head home at 2 a.m., or stick around for breakfast in the morning? Were they staring deep into your eyes out of basic courtesy, or is it... true love? *Is it weird to ask to borrow their deodorant?*

While we aren't going to tell you how to handle these situations because they're completely dependent on personal preference and context, here are some tips and tricks to guide you through it! When in doubt, remember the three C's: consent, communication and compassion.

ASSERTING YOURSELF

Consent is step one, and everything else follows. In practice, this isn't always a clear binary between 'yes' and 'no'. It can include asking directly what your partner wants or doesn't want, and providing options (e.g., "Do you want to watch another episode, or would it be alright if I kissed you?" and then DEMONSTRATING RESPECT FOR THEIR ANSWER). It also includes observing body language.

When it comes to hookups, sometimes people can feel obliged to give more than they really want. Remember that it's not on you to feel guilty about setting boundaries. Getting tested for STIs is also a vital part of being a responsible hook-up partner. If it's tough to ask someone, try offering up your own status to get them to reciprocate theirs.

Sex is also not the only destination for hookups, although intercourse is often portrayed as the "end goal." What a "hookup" is depends on your interpretation, whether that be a heated make-out session, penetrative sex or whatever "going all the way" means for you.

SETTING BOUNDARIES

To successfully pull off your hookup, whether it be a one night stand or a long-term friends with benefits arrangement, it's best to establish boundaries before things get hot and heavy.

Decide on anonymity. Do you share mutual, or even close, friends? Talk about this before getting steamy to ensure that neither person will kiss and tell if the other doesn't want their escapades known.

Not cool with sleepovers? Let them know beforehand. It's awkward, but what's more awkward is being curled up on the edge of your bed, wishing you had your personal space back and dreading the inevitable morning wake-up.

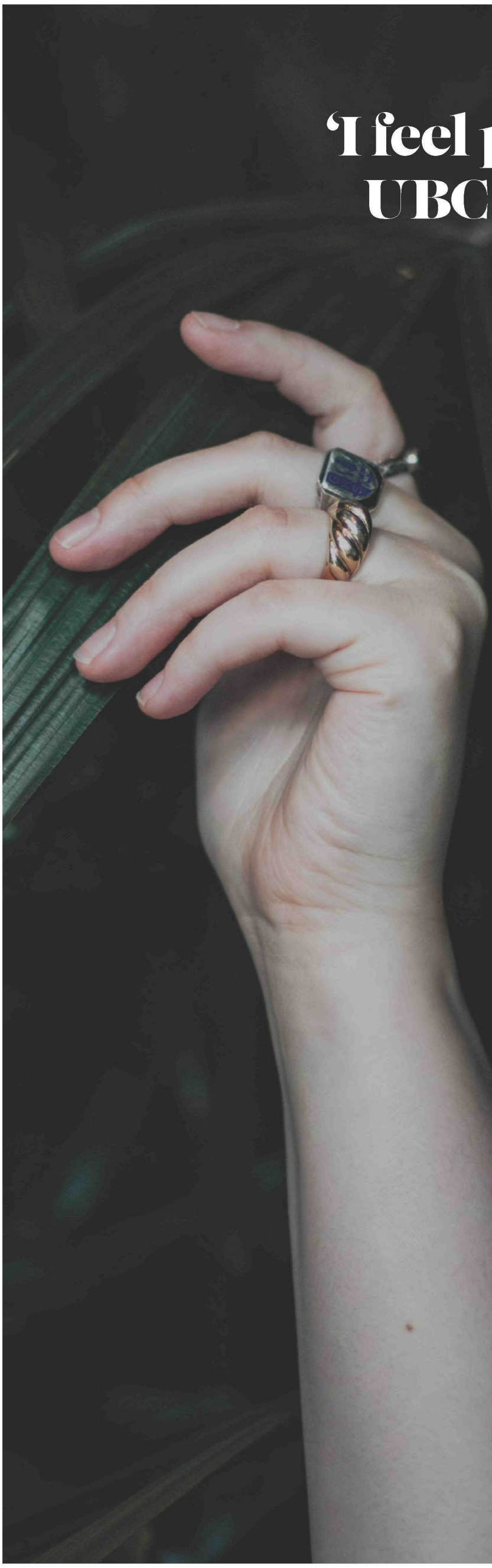
How long is this going to last? Not everyone is looking for a love connection. Do some introspection to figure out what you want and state it early, and spare yourself the awkwardness of trying to shut it down the next time you see them at Blue Chip.

RESPECT THE SPACE

Sometimes you'll go home with someone, and in order to get to their room, you'll have to be introduced to their four roommates, roommates' significant others and friends all sitting in the living room, knowing exactly what you're there for. Try not to feel too weird about it.

Know that not everyone wants their roommates to know about their after-hours activities, so keep it quiet. Throwing out a condom? Wrap it up before you throw it out. Anyone else who uses the garbage can the next day will be glad they don't have to see any remnants staring at them.

Don't take it too seriously! Sometimes, getting caught up in the small details can make you overthink. Don't be afraid to laugh off some of the awkwardness of getting caught in jeans or accidentally bumping teeth instead of lips. You don't have to be a sex god — just try and embrace the moment.



'I feel pretty liberated': How UBC students access PrEP

by **Nathan Bawaan**

Alexander Tsang, a third-year Sauder student, started using PrEP in summer 2020 after a Grindr hookup.

"It was pretty sketchy," he recalled of the hookup.

Tsang, who is from Vancouver, said he contacted a few clinics around the city before he was able to get on PrEP through the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC).

"It was hard to find the right people. But eventually, the people that I did contact sent me to the correct places."

For Tsang and many other Queer people who have sex with men, taking PrEP is a way for them to feel safer when hooking up.

"I feel pretty liberated," Tsang said. "Because we have a whole generation of gays that are dead [because of HIV]. I don't actually have to suffer that." He has since stopped taking PrEP because he is now in a monogamous relationship.

PrEP, or HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis, refers to any drug that reduces one's risk of contracting HIV, said Dr. Mark Hull, a UBC clinical associate professor and research scientist at the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BCCFE). In BC, the most common form of PrEP is Truvada, although other medications are available through private insurance.

The BCCFE, which operates out of St. Paul's hospital in downtown Vancouver, oversees the distribution of PrEP across the province. According to a BCCFE report, 4,299 people were taking PrEP in BC in the second quarter of 2022.

Under current BCCFE guidelines, PrEP is primarily recommended for three groups of people — men who have sex with men (MSM), those who have a partner recently diagnosed with HIV and Transgender women — who are considered at high risk of HIV acquisition. The BCCFE considers having condomless anal sex, along with other conditions like scoring a 10 or higher on the HIV Incidence Risk Index for MSM, as indicators of high risk.

Hull, who helps oversee the BCCFE's guidelines, added that other people who are at risk but don't fall under the three listed groups can still get on PrEP in some cases.

"There's an option to apply to the provincial program with your doctor who assesses and feels you're at risk for your type of exposure," he said.

BARRIERS TO ACCESS EXIST

Like Tsang, Rafsun, an international masters student studying forestry, said it took him a while to find a provider. His name has been changed since he is not out to everyone in his life.

Rafsun said he spent two years trying to get on PrEP in Canada, but admitted he wasn't trying too hard during that entire period.

