SHOTPUT.

The Slow Dance
Episode 2: SEND PICS
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Full transcript

Lucy (L):
Welcome to Episode 2 of The Slow Dance, a five part podcast series by Shotput in which teens educate us about sex. I'm Lucy.

Jim (J):
And I'm Jim. If this is your first time, you might want to go back to Episode 1, which was all about firsts; first kisses, first time having sex, and future firsts. You don't have to listen from the beginning but it might be more fun that way.

L:
Today's episode, Send Pics. Okay, Jim, I've got a question. What's the one thing that teens want but can't get?

J:
That's obvious: sex.

L:
No. Privacy.

Respondent (R):
You always heard stories about people in bushes up Arthur's Seat, didn't you?

R:
I've heard several of them. I've heard several, in parks or just bushes, there's always bushes involved, I don't know why.

R:
I shared a room until just halfway through this year when I moved out, so I've shared a room so there was never, never space, ever. So, it had to always be somewhere else. It had to be either at their house or it just wouldn't happen. There was no way it could be done in my house because there was no privacy.

R:
It depends on the situation.

R:

It depends on how well you are together. Like see if you're going to their house for the first time, it's usually when no one's in. But when you start to build a relationship with them, then you start to know their parents and that.

R:

It also depends on how the parents are. Like if it was me, my mum and dad would want to be in the house.

R:

Yeah.

R:

But if you're going to a boy's, it's usually that the mum and dad aren't there.

R:

Yeah.

R:

My mum said I could have a boy in my room but I'd need to keep the door open.

R:

My mum doesn't take it that far, but she wants to be in the house.

R:

My parents are very chill. My dad probably comes into my room like every two seconds to make some dumb joke, but that's about it. They're really chill. It all depends on the parent, really.

R:

Anyone who knows me knows my mum has got the biggest mouth in Grangemouth, I'll just say that, and basically it's always like fifty questions. So, you'll start a conversation and an hour later you'll still be having the same conversation about a different thing. So, say someone came to my house, it'd be like "right, what's your name? Where are you from? Who's your mum and dad? What school did they go to?" But then when it's just you and them, it's like a conversation you have, like "what's your name, where are you from?" end of story. No "where's your mum and dad from? What's your favourite food?"

R:

That's true. Not for me, but the horror story that kept cropping up that to me just felt so wrong was lots of people having sex in their siblings' bedrooms at parties, especially if they were younger, it's like "that's not right."

R:

Or they did it in people's parents' beds at parties, and I was like "oh, my god, your poor parents."

R:

I know.

R:
I think that's worse, that it's not even your own parents, it's strangers.

R:
Yeah. I think also, though, when you're a teenager, I know I didn't have a double bed until like last year. So, I think it was the sort of… I don't know, pretending you had a bigger bed than you did.

R:
I've got two little brothers and my mum, so if someone was coming over, you'd have to time things so carefully, you'd have to be like "well, So-and-so is going out at this time, So-and-so goes out at this time, so if you come at this time and then you can say hello and then they'll leave until this time, so we've got like thirty minutes." Because I think often like parental anxiety as well, so my mum, if there is a boy downstairs, she'd be coming in every ten minutes, like "[KNOCK-ING] how are you? What's going on?" I had my own room, but it wasn't private. Like if someone else was there, she was in every ten minutes to see what was happening.

R:
That's horrific.

R:
I feel like if I was to have a boy in my house, I'd only ever let them come if my mum and dad weren't in. And I just wouldn't tell them that they were here.

R:
There's no private places, wherever you go, there's always going to be someone.

R:
Like if you have a free house, that's the perfect opportunity to have someone in because there's no one there. And see if your parents go away for the weekend, that is perfect. That is what you want.

J:
Yeah, some things just don't change. And access to a private space, I remember that too. I'm from the Motor City of Detroit, so there was a lot of secret car action going on among teens.

L:
But teens today have a tool that we didn't, social media. And it's not exactly a private space, and we'll get to that later, but it does solve some problems.

[MULTIPLE VOICES]:
Snapchat.

R:
You slide in the DMs.

R:
Slide in their DMs if you're brave, because that's all collected.

R:
You could get left on 'seen'.

R:
You have your Instagram Stories and someone will put a nice photo of them up, and you swipe up and you can react, like…

R:
"You're hot, like."

R:
Aye. Like "wyd."

R:
"Look good, babe. What's your Snap?"

