



Talking About Our Generation: Morning after pill doesn't solve spring break mistakes

BY ANNA MEIER
Columnist

Waking up in Panama City Beach can be devastating, especially with the taste of Waffle House and whiskey still lingering in your mouth, a stranger next to you, no condom in sight and the local drug store fresh out of Plan B pills.

Everyone knows the stereotypical spring break is filled with drunken mishaps, random hookups and the occasional fight. Everyone also should know using protection is paramount when having sex with someone you don't know so well, and, let's be honest, meeting a girl while she was dancing on top of a bar 10 minutes

ago does not mean you actually know her. But for some reason, as intensely as we have had the "use protection" talk from various outlets, people still think the rules don't apply to them.

In Panama City Beach last week, multiple CVS pharmacies sold out of their stock of Plan B, or morning after pill, according to WJHG, the NBC news affiliate for Panama City. Plan B is the emergency contraceptive people, including vacationing college students, apparently are relying on in lieu of the preventative contraceptive measures they should have used the night before.

Some might ask, "Well, why not rely on the pill if it's effective in preventing pregnancy?" First of all, it's like taking an overdose of normal oral contraceptives, flooding a woman's body

with synthetic progesterone. Because having a dump truck of this hormone coursing through your veins is not normal, it causes side effects like breast tenderness, diarrhea, dizziness, headache, stomach pain, vomiting, hives, difficulty breathing and irregular bleeding, according to drugs.com. But, you're right, using a condom would be much more uncomfortable than dealing with those symptoms for two or three days.

Second, Plan B does absolutely nothing in the way of preventing sexually transmitted infections, but that's another story, especially if you watched the Academy Awards and happened to catch the commercial about the fact that every 47 minutes another woman is diagnosed with cervical cancer, which can

be caused by STIs.

The problem I have is that many of the people going on spring break to places like Cancun, Panama City and South Padre are in college. They go to accredited universities and are preparing themselves to become the doctors, lawyers and engineers of tomorrow. Yet they still think it wise, or at least acceptable, to drive 10 hours to a beach, consume a diet of beer, Taco Bell and Hooters and make mindless mistakes for a full week.

Perhaps the stress of college is too much. Many people our age can't handle having to work a job, crank out a paper or two per week and refrain from having sex with attractive strangers. That simply would be too much. So Spring Break is the one time a year we as a society (or maybe just

MTV) condone this kind of behavior, chalking it up to letting loose and having a good time.

I'm curious as to the real, deep-seated reason behind this kind of animalistic behavior. Maybe it's just one more sign that we haven't evolved much from our aboriginal ancestors, times of fire worship, animal sacrifice and passing the peace pipe. At least most ancient cultures celebrated sex as a ceremonial or, at the minimum, an instrumental act. We've let it devolve into a randomized ritualistic practice only involved in the active worship of the gods and goddesses of brewing and beer.

When we get down to the nitty gritty, the facts are that 72 percent of men and 69 percent of women plan to always or almost always consume alcohol

before having sex on spring break, according to bookofodds.com. If that's not an unhealthy statistic, I don't know what is.

Just last week I heard someone at a party tell a whole group of people he never uses a condom if the girl he's sleeping with claims to be on birth control, because he could definitely tell if someone had herpes.

Maybe this person misspoke, but let's not take his lead on this one. Instead, let's figure out how to have normal interactions with people — actually getting to know someone before you sleep with them and not being in some sort of beer-blinded, pot-induced stupor. And, for the love of all that is right and good, please don't ever listen to that "Spring Break Anthem" song again.

MEDITATIONS OF MICHELLE: Eco-living creates contentment

BY MICHELLE MARTIN
Columnist

We all know the classic tale of how humanity, with its insatiable greed, destroys Mother Earth. With our lack of foresight and lust for convenience and new gadgets, we have pumped so much carbon into the atmosphere that melting ice sheets could raise sea levels by as much as six feet during this century.

Deforestation, disappearing species and our convoluted food system of factory farming and pesticides are all symptoms of our skewed priorities and profit-driven mindset.

