

# DECISION MAKING

## Lesson 1

GRADE  
**CALM**

### LEARNER OUTCOME<sup>1</sup> P12:

- Examine the relationship between commitment and intimacy in all its levels.
- Identify expectations and commitments in various relationships.
- Examine a range of behaviours for handling sexual involvement.



#### MATERIALS:

1. **SUPPLIES:** Newsprint and Pens
2. **SLIDE:** A Model for Decision-Making
3. **HANDOUT:** Using the Decision-Making Model
4. **HANDOUT:** An Important Decision
5. **SLIDE:** Talking about Sex
6. **SLIDE:** Ways of Communicating
7. **HANDOUT:** Being Assertive
8. **ANSWER KEY:** Being Assertive



#### INTRODUCTION:

Making decisions about becoming involved in sexual activity involves understanding one's personal values and learning how to respect the values of others. Setting sexual limits and understanding values helps students to maintain congruency between their actions/behaviors and their values. Ultimately this will help to establish and maintain future goals and health. The activities in this lesson encourage students to think about how to talk to a partner about sex so that their values and limits are protected.



Before completing this lesson, you may consider completing the [Examining Abstinence](#) lesson. This session refers to the concept of personal values, which are addressed in the [Personal Values](#) lesson. *Ensure that you preview all activities and materials prior to teaching this lesson.* Some passages and examples throughout the resource could be problematic for some students and communities. Be aware that not all students will be comfortable with the topics addressed throughout this lesson plan.



## APPROACHES/STRATEGIES:

### A. GROUND RULES (5-10 min)

Ensure ground rules are established before beginning this lesson. For classes that have already established ground rules, quickly reviewing them can promote a successful lesson.

### B. SETTING SEXUAL LIMITS (25-30 min)

*Students practice the decision-making steps required to set sexual limits.*

1. Divide the class into small groups. Write the following questions on the board:
  - **What does the term “sexual limits” mean?**
  - **Why is it important to set sexual limits?**
2. Groups can record their answers on newsprint and then display them.
3. Ask the groups to explain their definitions.
  - **What does the term “sexual limits” mean?**  
Sexual limits refer to sexual behaviours and boundaries that are acceptable or unacceptable to an individual. They are personal and should result from careful consideration of personal values.
  - **Why is it important to set sexual limits?**  
Discussing and setting sexual limits ahead of time with a boyfriend/girlfriend will help to ensure that: you are not “taken by surprise”; your actions fall in line with your values; and misunderstandings are avoided.



Sexual limits are discussed in [Examining Abstinence Lesson 1](#) where students identify alternatives to sexual activity.



Some people have sexual intercourse in their teen years. Many do not. Cultures and religions support a variety of values that influence our individual decisions. It is important to realize that these values may be reflected in the attitudes of students in the class and they may be struggling with sexual decision making.

4. Display the **A Model for Decision-Making** slide. Ask students to read and discuss the **Using the Decision-Making Model** handout thinking about the following questions:

- Why is a decision-making model helpful?
- Which step would take the most time?
- Where can teens get information that can help them decide about their sexual limits?

5. Distribute the **An Important Decision** handout. Ask students to read Matt's story and then list and explain the steps he used to make his decision. Conduct a large group discussion to collect feedback.



Different cultures and families have different beliefs about the use of contraception. In many societies, there are cultural taboos against sexual intercourse outside of marriage.

### C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (15-20 min)

*Students think about the communication skills partners need to use to talk to each other about sexual decision-making and the consequences of their choices.*

#### **Why should those who choose to be sexually active consider emotional and relationship consequences as well as physical consequences?**

- **Physical consequences** of sexual activity may include pregnancy, HIV and AIDS or other STIs, and the increased risk of disease. For example, risk factors for cervical cancer include: HPV, early age of first intercourse, and history of STIs <sup>2</sup>.
- **Relationship consequences** may mean that the relationship changes. A couple may spend less time talking, building mutual interests, and sharing good times with friends in favour of sexual activity. Relationships with friends and family may also be affected. One partner may enjoy or want sexual activity more than the other, so the balance of power in the relationship may change. If pregnancy or STI resulted would the relationship last?
- **Emotional consequences** relate to the importance of highlighting that sex is not just a physical activity. The psychological impact of being sexually active must not be ignored. Someone may have decided to be abstinent until recently and may feel guilty or disappointed after the first sexual experience. They may feel that they have betrayed their values or beliefs. If pregnancy or STI result, the emotional consequences may be far reaching.

**What role does effective communication play in any decisions a couple must make?**

- **Verbal skills** will include being able to express feelings and desires effectively and making time to discuss what each other wants and needs from the relationship.
- **Non-verbal skills** will include messages each partner sends to the other about needs and desires e.g. eye contact, tone of voice, hugging, holding hands, massaging.
- **Assertiveness skills** are important when a couple is making a decision about a sexual relationship. Display the **Talking About Sex** slide<sup>3</sup>.