R:
It depends on confidence. If you're wanting to shoot your shot, probs do it over Snapchat.

R:
Yeah, because it'll be a lot more awkward, like, saying "oh, you're really gorgeous." It's harder to say that in real life than it is over a screen.

R:
I'm finding it so hard not to interrupt. You guys need to bear in mind, see my generation, you had to phone his house and pray that his mum and dad didn't answer! You know nothing about shooting your shot.

R:
You haven't had to FaceTime someone when your mum makes announcements to your upstairs Alexa "do you want dinner now or later?"

J:
By the way, that voice you just heard, that was the teacher, she sat in on the conversation.

R:
I'll bow back out, but I just had to say that, phoning someone's house phone, that's what we had to do!

R:
Obviously the internet, social media, things like that. I think that plays a big part in it and is almost where all those relationships... well, I know for me a lot of the relationships I've had have sort of birthed from that. Like we've known each other through this thing, but we've only started talking on Facebook or Snapchat or Instagram, and I feel that that's how you can get to know a person these days as well, like scrolling through their Instagram or Facebook, you can have an

idea of what they like, their sense of humour, what sort of things they get up to. You can learn that from a conversation, but conversations are more difficult.

R:
Yeah, I guess for me a private moment is through text messages and social media, instead of the verbal side of things.

R:
It creates a playful setting, foreplay, if you like. And it's just, see how far we can push it, but always bring it back to normal.

R:
With social media and texting, it's quite easy to… not ignore the text, but to kind of put it aside and think about how you're going to respond, whereas in person, you have to just straight away get back to them.

J:
Now, of course, and infamously, social media has a lot of problems. And the teens who we spoke to were not blind to this. To the contrary, they were really articulate about these problems.

L:
Yeah, and one thing we heard over and over again was this one phrase, an abrupt request: send pics.

R:
It's never a nice conversation, it's always like "I won't push you into anything, don't worry, I'm a good guy." Two minutes later, "send pics, send this, send that." And it's like "no, I don't want to send you anything, I want to have a relationship with meaning."

R:
A lot of my friends got asked for pics if they were talking to a new guy, it was because Snapchat was still kind of coming into trend when we were in high school, so a lot of people thought since it was a new thing that they were using, like it's not so permanent, you can see if they've screenshotted or whatever, but there's a way you can screenshot without it notifying that person, which is kind of a way that some people started to do it, and then they passed them around and everything.

R:
You would literally just get random guys in their fifties adding loads of accounts like "send pics", and it's like "no, please go away." But it's a big thing on Snapchat.

R:
Yeah. The thing is what really makes me feel sick is the fact that the boys want pics, and once they've got them, that's it, they won't talk to you again unless they're <AUDIO GARBLED> the next thing, and then they want to talk but they want more. But they're never going to want a relationship. It's never because they like you, it's just because you have a nice body. And my

friend actually knows that now and still lets them do it to her. They've never screenshotted. That's what scares me, if they screenshot that and send it. I've never sent it.

R:
They could be screenshotted, they can be saved. Yeah.

R:
Lasts forever online.

R:
Everything lasts forever online.

R:
I've got a kind of different experience, I think, coming from a Catholic school, it made us slightly worse, especially from a younger age, we were doing a lot of stuff that we shouldn't have been doing, like nudes and sending whatever messages, even from like first year. And obviously thinking of it now, my big, old nineteen year old self, I'm like "oh my god. You stupid wee girl, what the hell?"

R:
The guys you talked about, it's very much a thing, like "I've seen this and this and this person naked. You haven't." It's almost like a sense of having one-up on someone, and being like "well, they sent it to me." "Well, they haven't sent it to me." It's weird.

R:
It makes me sick. Every time I hear boys talking about women, objectifying women, it's just so… "grrr!"

J:
And, of course, we can't ignore the more infamous cousin of "send pics", the dick pic.

R:
I don't really think that it's the most attractive thing either. I think they all parts just look weird! No matter who it's on. I think girls have much nicer bodies as well. Ew, just men, ew!

R:
You don't really want to see that on a photo. I don't want to open my phone and like [SARCASTIC] "oh, that's lovely, thanks for that!"

R:
I can't imagine sitting there and being like "wow, look at this!"

R:
I think the only thing that's nice is like a shirtless pic, that's sometimes nice. But it's not like I want more out of that, it's just like "hmm, okay." But, a dick, no, it's just not nice, I don't want to open my phone and see that.