You have heard the story a million times by now and I'll spare you the spiel, because instead of dwelling on the evils of humanity, I'd rather focus on how our less eco-friendly lifestyles affect our psyches. What has our abandonment of an earth-based lifestyle done to us on an emotional and psychological level? When we left the farms for factories and traded in our plows for office computers, did we gain or lose in the end?

I don't want to use this column to ignorantly romanticize the authenticity of "living off the land." I realize there were many troubles associated with that lifestyle, including disease, overwork, pests and famine. In many ways technology has improved our standard of living. However, my intuition keeps telling me the pendulum has swung too far in the opposite

direction toward consumerism, modernization and convenience. The weakening state of our earth proves we're doing something wrong.

I lodge my major complaint against consumerism — the notion that purchasing manufactured goods makes the world go around. For many years I never quite understood why groups like Adbusters treated advertising and product consumption as evils. Then I gradually realized I had grown up learning a lie: that buying more new clothes — ones I usually didn't really need — would fill a tiny void in my soul. But as soon as a new shirt filled one pocket-sized void, another one would appear. I would need more music, another poster, a new skirt, a cup of coffee, a burrito. The cycles of consumerism kept me coming back for more because eventually those clothes became "outdated," and I would need to go shopping again.

Soon, I realized that, although I could throw my money and energy at this endless cycle forever, my purchased happiness only provided me with a fickle, temporary contentment that required constant maintenance. My mind was always snooping around for its next fix. Thus, my happiness largely depended on what I owned or how much fun I could purchase. After I uncovered these flaws in the system, I found a deeper and more consistent happiness in simplicity — contentment with less, not more — in appreciating

whatever life threw my way, in each moment.

Last semester I visited the Possibility Alliance, a homesteading educational center in La Plata, and this cemented my views. I always had a sense of completeness when hiking through nature that I could never quite grasp when doing homework on my laptop in the library. The homesteaders at the Possibility Alliance use no electricity or other modern conveniences. They bike wherever they have to go and make everything — down to the beeswax candles they use at night. However, founder Ethan Hughes told me, "We don't go to restaurants or movies, and we certainly don't go to Aruba for vacation, but we feel like we live like kings and queens. We have a daughter, and we spend time together doing what we care about, and what else is there? If our goal is happiness, then we're way happier now."

This comes from a family that lives on \$3,000 every year. When I visited there, I could see why. No white noise muddles the air, only the natural sounds of wind and livestock. The air feels warm and peaceful. It's difficult to explain, but I have a sense when I'm in this place — or any place in nature — that I don't want or need anything else.

I feel duped by consumerism. It taught me to depend on coffee instead of self-discipline to get schoolwork done, to watch movies when

I hung out with my friends instead of interacting with them, to depend on packaged food instead of making homecooked meals and to believe that nature was a novelty to enjoy in my spare time instead of throughout my day-to-day existence. We've lost bodies of knowledge about the earth because hardly anyone lives a sustainable, earth-based lifestyle. Considering how little time we spend within an actual ecosystem, it's no wonder we don't think twice about harming the ones we do.

In addition, the lifestyles we have replaced this one with are not always psychologically healthy. With depression hitting 9.5 percent of Americans according to the National Institute of Mental Health, is it really working for us? Even now, we all spend our weeks chained to our desks. Then by the time Friday comes we have such a strong need to cut loose and communicate with other people instead of our computer screens that we spend all our money at parties and bars. Don't get me wrong, I am incredibly grateful for the body of knowledge I have acquired at Truman, because it has truly shaped me as a person. But I do feel like my lifestyle is missing something organic and authentic, which is why I hope to someday live "off the grid," similar to the people at the Possibility Alliance. In the meantime, I can't mope around about it. I still have a lot of control over my lifestyle, so I am taking little steps toward simplicity



whenever I can. I try not to buy anything I don't need, and I try buying secondhand if I do. I mend my torn clothes instead of tossing them. I save my food scraps for compost and try to buy food from local sources to break down the concrete wall that separates me from where my food comes from. And most importantly, I try to spend a few minutes outside whenever I can.