He said part of the challenge was not knowing if he was even able to get on PrEP as an international student.

In BC, PrEP is free under the Medical Services Plan (MSP) — something which is unique to the province, Hull said. International students are covered under MSP, although it takes three months for coverage to begin.

Hull acknowledged that international students might face an extra barrier when trying to get on PrEP.

"Depending on their status, it does get a little bit more tricky to figure out," he said, adding that international students not covered under MSP could try going through a privately-funded provider.

Another challenge for Rafsun was finding someone to provide PrEP for him.

"Every time I called UBC Hospital or anywhere I go, they [couldn't] really guide me where to go. So it was really confusing," Rafsun said.

He said he called UBC Student Health three times in the past year to get STI tested — a BCCFE requirement to get on PrEP — but that the staff just "said some general answers and didn't really send [him] anywhere specific."

"I just thought that UBC Hospital would be providing PrEP because at least my undergrad school [in the US] used to," he said.

In a written statement sent to *The Ubyssey*, UBC's Chief Student Health Officer Noorjean Hassam wrote that UBC Student Health provides PrEP to students on a case-by-case basis.

"Student Health Services believes PrEP is important to provide and will work with students individually to determine if it is an appropriate course of action for them," she wrote.

FEELING PrEPARED

Rafsun eventually got on PrEP earlier this month after a friend told him about the Boulevard Youth Clinic, an STI clinic in Vancouver, in January. He went to the clinic where a doctor helped him complete the necessary STI tests and blood work.

"The doctor was really supportive ... by making sure that I had the points [of information] to get the PrEP," he said.

A couple weeks later, Rafsun was able to pick up his prescription from the pharmacy at St. Paul's Hospital downtown — although he said this also could be a barrier for students.

"I guess it makes sense," he said, noting that St. Paul's is near Davie Street, a historically 2SLGBTQIA+ neighbourhood. "But also it's so far from UBC and other places."

"I prefer there be more providers for sure."

Due to limited provincial funding, Hull said the pharmacy at St. Paul's is essentially the only PrEP provider in the city of Vancouver. But, he said the program can be flexible.

"If you identified a local pharmacy that was more convenient for you — especially if you live further out from downtown — then they make a lot of effort to try and send it to your community pharmacy," he said.

When asked if the BCCFE had considered working with UBC Hospital or the Shoppers Drug Mart on campus to provide students with PrEP, Hull said the centre would be willing to do so, but that he doesn't think a conversation has happened yet. Hassam did not comment on this in her written statement.

Regardless of the challenges, Rafsun said he feels safer going into hookups now that he is on PrEP. He and Tsang said they both believe people who are eligible under the BCCFE guidelines and are sexually active should consider taking it.

"The pros just outweigh the cons so much," Tsang said. "So final conclusion: get on it."

Celibate Girl Summer

by **Phoebe Fuller**

On our first beach day of the year, ceremoniously marking the beginning of summer in Vancouver, my best friend Aya and I made a celibacy pact.

We both got out of long-term relationships earlier that year and had done everything together since, including dating. Before the pact, we had both been swiping and meeting strangers for about a month. It wasn't going well.

I was single for the first time in my adult life after dating my high school boyfriend for six years and, in the immortal words of Megan Thee Stallion, I was ready for my hot girl summer. I used to joke that I learned a lot about myself after my breakup, including that I'm a total slut. My first date activities usually consisted of going to a park (walking distance from my place), going to a different park (walking distance from his place) or asking him to come over to "watch a movie" (the universal code for sex).

What I already knew about myself before the breakup was that I'm Queer. Part of my debut summer as a 'single' was supposed to be reclaiming and exploring that part of my identity. Navigating dating after being in a relationship for so long was hard enough, but adding Queer dating as a baby gay on top of it was a Herculean task. I felt uncertain, inexperienced and embarrassed that I wasn't 'gay enough.' In hindsight, I may have overcompensated for feeling like a gay virgin by being a heterosexual harlot.

That day at the beach, despite the sun shining down on us, the menacing shadow of men loomed large. Aya was still recovering from a philosophy major who, on their third date, told her he didn't believe in systemic racism or patriarchy (yikes). I had just hooked up with a guy who I'm pretty sure told me he'd "never gotten good head" just so I'd try really hard, only to say the next day that we should "just be friends" (ouch). While chewing on sandy chunks of watermelon, Aya and I consoled each other as we so often did.

Those privileged enough to have experienced it will understand that the intensity and intimacy of femme friendships cannot be overstated. After our breakups, Aya and I clung to each other like those baby monkeys separated from their mothers clutching surrogate dolls. We became each other's person. Our dating deficiencies didn't just cause us inner turmoil, they triggered conflict between us. When one of us would start seeing someone, the other would try to resist a bitter cocktail of jealousy — one part from our friend finding someone when we hadn't, and one part from our friend's attention being taken away from us.

Dating was taking up so much of our time and energy that our conversations were rarely passing the Bechdel test. Realizing this, we decided together to cut out the rot — the apps, the dating, the sex, everything. No more Tinder Tamagotchis. No more disappointing first dates. No more pretending to like a guy's Spotify playlist. We would spend the summer focusing on ourselves and our friendship. I deleted my dating apps and returned my stuffed animals to their rightful home on my bed after being imprisoned in my closet.

It lasted about three weeks.

Even though my stint with chastity could barely constitute a free trial, I like to think it had a lasting impact on me. Before, it felt like I was trying to prove something — to others, but also to myself. I wanted to know that I was still desirable after getting out of such a long relationship. I wanted to feel validated by men when I didn't in my Queerness.

Letting go of sex meant letting go of all the expectations I placed on myself after my breakup. Desperation fueled by insecurity was not leading me toward a good relationship with any person, let alone with my own sexuality. That insecurity was even infecting the few precious relationships I already had, including the one with my best friend.

Without the sexual or romantic pressure, I also discovered different ways of expressing and connecting to my Queer identity. Being Queer is so much more than sex and dating, it's about community and culture. It's about ordering an oat milk latte with whipped cream and asking for someone's sign before you even know their name. In seriousness, finding and fostering a community of Queer friends gave me more confidence in my identity than any one hookup ever could.

It didn't make me more righteous to stop using dating apps or having casual sex, but it did free up space in my mind for me to remember that I am whole without those things. Yes, I went back to doing both for the rest of the summer, but this time my stuffed animals stayed in plain sight. I didn't have anything to prove anymore. I wasn't looking for validation, acceptance or even love. I knew I already had those things, in great abundance, from my friends. ℭ

Sally Elhennawy always comes back to love

by **Colby Payne**

Sally Elhennawy is a writer who explores themes of Queer love and desire in her poetry. She is a third-year student in English literature and creative writing. *The Ubyssey* sat down with Elhennawy to discuss how she explores both her identity through writing, and her work as a source and expression of reclamation.

This interview has been edited for brevity.

What would you say poetry represents for you at this moment, and what has it represented for you in the past?

Sally Elhennawy: In the past, it represented an outlet for creativity. Right now, it represents an expression of my identity. Sexuality is an aspect of identity that's so fluid and changing. Poetry gives you the space to not have to have everything figured out, but still to be able to capture the expression of identity.

Would you say writing helped you to discover your identity?

I always knew that I was Queer — that was never something that was in tension with my identity. But writing helped me recognize my place in the community. It made me think about my role in this community, about the history that Queer people have gone through, and what I want to do with my future work.