R:

I think it's when you've not asked for it and it's just been sent.

R:

Yeah, and it's out the blue.

R:

Yeah if you think it's streaks, and you're like... especially if you're, like, next to your mum or something, and you're like "whoa."

L:

So, as you can hear, teenagers are really aware of the problems of sending photos on social media. They know social media isn't a truly private space. And they see how the "send pic" thing is weaponised against women.

J:

What teens are frustrated about is adults' condescension. The misconception that teens are foolish or naive. Teens are frustrated that despite how savvy they actually are, adults still feel compelled to scaremonger.

R:

Like they really wanted to scare you out of it completely. We had a police officer come in as well, but he gave a talk about Snapchat, and he was like "you think it's gone forever, but actually..." I remember distinctly, because it was so ridiculous, it definitely can't be true, but he said there's this massive like manufacturing warehouse somewhere in the Highlands and he can't tell us its exact location, and in this warehouse all the data from Snapchat is stored there for six months. So, every photo you've sent in the last six months is somewhere on a database, somewhere in the Highlands, and if they have cause to think you've sent nudes, they can go to the warehouse and find the picture you sent. And I remember he was so serious, he was like "we can't tell you where it is, we can't tell you what it looks like, but it is out there." And we were all like "oh my god. That can't be... is that true? No? Right?" That can't be.

R:

No way. In the Highlands! [LAUGHTER]

R:

I hope it's true, I would love it.

J:

Okay, so that is hilarious, and I love nothing more than a good laugh at petrified adults. But, this fear mongering that there might be a nude photo of you somewhere in the Highlands in a warehouse forever, this fear mongering covers up something that is much more frightening. Photographs of us, like just about everything else about us, are being translated into data. And that data is turned into a commodity, that data is being bought and sold by, you guessed it, those same social media companies that harvest the photos.

L:
And yet teenagers are not only victims, they know what they're signing up for. Those corporations, the Facebooks and the Snapchats and the Clearview AIs, they are doing some big evil things, but the teens, when they send pics, they are up to something much more interesting.

R:
I think there's also a different side, maybe a nicer side...

R:
There is, definitely a nicer side to it.

R:
...when you trust someone and everything like that. And there's a certain level of trust and intimacy when you share those pictures, because you're really opening yourself up to potentially... you know. It's also exciting as well.

R:
It is, with risqué photos, I think it's more exciting than the full-on photo sometimes. Because it is exciting to the mind as well, especially if you're in a long distance relationship. Even when it's something as simple as a bra strap on your shoulder or something like that, it's like the knowing of when you see that person, it's like that can happen, and your brain works from just the little excitement and it builds the adrenaline. And obviously something sexual isn't important in every relationship, but it does help build how you feel towards that person if you've got a good sexual chemistry, because it makes it exciting and you just want to know more about the person in that way sometimes. Because I feel like with the pictures, in some ways it does open your mind to it, so then you think about that person that way more and it opens up conversations, and it opens up the barrier in a way that you haven't got to be in person to do it. Because it can be very nerve-wracking in person to make that first move, but with photos, you're in your own room, you're in your own space, you can make yourself look however you want to. And you can start at your own pace instead of being in person it being full-on straight away.

R:
I think also when you are sending photos that are not extremely revealing and, like you said, maybe showing a bra strap or a bit more skin, there's a lot of tension that you're building with those photos.

R:
Social media, at least to me, especially Snapchat, was a platform for lust, lust-ish, something that would keep things going from Friday to Friday in the week, we would just flirt, extremely intense in the afternoon on Snapchat and then in daytime at school we would not do that at all. But it's not the same lust.

R:
No, it's still not the same lust. It's kind of like a cheap knock-off version.

R:

I think even going online, obviously I am a big advocate for "social media can be so great", but it can be so bad, and I would find myself on Omegle and random shit like that talking to random people, probably talking to older men, and pure weird stuff, and you just wouldn't know where to go, especially being so young, exploring everything. But I don't know, probably just imitation and finding it out for yourself, and then obviously once you try so many different ways, you'll eventually suss out that there's a way to go about it. There's times, honestly, thinking back, I put up with a lot of shit from boys sometimes, probably as we all have. But, yeah, you try some things, you get taken the piss out of you, you get loads of stuff happening, but then it does work. I think as I got older, obviously going through puberty and looks changing and all that as well, and putting a wee bit more effort in and learning how to do your make-up and your hair and all that, it kind of starts to change, and then the tables turn, and more people end up coming to you. So, in the end, it's worked out not bad. I mean, I am still single and nothing's on the table now, but fingers crossed it'll be all right. [LAUGHS]

L:

In all our conversations with teens, it was this very issue: the forging of one's digital identity, particularly one's digital identity as a sexual being that sparked some of the most interesting debates. Some found the distance provided by social media to be empowering, some found it to be disingenuous, and some found it to be both.

