PEER HEALTH EXCHANGE

National Non-Profit Launches selfsea: Mobile Mental Health and Sexual Wellness Platform for Young People
selfsea powered by Peer Health Exchange provides 13-18-year-olds a safe, inclusive, and anonymous digital space with support, resources, and stories from and for their peers about mental health, identity and sexual wellness.

May 19, 2022—Oakland, CA— Today selfsea, powered by the national non-profit Peer Health Exchange, launches, introducing a digital community created inclusively with and for young people aged 13-18 as a safe space to discuss and share knowledge on identity, mental health, and sexual health.

Young people face significant isolation and a lack of resources in seeking support for their health, especially compounded by the traumatic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is especially prevalent among Black, Latinx, queer and trans youth. They need safe, reliable spaces to explore who they are, what health decisions are right for them, and how to connect to supportive care. These young people face significant systemic barriers in living long and healthy lives, which weigh heavily on their mental health.

selfsea provides mental and sexual health support, resources, and information directly to young people during a time when states are attempting to legislate away their access to reproductive health care (Texas Heartbeat Act/Senate Bill 8 (SB8)) and LGBTQIA+ allyship (Florida's HB 1557/'Don't Say Gay' bill). selfsea circumnavigates the red tape that academic and legal institutions have, bottlenecking standardized resources and information for young people.

"Free and private resources to mental and sexual wellness tailored to young people are limited in home and academic settings, especially for BIPOC or LGBTQIA+ youth," said Chris Wilson, director, digital learning at Peer Health Exchange. "Unfortunately, we've heard from young people the last few years, most recently in states like Florida and Texas where laws are being passed that infringe upon even fundamental identity discussions, that they need a safe resource to help make sense of their paths and the stresses unique to them."

selfsea's most significant advantage is that it's a digital platform built for young people, by young people with the help of Peer Health Exchange's two decades of experience building healthier communities with young people. Young people in this age group are most likely to turn to each other for support around their health. They are also more attuned to online communities than any other generation. Individuals aged 13-18 can access selfsea via the web or by downloading it on their Android or iOS devices.

For young people who have parental locks installed on their devices or don't have personal mobile devices, the web version grants access on public computers without needing to provide personal information. selfsea contains peer-created and vetted digital content on intersectional topics from housing insecurity and bullying, to sexual wellness and identity discussions around race and sexuality.

Building healthy communities with young people

The mobile app features selfsea's proprietary 'communities' feature where verified users post questions on moderated discussion boards. App use is completely confidential-- while users have to enter an email address in order to access, that information isn't seen by anyone. Users can choose to share this profile information with other users, or keep it private or remain anonymous depending on their comfort level.

"selfsea is a resource and community for *any* young person like me who is looking for help regardless of where they live," said Wendy Marroquin, Youth Design Group member at Peer Health Exchange. "The biggest disadvantage we have today is that many of us feel alone while experiencing setbacks and personal problems. It's important that any kind of safe space reflects the community it serves and that's why I wanted to be a part of creating selfsea. To make content that's most meaningful and impactful to me. We're not alone."

You can download selfsea and start getting the information you need by visiting the App Store (iOS) or Google Play (Android). selfsea's wider video library and educational resources are accessible from any device at http://www.selfsea.org/.

About selfsea:

selfsea, powered by Peer Health Exchange, provides young folx with support, resources, and stories from young adults who've been there. We believe self-care is community care. Our app was designed together with young people as a safe digital place where they can see themselves reflected within a supportive and inclusive community that prioritizes their identity and experiences about mental health, sexual health, and beyond. http://www.selfsea.org/

About Peer Health Exchange:

Founded in 2003, Peer Health Exchange aims to build healthier communities with young people. Peer Health Exchange's mission is to build healthier communities with and for young people. Together, we create education opportunities for peers to share the tools and resources young people need to make healthy decisions. www.peerhealthexchange.org.

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