What themes arise frequently in your poetry?

Love shows up a lot in my poetry. To narrow it down, Queer desire. I really like this idea of reclamation – reclaiming certain forms or themes that have historically belonged to a particular group, but that I now feel like I have the right to co-opt in a way that is meaningful for me. I like that I'm able to write a sonnet in a way that's meaningful for me and talk about Queer love and desire and have it be beautiful in those [formal] constraints.

I've also written a personal essay about rom-coms, which were my favorite movie genre as a kid. For me, it's not about abolishing the genre because it stands for something that I don't believe in, but it's about creating space to reclaim it, and make it meaningful in the way that you see yourself represented.

What do you see as being the value of reclaiming these romantic conventions or forms that have been traditionally associated with heterosexual relationships?

Growing up seeing the value placed on things that don't include you makes you feel less valuable and less worthy. To reclaim that reaffirms your own value. From a purely practical point of view, there's no reason that such beautiful things should be restricted to one group of people. If a Queer person thinks that they don't have a right to access some form of art, it's a loss for that person because they deserve to experience the beauty of everything. By reclaiming, you reaffirm everyone's right to experience beauty and value in those ways.

You mentioned earlier that you felt like writing had helped you to recognize your place in the Queer community. Would you be able to elaborate on how writing helped you to recognize your place?

I didn't have language or the experience to verbalize how I felt about being a Queer person until I started writing and expressing that through poetry. In writing, emotions [arose] that I might not have been able to [otherwise] experience.

What do you feel that writing offers in terms of exploring love, and in terms of exploring sexual desire?

When I put my pen to the page, I often don't know what I'm going to be writing. Love and desire are things that I carry within me and are informed by my Queerness, and those are really hard things to think about on your own. It's like imagining the universe and how tiny we are in the universe — it's a really difficult thing for me to sit by myself and conceive of, and it's similar to something as big and powerful as love.

To sit with myself and think about how tiny I am in comparison with what love has been throughout history and what it's meant to people, and all the bodies of work that it informs — it's a lot to be going through my mind. Writing helps me reckon with that. It helps me pare down my emotions in a way that's digestible for me. I find myself writing about things that I didn't know that I was going to be writing about.

It always comes back to love for me, and it always forms in a way that I hadn't been able to verbalize to myself before.

Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

One of the things I love about writing poetry is how it allows you to get to know yourself better, but it also allows you to form connections with other people. Some people might be afraid of the fact that the emotions that they feel that mean so much to them are felt by other people, but I take comfort in the universality of certain emotions. Poetry for me has been instrumental in sifting through my own identity, but also in realizing that I can be inspired by people out there, and I can also inspire other people.

Identity labels aren't for everyone, and that's okay

by **Maya Levajac**

I'm sure we've all had moments where we questioned our identity and how we want to represent ourselves in society. Some people, however, struggle with their identity their whole life. The same can be said for sexuality too.

Our world puts great emphasis on labels. It seems like as each year passes, a new label for gender or sexual identity is created, adding increasing pressure to figure out what category we fit into best. At the same time, it can be incredibly overwhelming to pick a label. There may be instances where not all of who we are as a person can be defined in a single word.

Defining yourself can be confusing, and not knowing the answer can make people feel like something is inherently wrong with them. While labels can empower and add clarity to people's lives, they can also come with unwanted stereotypes. Especially for individuals in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, these stereotypes can make them feel invalidated and misunderstood.

It is okay not to know who you are attracted to or what type of person you are. You do not have to force labels onto yourself to make others happy or because it is what society expects. For some people, sexuality can be fluid and evolve as we navigate through life.

There is something beautiful about not knowing what you like. It gives you the freedom and flexibility to go out into the world and explore anything and everything. Only some get the opportunity to do that, so embrace it if you can!

'Your Best American Girl': A reflection on foreign bodies

by **Dana Turdy**

It was a swelteringly hot day in 2009, and I was visiting Hotan, my mother's hometown where I spent a great deal of my childhood. I had recently watched a movie where the girls would tuck their shirts into themselves to make them look like makeshift bras.

I thought it was genius.

I walked out of my room with my shirt styled like theirs. A relative looked at me and scoffed. He told me to "stop being silly" and wear my shirt normally — girls were not supposed to show off their bodies. I was irritated; I was only eight years old and wasn't sure what body I was supposedly "showing off."

I definitely did not feel "comfortable in my own skin" — a sentiment marketed towards young girls like me by Canadian brands who only had smiling white girls on their ads. I didn't look like those girls. Unlike "normal" Canadian girls, I felt foreign to my own body.

I read books about pretty British girls who had complicated relationships with their mothers and fell asleep wishing I looked like them. I wrote stories about girls with blonde hair and blue eyes named "Sophie" — girls who I felt so connected to but whose material reality couldn't have been more different than my own.

I spent most of my childhood in Surrey, where many newly-immigrated families lived at the time. Living there helped alleviate my feelings of alienness. Things changed when I moved to Kitsilano, the Land of White People and Pilates. Suddenly, I was surrounded by girls that looked like the ones I read about in books and watched on TV. Girls with massive houses, hobbies like horseback riding and family vacations to Hawaii. Girls who had blonde hair and blue eyes and were sometimes even called "Sophie."

Not long after the move, I received an anonymous comment on Ask.fm (a horrible yet popular platform) calling me an "ugly Asian" and telling me to "go back to China." I was 14.

Once again, I was abruptly confronted with the fact that there was something irrefutably strange about me in this place — so evident that even others felt compelled to comment on it.

Then, there's the exoticism. I am no stranger to the fetishization of Asian women. Recently, a guy I met at a bar told me he would love to take me out because he's "never been with a Uyghur girl before" and it was his "dream to try it." This kind of fetishization has manifested globally in some truly ugly ways, like in the tragedy of the 2021 Atlanta spa shootings.

For years, I consumed media that portrayed Asian women as boring, passive and subservient to others. Never the protagonist, but always the nerdy best friend (*Gilmore Girls* comes to mind). I couldn't help but internalize these messages; I internalized that I existed to serve others and their stories. Even now, I still struggle with forming my own sense of identity separate from other people and their expectations.

Thankfully, both the media and my self-perception are slowly starting to change. Movies like *Everything Everywhere All At Once* have brought me to tears because of their authentic portrayal of the immigrant experience, the Queer grief of children of immigrants and all of the other complicated emotions that accompany it. Artists like Mitski make hauntingly beautiful songs about the experience of wanting to be a "normal" American girl seeking validation and comfort from "normal" American boys.

Media representation and consumption is not everything — the recent shooting on Lunar New Year in California stands as a reminder of that fact — but I personally feel seen in a way I have never been seen before. UBC has given me friends who have similar circumstances, people who I've found solace and community in. And, maybe most importantly, I'm lucky enough to be receiving an education that has enabled me to understand and articulate these experiences.

I'm starting to feel less alien in this body, less alienated in my experiences and less alienated in this place. I'm starting to believe that I belong in my body and I belong here.

I belong here.

Destigmatizing sexual dysfunction

by **Brianna Reeve**

When university students talk about their sex lives, they don't usually want to talk about performance issues.

