

# DECISION MAKING: CREATING SAFE SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

## Lesson 10

DIFFERING ABILITIES

### LEARNER OUTCOME

Determine “safer” sex practices; e.g., communicate with partner, maintain abstinence, limit partners, access/use condoms/contraceptives properly. Develop strategies that address factors to prevent or reduce sexual risk; e.g., abstain from drugs and alcohol, date in groups, use assertive behaviour<sup>1</sup>.



### MATERIALS

Pressure Line Cards



### INTRODUCTION

Choosing to become sexually involved requires responsibility and an understanding of social, emotional and physical consequences. Thinking about responsibilities and consequences can help



This session is best suited to students who are ready to talk about being involved in a sexual relationship. It follows on from Lesson 9: More than Friends – Dating and Healthy



## APPROACHES/STRATEGIES

### A. GROUND RULES

- Ensure that ground rules are established before starting your classes. For classes that have already established ground rules, quickly reviewing them can promote a successful lesson.
- You should be prepared for giggles in your class. Try to acknowledge students' reactions to the subject by saying that sexuality and relationships can be difficult to talk about and it's ok to feel a bit uncomfortable.

### B. HAVING A SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

- Introduce the topic by referring back to Lesson 9: More than Friends – Dating and Healthy Relationships. Explain that this lesson may make some students feel uncomfortable as we will be talking about sex. It does not mean that we think that all students are having sexual relationships but many teens and young adults do have sexual relationships and it is important to be prepared. Some people have sexual intercourse in their teen years, many don't.



Sexual health education occurs most effectively in a classroom where there is a mutual feeling of trust, safety and comfort. Having Ground Rules in place can be a very successful way to facilitate a positive classroom environment. Click [here](#) for more information on how to set up ground rules.



More than half of Canadian youth 15–19 years of age are not sexually active

1. Do you need to have a boyfriend or girlfriend to be in a relationship?
  - Some people may not be involved in an intimate relationship ever in their life – they are happy to be around family and friends.
  - It is common to feel pressure from friends, family or even the media to have a boyfriend/girlfriend.
  - It is important that you always do what is right for you and do not jump into or stay in a relationship that is uncomfortable or unsafe for you.
2. What do boyfriends and girlfriends do in dating relationships? Make a list as a group.
  - Examples include: Go for coffee, texting, watch a movie, go to a hockey game, take a walk in the park, stay home and listen to music, go out with other friends, play computer games, make food together, talk, listen. They may also kiss, hug, cuddle, hold hands, touch and have sex.
  - Dating is more than just being friends. You may describe a boyfriend or girlfriend as your best friend, but when intimacy and sex starts to become part of your relationship things change and the responsibilities and consequences become more serious.

3. What is “sex”?

- Sex means different things to different people. It is usually referring to sexual activity when people do sexual things together.

4. What is sexual activity?

- Sexual activities can include behaviours such as touching, stroking, oral, anal and vaginal intercourse. These activities are done in private. Doing these sexual behaviours in public is inappropriate and can be against the law.

5. What can happen when you have a sexual relationship?

- Physical/health consequences – pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STI)
- Emotional consequences – feelings ranging from happiness and love to guilt and regret if you do not want to have sex
- Social/relationship consequences – reputation and potentially bullying (especially via social media), family and friends’ reactions, isolation

### C. CHOOSING ABSTINENCE

These discussion questions will help students begin to examine abstinence.

1. What is abstinence?

- Abstinence means making the decision not to do these types of sexual activity:
  - Direct touching of your partner’s genitals
  - Vaginal sex (penis to vagina)
  - Anal sex (penis to anus)
  - Oral sex (mouth to penis or mouth to vagina)

2. Is abstinence 100% safe?

- Abstinence is often referred to as being 100% safe. This is only true if the definition includes no sexual behaviour involving skin to genital, genital to genital or exchange of bodily fluids. Pregnancy can occur without intercourse if sperm is ejaculated near the entrance of the vagina or on an area that comes into contact with the vagina. STIs such as herpes and genital warts can be passed through skin-to-skin genital contact.

3. Do you have to be a virgin to be abstinent?

- No. A person who is abstinent is not necessarily a virgin. A virgin has never had sexual intercourse. Someone who is abstinent may have had sexual intercourse in the past, but is not currently sexually active. The choice to be abstinent can be made at any time, regardless of past experience. Just because a person has had sex before does not mean that that person must feel pressured to have sex again.