To build a better world, the environmental movement should consider advocating the benefits of living simply instead of overloading us with tales of our cruelty and greed. Most of us were raised to live a consumerist lifestyle from birth and are taught to buy things to assuage our desires. We need to see that simple living will make us happier, not just ethical.

I leave you with the words of Ethan Hughes: "In the end, we all want to be happy. That's the simplest summary of the world. We all play really bad means to get it. We're still going after it, but we think, 'Oh if I only had another hundred-thousand in the bank I would be happy. If I could only go to two more dance clubs tonight.' It's always something in the future."



BY ELIZABETH NECKA
Columnist

Talking to Greg Allen is like talking to J.K. Rowling.

As the founder of neofuturism, a new form of experimental theater that challenges traditional ideas of character and pretense, anything Allen says about neofuturist theatre must be true. After all, he created it. It's like asking J.K. Rowling what happened on Harry's 21st birthday. If she said it happened, it happened.

I participated in Allen's Truman residency workshop last week. It was intense but exciting work — it created abstract, original pieces and explored the full range of human emotions. During the week, members of the Unfiltered Theatre Guild created more than 50 pieces based on their life experiences and presented 25 of them Saturday night.

Neofuturism directly involves the audience, engaging them with the pieces. Although it is theater, neofuturism also is an exploration of the human psyche. When audiences are allowed to draw their own conclusions from abstract pieces, they demonstrate their thoughts through behavioral responses to the pieces presented.

One of the pieces put together in rehearsal was about a child who was afraid of the dark and cuddled her teddy bear for safety. The

The Truman Experiment: Experimental theater challenges traditional concepts

piece was created for exercise and rehearsal purposes and wasn't presented at the actual show. However, it was the week's most compelling example of how the theater of neofuturism evokes truths about human nature. In the play, the "audience" — other troupe members — were herded into a small, dark room and

instructed not to turn on any lights. The performers then crawled among the audience, looking for the teddy bear. One of the most abstract pieces, I interpreted it as though the audience members were monsters, obstacles in the way of the child's comfort and safety.

The visceral responses from the audience were interesting. Although no one could see, we could hear winces and exclamations of discomfort and nerves. People felt uncomfortable and claustrophobic, and some even were afraid of the dark. We knew and trusted the performers, but their brush against us, followed by another audience member's nervous laughter or shriek, let our imaginations run rampant. When it finally ended, we emerged terrified and disoriented, even though the piece was meant to be innocent fun. The performers couldn't understand why no one took out their cell-phone to see what was happening. Our simple response: They told us not to.

People will do stupid and frightful things in obedience to authority. In 1961, Stanley Milgram conducted a series of disturbing

psychological studies which proved just how far people were willing to go to obey. In a lab coat, his experimenter asked study participants to teach word-pairs to an anonymous learner in the adjoining room. Subjects were instructed to administer shocks to the learner if they made a mistake, increasing at 15-volt

increments to a maximum of 450-volts. The highest level was designated DANGER-SEVERE SHOCK. (The "learner" was an actor who wasn't actually shocked, but subjects did not know this.)

Despite cries and grunts of pain and suffering, remarks about a supposed heart condition and eventual silent submission, the "teacher" continued to increase the shock level. Milgram expected subjects to refuse to participate, but the presence of the authority figure in the lab coat

and the feeling that they must listen to him propelled their sustained obedience despite obvious stress induced by supposedly harming another innocent human being. To refuse to administer the shock would clearly breach the rules. Shockingly, about two-thirds of the study participants administered the most dangerous level, even when the "learner's" responses inclined one to think he could be near death. Two-thirds of Truman's population would equal approximately 4,000 students willing to administer deadly shocks in the presence of authority.

The human propensity to obey authority

"His theater confronts traditional passive audience roles by challenging his audiences to interact with his work, rather than obeying and accepting what is given to them."