Performance issues fall under the umbrella of sexual dysfunction, a broad term used by sexual health experts to describe sexual issues that cause frustration or stress. Some of the most common forms of sexual dysfunction include pain during sex and erectile dysfunction.

Sexual dysfunction is not uncommon in young adults. Thirty-one per cent of females and nine per cent of males aged 15–24 reported that they had experienced at least one form of sexual dysfunction that they felt hindered their sexuality, according to a 2016 *BMC Public Health* article.

Whether it's caused by stress, self-esteem issues or past negative experiences, sexual dysfunction can play a serious role in relationships and people's sexual identities.

"The sexual performance issues ... compound [and] you start to feel kind of guilty about it," said Mark, a second-year arts student whose name has been changed to protect his privacy.

"You're like 'What am I doing wrong? I can't satisfy my partner, I'm not getting anything out of this, he's not getting anything out of this, why am I even doing this?'"

Both physical and psychological factors can increase the risk of experiencing sexual dysfunction. Research has shown that past trauma can be a particularly strong predictor of sexual dysfunction in women.

"[Traumatic experiences] create an underlying negative reaction to [sex], which unfortunately, can generalize so that even their partners who they have a caring, loving relationship with, they're not able to engage in sexual activity," said Dr. Jan Cioe, an associate professor in psychology at UBC Okanagan.

A sexual health expert or medical professional can create treatment plans that may include sex therapy, sexual education, psychotherapy, medication or mechanical aids (such as dilators or sex toys).

"I think I've been able to move past [sexual dysfunction] solely because of therapy and the tools that that therapy gave me and ending relationships with the people who've done those things to me," said Britney, a second-year kinesiology student who experienced sexual dysfunction following a sexual assault. Britney's name has been changed to protect her privacy.

To address sexual dysfunction, one of the first steps is talking to your partner(s), Coie said.

"Sexuality when functioning properly is grounded in a clear and honest communication process, where you're willing to tell your partner this is working, this is not working, do this, but don't do that," said Coie.

The stigma around sexual dysfunction can make the process of coming to terms with it more difficult.

"I think it comes to two things, that we're afraid to be vulnerable, and that in large part, the way that sex is treated in some media, especially in pornography," said Mark.

Current research shows that only roughly one quarter of adults will seek treatment for sexual dysfunction symptoms due to fear of judgement from others, or from fear of damaging their self-esteem.

Breaking the stigma can start by deconstructing our expectations for sex, and focusing on consent, communication and openness.

"I feel like if everyone kind of just came together and was like, 'Hey, this is normal, this is natural. Maybe there are times when we're too anxious to get a boner, or we're too anxious to get wet down there,'" said Britney. "I feel like it's just normal and it gets stigmatized a lot of times when it shouldn't be."

Distorted

by **Elena Massing**

This article contains mention of eating disorders.

For years, I poured all of my energy into building a false version of myself.

Never let anyone notice the wrinkles in your clothes, or the curve of your hips. Plan your life down to the minute, in excruciating detail and call it being 'well-rounded.' Make sure you have complete control of everything, all the time.

When you have an eating disorder, your whole life is about keeping up appearances.

No matter how much anyone attempted to convince me otherwise, I believed that my physical flaws — which in reality were not flaws at all — were the only things they noticed about me.

I was in a relationship during the worst parts of my illness, and it was impossible for me to accept that someone could genuinely be attracted to me. If I wasn't satisfied with how I looked, why wouldn't she think the same?

Many people are naturally apprehensive about intimacy and touch, myself included, but the hyperawareness and false narratives I held about my body only made it more difficult to be vulnerable. Even though I rationally understood that my partner wouldn't say anything hurtful, I felt compelled to preface any instance that I showed my body with an apology for simply existing — for the possibility that I wouldn't look how she wanted me to.

I have no clue whether I actually enjoyed physical intimacy, because I only remember being caught up in the fear that I would be rejected. Allowing someone access to my body would force me to be completely honest with them about my anxiety surrounding my appearance. Not only would I be physically vulnerable, but I would also be letting my emotional guard down.

Because I was in a Queer relationship, I often found myself comparing my body to my partner's. I was in love with all the parts of her that she viewed as imperfect, but I was incapable of extending this grace toward myself — a normal feeling for many people, but an all-consuming condition for me.

Deep down, I think I harboured resentment toward her. In my eyes, she was a more refined image of everything I wanted to be. Being with her was like looking in the mirror and seeing a better version of myself.

I'm not proud of it. Even during that time, a part of me recognized how unfair it was to put her on a pedestal, but my judgment was clouded by the same urges that made my relationship with my body unhealthy.

Eating disorders encourage competition. I was constantly trying to surpass her in some way, but also felt guilty about how I was actively destroying our relationship.

Since then, I'd like to say that I've healed my relationship with food, but it's more complicated than that.

I can now eat whatever I want, whenever I feel like it. A shit ton of time and tears have gone into getting to that point. However, there's so much more work to do to genuinely accept my body, especially with the physical changes it has gone through during the past year of recovery.

Navigating sex and other forms of physical intimacy continues to be the hardest part.

I still hesitate before taking my shirt off, or flinch when someone places their hand on my waist. After spending so much of my life trying to feel as disconnected as possible from the thing I hated most, the idea of pursuing connection that relies on being in tune with my physicality seems foreign.

I'm learning (very slowly, but surely) that in order to let someone else love your body, you must first accept without shame that you are worthy of feeling desire and being desired.

No matter what stage of life I'm in, I know that I'll always be able to pick out my 'flaws.' The difference between my past and present is that now I choose to see these qualities as neutral, not negative. I refuse to give them the power that they once held over me, as I would rather redirect this energy into discovering and highlighting what I already do love about who I am.

I'm not saying you have to only see yourself in a positive light. That's not realistic. I don't know a single person who doesn't struggle with insecurities of some kind. But the world won't explode if you do a nice thing for yourself. You are not wrong for wanting to indulge, instead of punishing yourself for some wrong you never committed.

You don't have to love yourself, but you can give others the permission to love you. ❦

Unsolicited advice: Newly single? Remember to use protection

by **Phoebe Fuller**

It's totally normal not to use protection with your long-term monogamous partner — if you're both free and clear of STIs, have at it. Those of us who need to worry about pregnancy have other barrier-free means of birth control.

But after a breakup, once your tears have dried and your monkey brain beckons you to redownload Hinge, it is essential to get back into the habit of carrying around latex (or an allergy-friendly alternative).

Case in point: after my breakup last spring, I toyed with the idea of sex with different people for the first time in six years. Proudly implanted with an IUD, I hadn't looked at or so much as thought about condoms since *Pretty Little Liars* was still on TV.

One of my first hookups post-breakup was with a man recalled in my carnal canon only as Peanut Butter Guy, because of the unexplained jar of peanut butter he had on his bedroom floor.