Some people experience abuse, violence, assault or exploitation that takes the decision to be abstinent away from them. In these cases abstinence is not a choice e.g., a teen that is forced to have a sexual relationship with someone for a couch to sleep on that evening. Students who go through these types of experiences will need extra support to understand that what happened to them is never their fault. They will also need encouragement to understand that they can have healthy relationships where they do have the right to choose sexual activity.

4. Sometimes it may be hard to stick with your decision to be abstinent. Drinking alcohol or using drugs can affect your decision.

## D. CONSENT TO SEXUAL ACTIVITY DISCUSSION

For a sexual relationship to be healthy both people involved must agree to take part in that sexual activity. There are laws to protect people from anyone who may force them to have sex when they do not want it.

- Consent is permission for something to happen or agreement to do something.
- Before having sex it is important to make sure that the other person wants to also.
- Someone may say “No” or they may communicate with their body language. How can you tell if someone does not want to do something?
  - Shake their head
  - Push someone away or pull away
  - Withdraw
  - Cry

All of these things can mean no without words. These actions mean that the person is not giving consent.

- If you're drunk or high you CANNOT physically give your consent.
- Consent doesn't count (and is illegal) if you've been forced, threatened, bribed, intimidated, or rewarded to do something against your will.
- Even if consent has been given in the past, everyone has the right to change his or her mind and stop giving permission for any activity.
- Anyone under the age of 18 can not have sex with anyone who they have a relationship of trust with e.g., a teacher, coach, boss or family member.
- All sexual activity without consent, regardless of age, is a criminal offence.
- Sex with anyone under the age of 12 is against the law.



For more information about the laws of consent under the Criminal Code of Canada please see the [Understanding Age of Consent](#) page.

## E. SAFER SEX- STAYING SAFE

Abstaining from sexual activity is the only sure way of avoiding the risk of pregnancy or STI. When students receive information about abstinence and birth control methods they are better prepared to make healthy decisions about having sex. ii

### 1. What does safer sex mean?

- Any type of sexual contact involves some risk
- To make sexual activity as safe as possible involves planning ahead by:
  - talking to your boyfriend or girlfriend about their past relationships e.g., have they been tested for STI
  - using condoms, dental dams and contraception correctly
  - getting tested and treated for STIs
  - choosing abstinence or delaying the decision to have sex

## F. “AM I READY” CHECKLIST FOR SEXUAL ACTIVITY

This activity encourages students to identify factors to consider before entering into a sexual relationship.

1. As a larger group discussion, or in smaller groups feeding back to the large group, ask students to develop a checklist for sex.
2. Explain what a checklist is – you can use the concept of a shopping list or a checklist of items to take on a trip.
3. The checklist should address what needs to be considered, what is a deal breaker etc.
4. Draw a series of checklist boxes on the board/flipchart and discuss each item students present.
5. Students may need prompting with some ideas:
  - Health/Physical e.g., risk of pregnancy – do we have birth control?
  - Social/relationship e.g., reputation, what will my family think? What do the laws of consent say?
  - Emotional/personal e.g., Am I ready?; religion
6. Explain that each individual’s checklist may be different as factors are different for everyone but as a class you are developing a general list.

The list may include the following:

- Do we have a condom? Do we know how to use a condom correctly?
- Do we have birth control?
- What will we do if we get pregnant?
- Has my partner been tested and/or treated for STI?
- What will my parents/family/community say if they find out I am having sex?
- Do I love my partner?
- Will my partner stay with me after if the sexual experience is not good?
- What does my religion say about sex before marriage?
- Am I ready? Am I too young?
- What will happen to my reputation? Will people spread rumours online about me?
- Am I being pressured to have sex?
- Do we both give consent?
- Is it within the law e.g., age of protection laws?
- Are we sober?



Using condoms, dental dams and contraception along with STI prevention will be discussed in lessons 11 and 12. Students who identify as needing help with choices about contraception and STI can be encouraged to visit their local sexual and reproductive health clinic, family doctor or walk-in clinic.

