

Grade 7

Decision Making



Learner Outcomes

W-7.13 *Examine the influences on personal decision making for responsible sexual behaviour*

L-7.6 Examine factors that may influence future life role/education/career plans

This lesson addresses all of the specific outcomes listed above. Instruction in human sexuality (***bolded and italicized*** outcomes) requires schools to provide notice to parents about the learning outcomes, topics and resources.

How To Use

This lesson plan contains several activities to achieve the learner outcomes above. You may choose to do some or all of the activities, based on the needs of your students and the time available. Some of the activities build on the ones that come before them, but all can be used individually.

For a quick lesson, combine activities A, D and G.

Classroom Activities & Timing

- A. Ground Rules (5-10 minutes)
- B. Pressures Brainstorm (20-40 minutes)
- C. Life Line (30-40 minutes)
- D. Sticky Situations Role Plays (20-40 minutes)
- E. Am I Ready? (15-20 minutes)
- F. Family Values Interview
- G. Question Box (5-10 minutes)

Required Materials

HANDOUT: My Personal Life Line

HANDOUT: Sticky Situations

HANDOUT: Am I Ready?

HANDOUT: Family Values

Background Information

Making decisions about sexual behaviour is a values-based exercise. In order to be able to make their own decisions, students need to examine various aspects of sexuality. The exercises in this lesson encourage students to explore their ideas and values about becoming sexually active. While exploring abstinence is the main focus of the grade 7 sexual health learner outcomes, these activities offer the student who may choose alternatives to abstinence an opportunity to make informed decisions that respect their values.

Inclusive Language

Language is complex, evolving, and powerful. In these lessons, [inclusive language](#) is used to include all students, including those with diverse gender identities, gender expressions and sexual orientations. This includes the use of 'they' as a singular gender-neutral pronoun.

A person's sex can be assigned at birth as male or female. Some people are intersex (the reproductive, sexual, or genetic biology of a person is unclear, not exclusively male or female or otherwise does not fit within traditional definitions of male or female). Assigned sex is independent of gender.

Gender identity is a person's internal sense of identity as girl/woman, boy/man, fluid among genders or no gender (regardless of what sex they were assigned at birth).

For many people, their gender is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth (cisgender). For others, their gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. They may use terms like transgender, trans, non-binary, gender fluid, gender queer, agender or others, to describe their gender identity. The umbrella term 'trans' is primarily used here, to describe people whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth differ. While this umbrella term does not fit everyone, the intention is to be as inclusive as possible.

A. Ground Rules

Ensure [ground rules](#) are established before beginning this lesson. For classes that have already established ground rules, quickly reviewing them can help ensure a successful lesson.

B. Pressures Brainstorm

Students examine reasons why teens may become sexually active by exploring different sources of pressure.

1. Write this question on the board: **What pressures are there for teens to become sexually active?**
2. Give students time to write down a response to the question. Emphasize that the question refers to all teens and that answers should not be personal.
3. Students can remain anonymous by not writing their name on the page.
4. Collect responses.
5. Without revealing the author of any statement to the class, use the students' responses to lead a discussion. Use the following framework:
 - Write the identified pressure on the board. (This step may require you to summarize student responses. For example, both "Peers make you feel like a loser if you don't," and, "Some people's friends might already be having sex," could both be summarized as "Peer Pressure".) The section below may help identify broad categories for responses.
 - For each pressure identified by the students, discuss the following questions:
 - Why might this cause a person to feel pressure to have sex?
 - If a person feels this kind of pressure, what can they do to reduce or eliminate it?

Points for discussion:

Peer Pressure

- Like any situation, doing something because of peer pressure versus making your own decision is not recommended.
- Sex may be encountered outside of a traditional romantic relationship, as in the case of sex for fun or sex for favours. It is important to emphasize that students need to do what is good and risk free for themselves. Consider the values and beliefs of your family and community. Is sex outside of a traditional romantic relationship something they would see positively?

Alcohol and Drug Use

- Using alcohol or drugs reduces your ability to make informed decisions. This reduced ability can lead to actions that may not reflect your values or convictions.
- People who are drunk, high, sleeping or unconscious can't consent to any sexual activity, either legally or practically. To communicate clearly about consent, both people should be sober and alert.

Relationship—Partner Pressure/Partner Agreement

- Decisions about sexual relationships should be made equally by partners. These decisions should reflect the values and wishes of both partners.
- It is important to respect your partner's decision not to become sexually active and important to understand that you deserve to be treated with respect if you decide against becoming sexually active.
- If both partners want to proceed with becoming sexually active, this decision comes with responsibilities and possible consequences. It is essential to ensure that sexual activity is as safe as possible.

Media (TV, movies, music, Internet, social media, etc.)

- The media often provides an unrealistic portrayal of sexuality. Sexual activity is often portrayed as having no negative consequences. Also, media tends to portray sexual activity as being more prevalent than it actually is.

Pornography

- Some students who are exposed to pornography say that they will try to emulate it.
- Ensure students understand that people depicted in pornography are actors and they are putting on a performance.