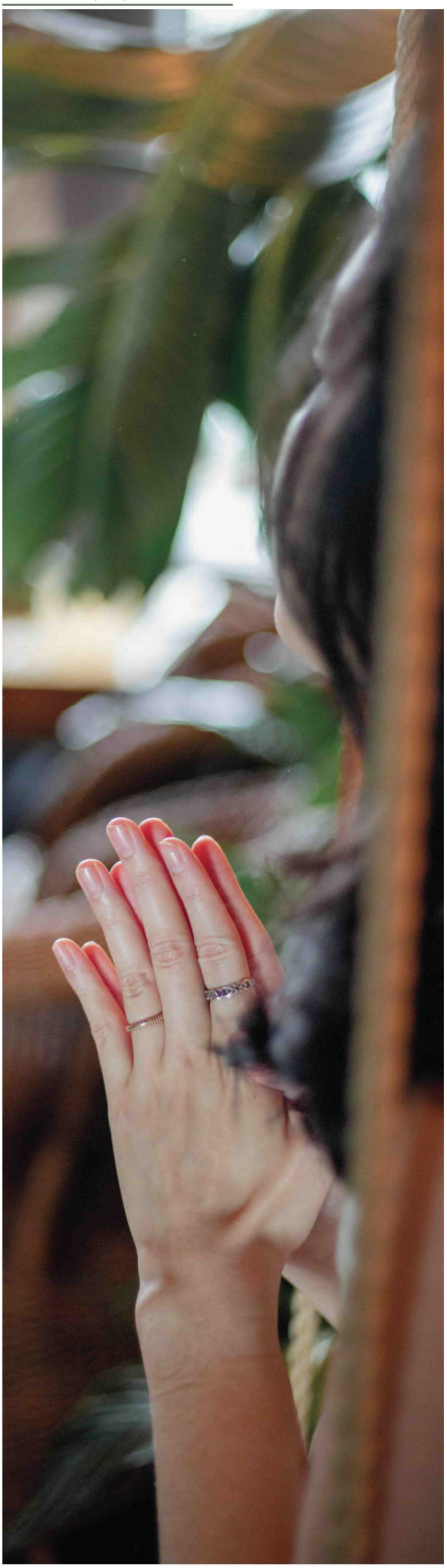
Once we got to the main event, Peanut Butter Guy pretty much immediately came (humble brag, I know). Startled, he said, "Sorry, it's been a while since I've done it without a condom."

I froze. I had completely forgotten that was something you needed to worry about when a stranger's genitals are *inside of you*.

Looking back, I shouldn't have been surprised that a straight man seemed to conveniently share my amnesia for contraception.

Even though I was ready to put myself back out there, I didn't bother buying my own condoms since I thought it should be the responsibility of the person with the penis to have them.

So my advice for anyone coming out of a long-term raw-dog relationship is to force yourself to go out and buy some form of sexual protection (because those condoms in your dresser are probably expired) and keep them on you. No matter if you find the experience mortifying or mundane, it will remind you that protection exists and you spent money on it. So USE IT!



Reconciling spirituality and sexuality

by **Farzeen Ather**

This article contains mentions of homophobia. All student source names have been changed in this article for their safety and privacy.

I grew up in Calgary, in a fairly fundamentalist religious household. I struggled to find balance between the 'Western' ideals of my friends and school, and the traditional teachings around purity and gender relations that were part and parcel of my family's cultural belief system.

I remember sitting in the back of my mom's car while she asked my fourth grade teacher exactly what I was going to be taught in sex education; whether I really needed to know about things like pregnancy and birth control; and if the classes would be co-ed ("Well, surely not!").

When I went on hormonal contraceptives at age 14, my mother encouraged me to keep it to myself. No one in our social circle needed to speculate around why I was taking birth control (even if it was literally to keep a barely-pubescent girl's hormones in check).

And of course, there was the sudden influx of side-eyes and pursed lips the second I hit puberty and started to fill out the clothes I was wearing that I had to deal with, because God forbid I attract the attention of a man any sooner than the day I was to be married.

Sexual education in North America and beyond has been heavily influenced by religion. Generations grew up under the cloud of abstinence-only sex education and purity culture, both disproportionately affecting young women and Queer folk.

Many grow up in households that demonize sex and sexuality, creating subconscious associations between an arguably integral part of the human experience, and feelings of shame and fear.

When I moved away for university, that changed. Young adulthood is an opportunity for many to forge new relationships to sexuality, exploring distance from the values instilled by their families and the faiths. I talked to two UBC students about how they balanced their coming-of-age with the values instilled by their family and their faiths.

'MY SEXUALITY WAS A FORM OF REBELLION'

Chloe, a fourth-year arts student, grew up practicing Christianity in a Korean-American household. She found that sex was something she was told she could talk about, but never really felt comfortable doing so.

"Any questions that were asked [about sex] were kind of met with the same answers that had already been said before," she said. "The conversation ended with 'not before marriage or outside of a relationship', ecetera."

"There weren't really any conversations about sexual orientation [either]. It was kind of just that anyone questioning their sexual orientation was wrong or confused, and that God made us a certain way for a certain reason."

She recalled one of the first instances where she realized the rhetoric she grew up with was not universal. One year, the soap company Lush came out with a Pride-themed ad campaign, including a soap bar that sported the statement "Gay is OK."

"I remember being confused that [it] was so broadly commercial [and] the general public believed that," she said. "I remember that soap bar [as] one of the first things where I saw gayness being celebrated or seen as something that was not just okay, but something to be proud of."

Chloe said it was only after she "left religion" that she was able to further explore her sexuality.

"I think that ... I had too much guilt associated with sex," she said. "And it was only when I absolved myself of the idea that 'someone's watching' [was I] able to do that."

She said separating religion and sex was the only way she was able to make sex about herself, and no one else. "I wasn't able to explore it before that because I didn't allow myself to," she said. "I feel like to truly be a sexually-curious individual you need to be in an environment that supports that."

Sex can often be a form of empowerment or rebellion for individuals who grew up in or are coming out of traditionally conservative environments. Chloe said she has felt differently about her sexuality at different stages of her life.

"I think that when I was younger, my sexuality was more of a form of rebellion for me because I knew that it was something I wasn't supposed to do. I knew it was something that my parents wouldn't like," she said. "And when I moved away and got my freedom and independence, I didn't need to rebel as much anymore. It became more empowering to me."

"[It became] kind of [a] symbol of my independence ... But then I also just think that sexuality and sex are super blown out of proportion in, just, the way that they're talked about in society, and that in the grand scheme of things, it is just a part of life."

The Queer community has also been marginalized by some religious institutions, despite many religious texts supporting inclusion and tolerance.

INTEGRATING QUEER RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Prabhangad, another fourth-year arts student, grew up in a Sikh family in northern India. He wasn't raised to think about sex in conversation with religion until he began his own self-discovery, realizing the role that both have played in his family and development.

"When we did have conversations about sex [and] sexuality, they were not necessarily related to religion, until I personally came out and my dad implied something towards my religion not being able to fit into my idea of sexuality," he said. "But it wasn't really restrictive [for me] because it just wasn't something that I saw go together."

Growing up, he said that he didn't realize his identity was considered "outside the norm" until he faced criticism for it. Most of the prejudice he faced was not from his immediate family, but from his extended community.

"Your aunt brings up to your mom that she doesn't think it's 'right' that I'm looking at her heels or ... I have a flower in my hair [in my] pictures on Instagram," he said. "That is how I was affected: because of other people, not necessarily my family."

Prabhangad today is comfortable in both his spirituality and sexuality, and explained the importance of a thoughtful relationship between the two.

"Not everything in the religion ... is something I need to follow," he said. "It's just a way of life and not your entire life."

SELF-DISCOVERY AND LIBERATION

Chloe and Prabhangad have differing attitudes toward religion and sexuality, and their stories are important because they reveal that there is no right answer.