**D. Optional activity – ‘Being Assertive**

*Students identify ways of expressing their feelings directly.*

1. Introduce the activity by pointing out that communication is a basic component of all relationships. Communication is the exchange of thoughts, ideas, or feelings between two or more people. We communicate both verbally (talking or writing) and non-verbally (posture, facial expression). Listening is also an important part of communicating.
2. Display the **Ways of Communicating** slide.
3. Write the following on the board: “I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_ and I want \_\_\_\_\_ “.
  - Using “I messages”, speaking clearly and making appropriate eye contact, help a person to communicate assertively.
  - Ask the students to consider a situation where a classmate is making fun of them.
  - Ask the group to fill in the blanks of the statement. The statement could read: “I feel **upset** when **I’m made fun of** and I want **you to stop.**”
4. Explain that it is helpful to practice responding assertively when you have a difficult situation ahead of you. Thinking and planning ahead builds confidence.
5. Distribute the **Being Assertive** handout. Ask students to fill in their responses and then take feedback from volunteers.
6. If time allows, students can form pairs and role-play the situations from the handout (or make up their own).
7. Debrief by pointing out that developing an assertive style of communication, which



You may have explored assertive communication previously as part of the CALM course. If not, and time allows, you may wish to use the following optional activity to identify ways students can express their feelings directly. You may also review assertiveness skills using some of the material included.

includes using “I messages” and compromise, is an important skill to learn. Like any new skill, it requires practice and will become easier with time. This skill will foster healthy relationships, decision-making and self-esteem.



Students with differing abilities may experience different types of sexual pressure. It may be necessary to extend the assertiveness section of this lesson and develop role plays for different situations. Concrete examples and repetitiveness in your message is important with this group of students



### QUESTION BOX (10 min)

Have students fill out questions and address them next class.



### SELF REFLECTION

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?



### STUDENT ASSESSMENT

During the lesson, did students:

#### Knowledge:

- Describe sexual limits?
- Outline the importance of learning about decision-making?

#### Skills:

- Demonstrate ways to use decision-making steps to make decisions about sexual limits?
- Exemplify appropriate listening and speaking skills during class discussion?
- Demonstrate assertiveness skills?

#### Attitudes:

- Recognize the importance of setting sexual limits.
- Recognize the importance of developing assertiveness skills.

1. Alberta Education. (2002). *Career and Life Management Guide to Implementation*  
Retrieved from: [http://education.alberta.ca/media/313521/calm\\_pos.pdf](http://education.alberta.ca/media/313521/calm_pos.pdf)
2. Canadian Cancer Society. (2015). *Risk factors for cervical cancer*. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/cervical/risks/?region=ab#History\\_STI](http://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/cervical/risks/?region=ab#History_STI)
3. Alberta Health. (2015). *Am I ready for sex?* Retrieved from <http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/sex-am-i-ready.html>

## A MODEL FOR DECISION MAKING

- 1. Define the problem**
- 2. Generate at least three options**
- 3. Analyze the consequences**
- 4. Make the choice**
- 5. Reflect on your decision**

## A MODEL FOR DECISION MAKING

**A decision making model can provide information that guides important choices. Read about the decision Cody has to make, and then see how she used the decision model to guide her decision.**

### CODY'S JOB

*The mother of a friend offered Cody a part-time job in a clothing store at the mall. If Cody took the job, she would work three hours everyday after school and half a day on Saturday. The job would give Cody some spending money, a discount on clothes from the store and, most importantly, some job experience. The job would also take up most of Cody's free time and interfere with getting her homework assignments done.*

*After considering her options and the possible outcomes, Cody decided to take the job. The experience and extra money were very attractive to Cody. At first, the new schedule was hectic, and learning the new job was difficult. Trying to juggle school and work was very stressful.*

*After a few weeks, Cody settled into a routine and learned how to schedule her time more effectively. Cody misses the free time she used to have, but she enjoys the extra money. An additional benefit is the pride Cody experiences in holding a job. Overall, Cody feels her decision is a good one. She was fairly accurate in predicting the advantages and disadvantages of having a part-time job.*

#### STEP 1 DEFINE THE PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED

- Should I take the part-time job?

#### STEP 2 GENERATE AT LEAST 3 OPTIONS OR ALTERNATIVE COURSES OF ACTION

- Take the job
- Don't take the job
- Ask if the job would be available for the summer

#### STEP 3 THINK ABOUT THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF EACH OPTION

- **Advantages of Accepting**
  - more money
  - discount on clothes
  - job experience
- **Advantages of Refusing**
  - more free time
  - easier to do homework

- **Advantages of Asking About a Job Later**
  - More free time
  - Easier to do homework
- **Disadvantages of Accepting**
  - less free time
  - less time to do homework
- **Disadvantages of Refusing**
  - less money
  - no job experience
- **Disadvantages of Asking About a Job Later**
  - may not be available later
  - less money now

**STEP 4**

**AFTER WEIGHING ALL OPTIONS, CHOOSE THE BEST ONE**

- take the job

**STEP 5**

**REFLECT ON YOUR DECISION**

- I am happy with my decision
- I accurately predicted the advantages of taking the job
- I learned that there were things about the decision I couldn't predict.