7. This checklist is something to think about before you have sex. If you can not check off all of the items on your personal checklist take a step back and think about choosing abstinence.
8. Decide how you will tell your partner if you do not want sex.

**REMEMBER no-one should force you to have sex or do anything sexual that you do not want to do. That is sexual assault and is against the law.**

### **G. EXTENSION ACTIVITY: DEALING WITH PRESSURE TO HAVE SEX- 'IT'S OK TO SAY NO' ACTIVITY**

Besides abstinence, postponement of initial sexual activity, adherence to one sexual partner and protected sexual intercourse are sequentially offered as the next best alternatives<sup>iii</sup>. This activity helps students develop skills for dealing with pressure to have sex.

1. Some teens may feel pressure to be involved in sexual relationships. Who/where can the pressure come from?
  - Friends and peers – either directly or the belief that everyone is having sex
  - Boyfriend/girlfriend – maybe there is pressure to have sex or the fear that the relationship will end if the request is not met
  - Media – most popular media gives the impression that teens are sexually active and this can lead to pressure
2. How can you really tell someone that you do not want to be sexual with them? What assertive communication skills will you use? Write the following on the board and discuss:
  - Be clear and use I messages – “I feel.....”
  - Use a firm but calm voice
  - Make sure you have eye contact
  - Listen and respect what the other person is saying but stand strong!
3. This activity can work in several ways – small groups, pairs or as a group discussion. Distribute the pressure line cards or read aloud.
4. Ask students to think of responses to the pressure lines. They may even think of some new ones! You may find it a useful exercise to have students say the lines and responses out loud or in a small role play situation using the assertive communication tips above.

<b>PRESSURE LINE</b>	<b>SUGGESTED RESPONSE</b>
You would, if you loved me.	<p>If you loved me, you wouldn't push me!</p> <p>Maybe I don't love you enough.</p> <p>I love myself enough to know when something is not right for me</p>
All our friends are doing it!	<p>You won't have trouble finding someone then!</p> <p>Do you always follow the crowd?</p> <p>Really? Or are they just posting stuff online that makes you think that</p>
I have to have it, it will hurt me if I don't.	<p>No, you don't. If I can wait, so can you.</p> <p>It won't hurt you, nothing bad will happen to your body if we don't do it.</p>
If you don't, I'll find someone else who will	<p>So! Go find someone!</p>
Are you too scared?	<p>I'm brave enough to know my own mind.</p> <p>Won't you be scared if we do it and we have to worry about pregnancy?</p>
You told me you would last week!	<p>I get to choose when I have sex, I can change my mind.</p>
You did it with him/her, why not me?	<p>How do you know what I have done with anyone? You should trust what I say and not rumours you hear.</p>

H. **EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:** See [Decision Making](#) lessons.

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### QUESTION BOX

Have students fill out questions and address them next class.



The process of asking questions is an important learning activity that helps students clarify and validate information being presented. Question Box is a method of individualized instruction which has been proven to enhance learning. Click [here](#) for more information on how to use the question box.

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### SELF RELECTION

During the lesson, were:

- Ground rules being followed?
- Good practices established regarding group work and discussion?

What will you change for future classes with this group?

What will you change for future use of this lesson?

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### STUDENT ASSESSMENT

During the lesson, did students:

#### Knowledge:

- Define safer sex?
- Identify some consequences associated with involvement in a sexual relationship?
- Identify assertive communication, and practice assertive communication skills?

#### Skills:

- Use assertiveness skills to deal with difficulties in relationships?

#### Attitudes:

- Accept the need for safer sex practices?

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<sup>i</sup> Alberta Education. (2002). Health and life skills guide to implementation: Kindergarten to grade 9. Retrieved from <http://education.alberta.ca/media/352993/pos.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> SIECCAN. (2004). Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, Vol. 13 (2). Retrieved from <http://www.sieccan.org/pdf/mckay.pdf>.

<sup>iii</sup> Sexual Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). (2008). Community action kit: what the research tells us. Retrieved from <http://www.communityactionkit.org/index.cfm?pagelD=887>

## HANDOUT: Pressure Line Cards

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You would, if you loved me.

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All our friends are doing it!

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I have to have it, it will hurt me if I don't.

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If you don't, I'll find someone else who will

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Are you too scared?

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So are you just teasing me? You told me you would last week!

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You did it with him/her, why not me?