For some, exploring sexuality within the constructs of organized religion feels restrictive, or associated with too many negative feelings. For others, religion can be interpreted as a way to supplement their self-discovery, strengthening positive values and identity.

My own self-discovery didn't flourish until I became agnostic. I rebelled against the constraints my religious upbringing had placed around me until very recently, a phase I think a lot of young people go through. Spirituality used to be something I curled my lip at, because I just couldn't conceptualize a world where it would align with sexual liberation.

Meeting people at university who are able to reconcile spirituality and sexuality has shifted my perspective though. I can't say I'm a revert by any means, but I have a newfound respect for the delicate balance I've witnessed between two things I never thought could be reclaimed as one.

Jumping (situation)ship: How many weird talking stages does it take to set your boundaries?

by **Gloria Klein**

How to lean into your dark feminine energy. Don't chase, attract. Five ways to get a high-value man obsessed with you. Easy pilates workouts to get rid of your hip dips. If he doesn't text you back in 5 minutes it means that he is in a 24-hour fuckfest with 7 other girls and you need to cheat on him with his da-

How did we get here?

While this type of dating 'advice' might seem like standard TikTok clickbait, its focus on manipulation via self-improvement reveals something about the perils of modern romance. Our culture of casual-no-labels-ha-ha-lol hookups often overlays a sense of anxiety and disposability, and I've noticed more and more women rejecting it.

Why? Gone are the days of roses and opening car doors, replaced by the days of only hanging out when it's dark outside and maybe an Uber Eats order if you're lucky. Say goodbye to meet-cutes and hello to recycled Hinge prompts (we get it, you like tequila... and are competitive about everything... and think that pineapple on pizza is good). If you're looking for labels, you're better off making sure that the condoms in your nightstand are labelled "LUBRICATED" and "NOT EXPIRED" than asking "What are we?" to that guy from Bumble you've been seeing for four months.

So, it makes sense for women to try to get ahead of hookup culture by leaning into being performatively unbothered. If you take four hours to respond, then I will take four days. If you don't ask me out for a week, that's chill, I'll just post some other guy's arm on my story and look hot as fuck doing it.

Unfortunately, dating often seems to cascade into competitions of who cares less, completely losing track of how you got there in the first place.

I am not endorsing a return to the old-timey notions of dating nor completely denouncing casual hookups, which can be empowering and really fun. What I am saying is that it is possible that casual relationships have gotten too casual and that the guards we put up to protect ourselves may be getting in the way of getting what we actually want.

Consistently having experiences where you don't feel valued and get wrapped up in caring more about what the other person is thinking over your own desires can lead to a sort of burnout from pursuing romance or sex in any form. Why keep repeating a cycle of intense situationships with emotionally-unavailable men when you can just disengage entirely?

For a while, you embrace looking in the mirror and realizing you're becoming the no-nonsense businesswoman at the start of every 2000s romcom. You know, the one that's too focused on getting that dream promotion and doesn't bother with men because they're too much of an annoyance and distract her from her main goal. The only difference is that you don't end up getting randomly swept off your feet and your entire worldview changed by Tom Hanks... you end up alone, with only a vibrator to your name.

A period of hookup-burnout voluntary celibacy can be restorative. But, it is not a long-term solution to the damaging culture of noncommutative casual sex that got you there in the first place.

So, after you delete Tinder/Hinge/the number saved in your phone only as "Hot Kevin (Moustache??)," how can you rebuild?

Spend that time after your latest failed entanglement actually figuring out what you want. No, not what the Amy-Dunne-"cool-girl" version of you wants, but actually what you want. Ask yourself things like "What degree of commitment and exclusivity am I looking for?," "What level of communication do I need in order to feel comfortable?" and "What does my ideal sex life look like and how can I get closer to making that happen for myself?"

When you make your triumphant return to the dating scene, express those gosh darn boundaries clearly and sooner rather than later. Remember you can't say the wrong thing to the right person.

'There's no right way to heal from anything': Reclaiming your body after sexual trauma

by **Isabella Falsetti**

This article contains mention of sexual assault.

For many survivors of sexual trauma, there is a clear before and after — and there is no going back. But that doesn't mean healing isn't possible.

For Allison, a first-year student in the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, the healing process began without her realizing it.

"It wasn't an active 'This is me healing right now'; it was very after-the-fact," she said. Allison's name has been changed for her safety.

Allison's then-boyfriend sexually assaulted her when she was 14. She didn't process the trauma immediately and recalls being very avoidant.

It wasn't until much later that she realized her avoidance was itself a form of healing.

Allison believes her understanding of healing differs from that of other survivors. "I think, 'Dang, I did it wrong.' But there's no right way to heal from anything."

It's not uncommon for survivors of trauma to develop post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. According to the American Psychological Association, seven to eight per cent of the population will experience PTSD at some point in their lives.

For Allison, her PTSD was coupled with memory loss. This can happen when the hippocampus, the region of the brain responsible for encoding memories and regulating stress hormones, becomes damaged and loses volume due to heightened stress levels.

"A lot of my memories before I was 14 years old, and during that relationship, are gone," she said. "I lost my teenage years."

In a 2008 study, women with a history of childhood physical or sexual abuse experienced double the rate of general autobiographical memory loss compared to those who no abuse history. For men, the rate was 1.5 times higher compared to those who did not experience abuse.

"It's almost like there's two people: there's the person you were before it happened and the person who you were after."

But Allison has become content with the person she is now. "I don't remember who I was before but .... it's not bad that I changed."

Olivia, a fourth-year science student whose last name has been omitted to protect her privacy, also feels proud of the person she's become in the aftermath of her sexual trauma. One change is through reflecting on her own sexuality. Healing has allowed her to explore which genders she is attracted to and consider how to best satisfy her sexual needs.

"There is no shame in talking about what makes you feel good."

She added that seeking support from UBC's Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO) helped validate her experiences and guide her through the healing process.

Olivia highlighted the importance of drawing on support both from loved ones and professionals.

"It's okay to just reach out for help," she said.

In addition to SVPRO, the AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC) is another free option available to UBC students.

Healing can be a long- or short-term process, said SASC Manager Aashna Josh. "It can take time and there can be lots of ups and downs."

"[We] really encourage folks not to feel pressure to get over it ... and not [ignore] the pain of those things."

The SASC uses a trauma-informed, harm-reduction approach, said Josh. One of its main strategies is holding space for survivors to process their trauma at their own pace. While the SASC doesn't offer counselling services, it can connect clients with external resources like mental health professionals.

The SASC is focused on "meeting [people] where they're at" to understand and help ground their experiences of sexualized violence rather than using "a deeper therapeutic lens," said Josh.

For survivors who wish to seek professional help, therapy can take the healing process a step further.

While in therapy, Allison's therapist gave her an exercise: draw a self-portrait of what she looked like inside.

"You'd be surprised how bright it can be," she said. "I think [introspection] is really important when you're starting your healing journey, and that bright person can take you really far."

A test you can look forward to: How STI testing can make sex more fun, free and safe

by **Tina Yong**

Despite increased general awareness of sexual health, STIs among young adults are on the rise. A 2021 report by the Sex Information & Education Council in partnership with Trojan Condoms showed an upwards trend of STI contraction among Canadian university students aged 20–24.