## AN IMPORTANT DECISION

*Use what you have learned about the decision-making model. List and explain the steps that Matt used to make his decision.*

Matt and Hannah have been dating for about three months. Matt is happy when he is with Hannah. They laugh and have fun together. Matt can tell that Hannah cares about him by the way she smiles and listens when he talks. Things have gotten serious between Matt and Hannah during the last month. They have been alone more and kiss a lot. They touch each other, and things have gotten pretty hot. Hannah has told Matt that she loves him and wants them to be together in every way.

Matt would like to have sex with Hannah. Who wouldn't? There just seems to be a lot of reasons not to have sex. Matt is concerned about getting an infection, but he is even more concerned about getting Hannah pregnant. Matt has plans for the future, and a baby just doesn't fit into those plans at this time. Hannah says they can use condoms, but Matt knows condoms are not 100 percent safe. He would be stressed out. The other thing that Matt thinks about is how sex might change his relationship with Hannah. Some of the couples he knows broke up after they had sex. Things just got too complicated.

Matt talks to Hannah and tells her he has decided to wait to have sex. He says he hopes she understands their relationship and future are just too important to risk. Hannah says she is willing to wait, too. Sex is a big decision, and they should be sure. Matt feels good about his decision for now. He and Hannah are closer than ever. They seem to communicate better now that the pressure is off.

### MATT'S DECISION-MAKING STEPS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

# TALKING ABOUT SEX

## SET LIMITS

Think about how far you want to go and **set your own limits**. Don't do anything you don't want to do. **Use assertive communication**. Make sure your partner knows how you feel and will respect the limits you set.

## PREVENT PREGNANCY

Talk to your partner **before** you have sex about birth control and choose an effective method that you will use **every** time you have sex.

## PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR PARTNER

If you or your partner has had sex before, get tested for sexually transmitted infections (STI). Use a condom **every** time you have sex.

## I DON'T THINK I AM READY FOR SEX. NOW WHAT?

**SAY NO!** You have the right to say "no" to sex and you should not feel guilty about your decision. Saying "no" has many advantages. You do not have to worry about unplanned pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases. You have more time to think and talk about your relationship with your partner.

Adapted from Alberta Health. (2014). *Am I ready for sex?* Retrieved from <http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/sex-am-i-ready.html>

# TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

## ASSERTIVE

- stand up for their rights without denying other people theirs
- respect themselves as well as others
- ask for what they want in a straightforward manner
- express their emotions(both positive and negative) in a healthy manner

## PASSIVE

- give in and say yes even when they don't want to
- put the feelings and concerns of others before their own
- keep their concerns to themselves

## AGGRESSIVE

- think of themselves first, at the expense of others
- dominate others
- use threats or force

Adapted from: Canadian Federation for Sexual Health. (2005). *Beyond the basics: A sourcebook on sexuality and reproductive health education*. Ottawa: Author

## BEING ASSERTIVE

**Directions: Write an assertive way to deal with each situation.**

1. Your friend tells you to “shut up” during an argument.
2. You want to tell your best friend that you are gay.
3. You are starting to worry that a friend likes you in a romantic way but you do not feel the same way.
4. Your parents have been arguing a lot lately and the situation is upsetting you.
5. Your partner tells you they want to have sex, but you don't want to.
6. You need to tell your partner that you have Chlamydia.
7. Your partner refuses to use condoms.
8. You have decided to break up with your partner.

Canadian Federation for Sexual Health. (2005). *Beyond the Basics: A Sourcebook on Sexual and Reproductive Health 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*

## BEING ASSERTIVE - ANSWER KEY

1. Your friend tells you to “shut up” during an argument.
  - ***I don't like it when you speak to me that way. It makes me feel as though you don't care about me.***
2. You want to tell your best friend that you are gay.
  - ***There's something I need to tell you, but I'm worried about how you might react.***
3. You are starting to worry that a friend likes you in a romantic way but you do not feel the same way.
  - ***This is really hard for me to talk about, but I'm getting the feeling that you want to be more than just friends. I really like being friends with you, but I'm not attracted to you in that way.***
4. Your parents have been arguing a lot lately and the situation is upsetting you.
  - ***I feel upset and worried when I see you arguing so often. Can we talk about the situation?***
5. Your partner tells you they want to have sex, but you don't want to.
  - ***I'm just not ready for sex.***
  - ***I don't feel like having sex tonight.***
  - ***Can we just hug/kiss/touch each other instead.***
6. You need to tell your partner that you have Chlamydia.
  - ***I have something important to tell you, but I'm really worried that you will get upset. I just got some test results back from the doctor, and it turns out I have Chlamydia.***
7. Your partner refuses to use condoms.
  - ***I always use condoms.***
  - ***Using condoms is really important to me.***
  - ***Condoms can be fun. Let me show you...***
  - ***Let's go buy some together.***
8. You have decided to break up with your partner.
  - ***You know that I care about you a lot, but I think the time has come for us to break-up.***

Canadian Federation for Sexual Health. (2005). *Beyond the Basics: A Sourcebook on Sexual and Reproductive Health*.