R:

When you're talking new with someone, you're not going to show them everything about you and then for it to die off a few days later because they're like "whoa, they're a weirdo."

R:

I was going to say, I think in real life, the more you get to know someone, the more they become themselves. Obviously over Snapchat, right now if we were having to do this podcast over Snapchat, no one would say nearly as much as we are now. But in real life, after like twenty minutes you can actually see who a person is because to carry on a lie or whatever, a fake identity, someone you want to be, or hide your insecurities, can't last forever.

R:

I think in real life a lot of people put on a fake persona because they're not really happy with themselves in a way, or they want you to see what they like and not so much what they don't like. But I don't think that's the case for everyone. I think sometimes it's a bit more genuine.

R:

I do think that especially over Snapchat, you can just post what you want everyone else to see, you can post you being happy and bubbly and all that. Even in real life you can be happy and bubbly to everyone that you want to see that way, but then…

R:

It can hide your insecurities.

R:

...yeah, if you trust someone, they can see your insecurities and they can see everything. But for most people, what you see is what that single person wants to see of you.

R:

I do a lot of gaming online, so a lot of people I've met has been online, and a lot of them have been in America, so I've only really been able to talk to them at night. So, night time was majorly associated with them because I'd be up from like one in the morning until six in the morning talking to these people. I kind of got to know the feelings you can have without being someone physically in a room, you got to know each other personally before looks. You didn't have to know how each other looked before you got those feelings. I feel like especially now when I'm meeting more people in person, it's very much look-based, how does this person look? I don't really want to talk to you if you don't look like that for a lot of people. But for me because that's how I started getting crushes on people, it's all personality based. So, I feel like it was a lot in my favour to go personality off of looks, because I was then meeting people who didn't know me. Before, I used to meet people a lot in my drama club, and I had a lot of drama go on there and I had rumours spread about me, so anyone I met knew a me that wasn't actually me by what people had been saying that just wasn't true. So, when I started reaching out online to people, it was nice and I felt comfortable because I could be the real me. A lot of people try to ask "what did actually happen? Did you actually do this?" And people trying to accuse me of stuff that I didn't actually do. So, it was nice to have a branch that didn't tie you down to where I live. So, a lot of it for me was in my room playing video games talking to people, really.

J:

Isn't this what we all do all the time? Online, yes, but also in real life. We create a character that is ourself, and we go around playing that character every day. Maybe teenagers have just become more agile at it, using all of the tools at their disposal, social media included. There is a lot of chat about teenagers being snowflakes today, but through this self-fashioning, they are actually being really robust, dynamic, clued in. We'd like to send a message to that police officer who warned about the warehouse in the Highlands, and all the other adults with their doomsday scenarios.

L:

The kids are all right.

R:

I mean, you can post on your Snapchat or on your Instagram photos with like ten filters, but you can't put a filter on real life.

L:

Thanks for listening.

J:

Next week on The Slow Dance, we'll be talking about something we're all too familiar with, sex ed.

L:
Here's a little preview.

R:
When we got sex education in Primary 7, it was girls get a period and sometimes boys have wet dreams, and that's what we live with now, and then that was it. And girls would walk out the class crying, like terrified. Like I've learned something my mum's going to get me into trouble for.

J:
The Slow Dance is a five part podcast series created by Shotput and funded by Creative Scotland. You can like and subscribe on all major podcast platforms including iTunes, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify.

L:
The podcasts wouldn't be possible without the support of the teens involved. Our interviewees were anonymous, but you know who you are, thank you.

J:
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L:
Shotput is a dance theatre company in Glasgow run by Lucy Ireland, Helen McIntosh, and Jim Manganello. The Slow Dance is hosted by Lucy and Jim, edited and produced by Amanda Stanley, with music by Cat Myers, and illustrations by Ashwin Chacko.

J:
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L:
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