The report, which collected responses from 4,500 students across the country, also showed that awareness of STI prevalence as well as condom use both fell during the COVID-19 pandemic. One in three students surveyed said they did not use a condom during their last sexual encounter with a one-time partner.

Similarly, in an informal Sex Survey by *The Ubyssey*, 40 per cent of 200 respondents said they had engaged in penile-vaginal sex without a condom and without a previous STI screening.

Researchers attributed respondents' lack of concern to misconceptions and a lack of sexual health education beyond secondary school, leading students to downplay the likelihood and extent to which they could be affected by an STI. In *The Ubyssey* Sex Survey, the most common barrier to getting tested was a lack of information about where to get tested and how to go about doing it.

Many of the most common infections can also be asymptomatic, which further contributes to inadequate voluntary testing.

In terms of prevention, experts promote condoms and vaccines (such as the Gardasil HPV vaccine), in addition to advocating for the reduction of certain risk factors like substance use and having multiple sexual partners. Advocates also increasingly stress the need to balance the messaging around risk factor mitigation with principles of harm reduction to avoid shaming individuals who are going through an exploratory stage of their lives.

Dr. Rohit Vijh, a senior public health resident at the UBC School of Population and Public Health, works in clinical prevention. He said that destigmatizing sex is an important part of the conversation about STI prevention.

"Having sex is actually a really important part of our overall wellness," Vijh said. "It promotes pleasure and intimacy and is an important aspect in our lives. It's all about being empowered to take control over one's sexual health."

Routine STI testing is one strategy students can use to screen for STIs, even when no symptoms are present. Vijh recommended anyone who is sexually active to get routine STI tests.

UBC Student Health Services offers STI testing at both of its on-campus clinics. The BC Centre for Disease Control also offers an online assessment tool that allows you to bring samples to a lab and get results without having to first visit a health care provider.

With STI testing, it's important to keep in mind the "window period," which is the time between coming in contact with an STI and when it will show up on test results, according to Vijh. The window period varies for different infections.

Marginalized people face additional barriers to testing and treatment.

A 2018 study conducted among undergraduate students in Nova Scotia has shown that university students can get trapped in a "cycle of misinformation" due to unclear communication from care providers and the invisibility of sexual health services. This cycle disproportionately affects 2SLGBTQIA+ students.

The study further demonstrated that non-heterosexual female students were 63 per cent less likely and male students 79 per cent less likely to access sexual health service students than their heterosexual counterparts.

UBC offers NURS 280, a course on sexual health, that is available to students from any program. Vijh said that initiatives like this promote an "open dialogue," which is an integral part of improving access to sexual health services.

"Everyone is at risk if they are [newly] sexually active or have [new or casual partners], it's about what we do with that and not shame people or make [them] feel bad for having sex," Vijh said. "But rather, how we can take charge of our own health."

Finding intimacy after heartbreak

by **Shanai Tanwar**

For almost the entirety of my university career, the only constant in my love life — aside from proclaiming "I'm never downloading a dating app again!" and then doing exactly that — has been heartbreak.

Heartbreak looked like a failure to launch a relationship (read: I was ghosted). Or finally putting a full-stop to a situationship where I swallowed too many "I think I love you's." And most recently, I lost someone I'd loved for a few years, because he chose to invest in something healthier, and I can't blame him for that.

The thing with heartbreak is that no matter how much you try to rationalize it, there's no way to really pick up the pieces of your heart in any logical manner. It's kind of like finally putting together a precious broken heirloom... only to drop it and watch it shatter all over again.

Heartbreak first took the shape of a monster who was screaming, "Fuck, I would love to be loved!" I found myself playing the same song over and over again to live a little in those stolen moments of nostalgia, and all my showers involved daydreams about them. Slowly, it morphed into indifference until I eventually bargained and settled for a diluted version of reality where I didn't feel whole, but was also too numb to really care.

It's not fun to ruminate over the same person over and over again simply because you entered the elevator and it smelled a little bit like them. The taste of their name grows stale on your tongue and frankly, I just got bored of being sad.

When I first met the man who's now my partner, I was so deep in this last stage that I almost didn't give him a real chance. *He's only in town for a week,* I thought. There's no way I'm in the space to commit to dealing with US immigration to shoot a shot with someone I met five seconds ago.

That was until he left to cross the border for the first time since meeting me and I felt my heart wrestle with the uncomfortable feeling that I could choose now to either see him again, or never at all. The latter possibility scared me a little. After months of feeling nothing in the love department, it came as a slight shock to my dopamine receptors.

Coming to terms with my feelings (and the fact that he reciprocated them!) was like relearning a foreign language I'd studied for a few years but slowly forgotten. Intimacy found me cautiously, gradually, but surely. At each step I found myself fearing I'd break the heirloom of my heart, and at each of these points I was confronted by the steadily growing realization that trust takes time to find its roots again.

When we dance now to love songs playing softly on his vinyl player under the moonlight while the rest of the world sleeps, or when we know exactly what the other is saying in our common, familiar Hindi, it feels like trust is also something we build together.

ADVERTISEMENT

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN?

Gaining Practical Management and Legal Experience

Advocating for Groups on Campus

Becoming a Student Leader at UBC

Run in the Student Legal Fund Society Elections

Nominations Close
February 17th, 2023

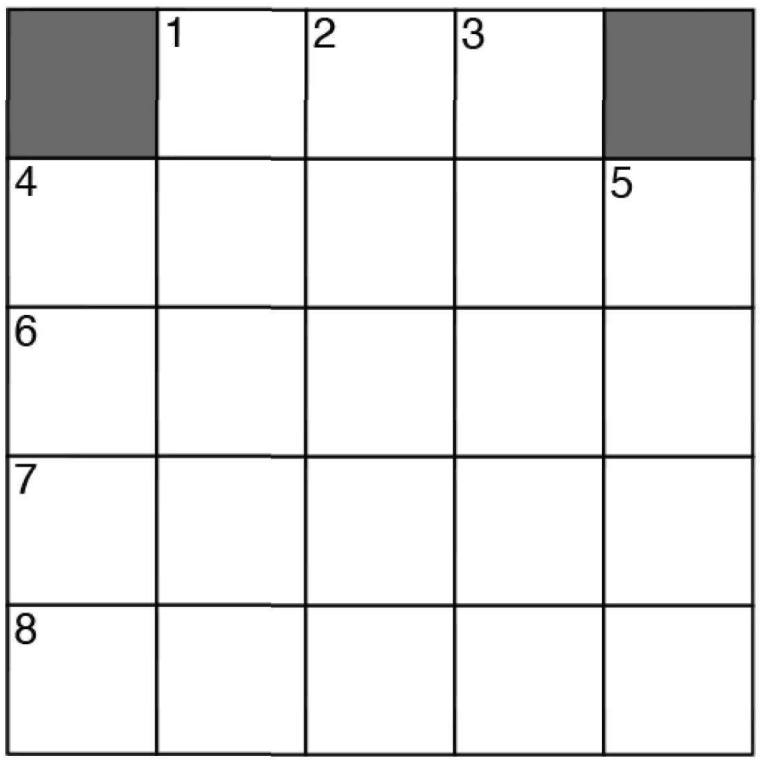
ADVERTISEMENT

Good Luck on your Exams!

The businesses of the Nest want to wish you good luck on your midterm exams!

THE SOUP MARKET
Grocery CHECKOUT FRESH MARKET
CAMPUS VISION
RBC
WIRELESSWAVE
TEADOT
INS
the Delly
SHAPECUT
SeoulHotdog
THIRSTYYY

QUICKIES



◀ CROSSWORD 1

ACROSS

1. _____-stick
4. Egomaniac's self-description
6. A breakup, perhaps
7. Say aloud
8. Liam of One Direction

DOWN

1. *Barbie* director Gerwig
2. Horny, formally
3. One of two child-star identical twins
4. Batter's phrase
5. Jane of literature

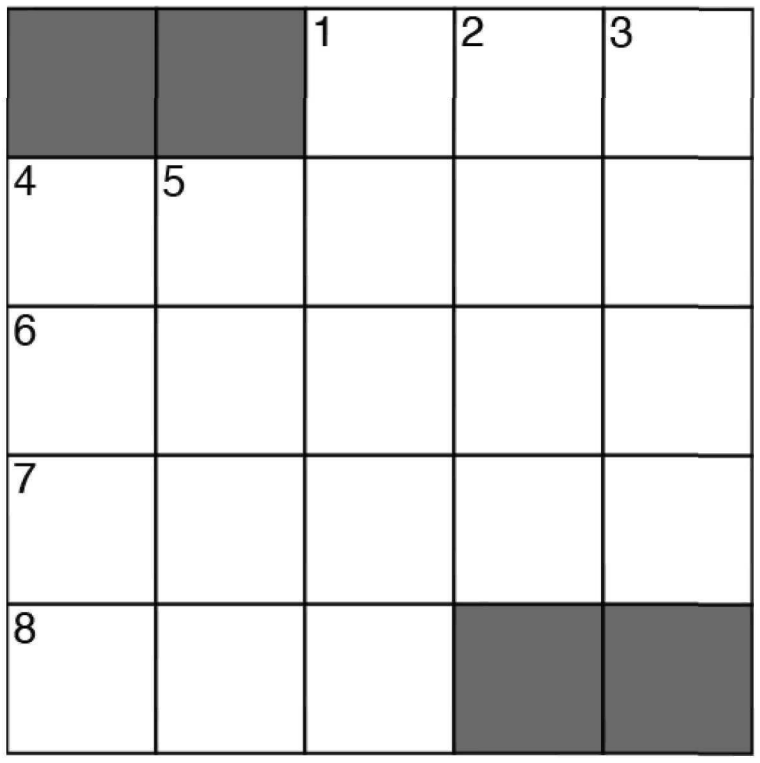
CROSSWORD 2 ▶

ACROSS

1. Help
4. What a cowboy might use a rope for
6. 'You fuck your ____?' line from *The White Lotus*
7. Heckler
8. Tree creature in *The Lord of the Rings*

DOWN

1. Fred's neckwear in *Scooby Doo*
2. Mann, for one
3. Practical sort
4. Important substance for anal sex
5. A way to make a confession (abbr.)



THE UBYSSEY CRUCIVERBALIST BOARD

SUDOKU

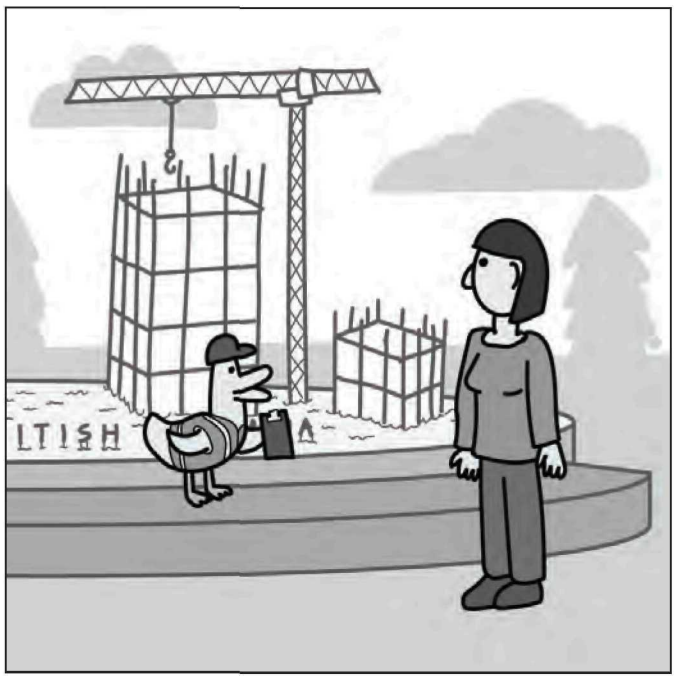
						5		2
			8	2				6
2					7		9	4
9	6	1					2	5
8	2					1	4	3
6	8		3					7
3				7	6			
5		2						

	5	4	3	1	9		8	
					7			
8							1	
5	4							2
		1		4		6		
6							3	1
	3							8
			4					
	8		5	9	6	2	4	

COURTESY KRAZYDAD.COM

THE UBYSSEY'S CAPTION CONTEST

January 31



JASPER DOBBIN / THE UBYSSEY

OUR FAVOURITE SUBMISSIONS

"The Nest, The Coop, The Hatch... you didn't know we run this place?" — Sustainability Noodle, student

"Duck wearing hat." — Duggs, student

"We ran out of duck tape." — Ellie "Cool Kid" Martin

SOLUTIONS — JANUARY 31

Crossword

R	F	D		T	B	S	P		B	E	S	E	E	M
E	L	A		A	R	T	E		R	E	I	N	E	D
C	A	S		L	O	O	T		A	R	G	A	L	I
E	X	H	I	L	A	R	A	T	I	O	N			
D	E	E	S		D	E	L	E	D			I	F	A
E	N	R	A	G	E			P	E	D	I	C	E	L
				I	N	C	R	E	D	U	L	O	U	S
S	C	R	O	D		O	L	E		R	O	N	D	O
H	A	I	R	D	R	E	S	S	E	R				
A	N	N	O	Y	E	R			M	A	R	A	C	A
D	A	D			O	C	O	M	E		A	T	A	D
			I	R	R	E	V	E	R	S	I	B	L	E
T	A	S	T	E	D		A	T	A	T		A	L	S
B	A	R	I	T	E		L	O	L	A		T	A	T
S	H	I	N	E	R		S	O	D	S		S	S	E

Sudoku #1

9	3	2	7	5	8	6	4	1
6	4	1	3	9	2	8	7	5
5	8	7	4	1	6	3	9	2
1	6	4	8	3	9	2	5	7
8	9	3	2	7	5	1	6	4
2	7	5	6	4	1	9	8	3
3	2	6	5	8	4	7	1	9
4	1	8	9	2	7	5	3	6
7	5	9	1	6	3	4	2	8

Sudoku #2

9	5	2	4	8	7	6	1	3
7	1	3	2	6	9	5	4	8
6	4	8	1	3	5	2	9	7
2	7	6	9	5	3	4	8	1
4	3	9	8	1	2	7	6	5
1	8	5	7	4	6	9	3	2
8	2	1	6	7	4	3	5	9
5	9	4	3	2	8	1	7	6
3	6	7	5	9	1	8	2	4

Got game?

Send in your game ideas or cartoons to *visuals@ubyssey.ca.*