Clothing/ Appearance

- While clothing can send messages, it is important to emphasize that interpreting these messages as consent for sexual activity is wrong. Consent is not given by clothing or appearance. Consent can only be given verbally and freely. The absence of "yes" means no.
- Clothing can represent culture and beliefs. It is important to respect others' values and beliefs around clothing.

Hormones/ Attraction

- Feeling sexual attraction to someone is a natural and normal response to hormones. Hormones and attraction do not provide a reason or excuse for inappropriate behaviour. For example, it is normal to be attracted to someone, but not normal to harass that person.

- Having sexual feelings is normal, however, a person does not have to act on these feelings (e.g., if they are not ready, if it is not appropriate, or if consent has not been given) even if two people share these feelings.

Curiosity

- Being curious about sexual activity is normal. However, becoming sexually active needs to happen when someone is ready. If you have questions about sexuality, you can ask a parent or supportive adult in your life for an honest, open answer.

Prior Sexual Activity

- Abstinence is a choice. A person who has been sexually active once or many times can still choose abstinence.

Seeking Acceptance/ Love/ Comfort

- Often, troubling situations and low self-esteem can lead a person to seek acceptance, love and comfort in ways they would otherwise not be comfortable. Becoming sexually active is not a healthy way to solve problems or to gain acceptance and can decrease self-esteem.
6. Debrief this activity using the following questions:
- How is not making a decision about becoming sexually active, a decision?
 - Why is equality between sexual partners so important?
 - What skills does a person need when they are making decisions about a sexual relationship?

C. Life Line

Students examine their personal life goals and decisions, and explore the impact that becoming sexually active might have on these plans.

1. Give each student a copy of **My Personal Life Line** handout.
2. Have students fill in their age at the top of the line, and point out that the bottom of the line is when they turn 40.
3. Have students make marks along the timeline indicating:

Many students have different religious or cultural expectations surrounding relationships and marriage. In some cultures, it may not be appropriate for a girl to be alone with a boy even if they are friends. Other cultures or religions expect girls/women to marry at a very young age. If teachers are open to this information, they may be a good source of support for students who are trying to understand their personal beliefs.

- The age at which they would like to start their first 'real' job. Have them write the type of occupation they would like to pursue.
 - The youngest age at which they would like to become involved in a long-term committed relationship. Have them write the word 'relationship' or 'marriage' here.
 - The age at which they would like to be a parent for the first time. Next to the mark, write the age and number of children you would like to have. If a student never intends to have children, have them write 'no children' at the age that represents a possible answer.
 - The accomplishments they would like to achieve (such as graduation, travel, etc.) between now and the first mark along the line.
 - Any other major events along the timeline that have not been covered in the instructions.
4. Poll the group to determine the average age for beginning an occupation, entering a long-term committed relationship/marriage, or having children.
 5. Discuss the various plans that students have listed to occur between now and when their 'adult life' begins, as indicated by the marks indicating occupation, relationship/marriage and children.
 6. Ask the students to put two more marks on the timeline, one in the space between now and relationship/marriage, and the other at any point they choose. Number these marks 1 and 2.
 7. Have students label the two extra marks as follows: 1 = pregnancy. 2 = STIs. Some students may refuse to write these down and that is okay.
 8. Debrief this activity using the following questions:
 - How would these events fit into your planned lifeline?
 - In the case of teen pregnancy, what other goals would likely have to be cancelled, altered, or postponed?
 - What other impacts do you imagine there would be? Who would be your supports in this situation?
 - What about an STI? What implications does this have for the future?
 - If you disagree with the appearance of any of these "added" life situations in your life, what does this mean for the decisions and

lifestyle choices you are making now or will have to make in the near future?

- What are you doing now to accomplish the goals you've indicated?

D. Sticky Situations Role Plays

Students look at their options and use their values to make decisions about sexuality and learn to recognize and effectively deal with peer pressure.

1. Explain to the class that this activity will help them look at different sides of a situation and make good decisions.
2. Divide the class into groups of 3-4 students.
3. Give each group a copy of the **Sticky Situations** handout which includes 3 scenarios to choose from, and a decision-making chart to complete.
4. Ask each group to choose one of the scenarios, and use it to fill out the handout.
5. Give the groups time to create a role play, based on either the abstinence or sexually active option they created for their scenario.
6. You can have each group present their role play to the whole class, or present just to you as the other groups are working.
7. Debrief this activity using the following questions:
 - What kinds of things do people need to think about before they make a decision about becoming sexually active?
 - What could happen if you didn't think about the consequences before you made a decision?

When using role play activities that highlight relationship issues, it is important to be aware of heterosexism.

Students in your class may be questioning their sexual orientation or involved in a same gender relationship. Students who identify as LGBTQ2S+ also experience pressure in their relationships. The scenarios are intentionally gender-neutral to be inclusive of all students.

E. Am I Ready?

Students use this handout to further explore whether they are ready for sexual activity.

1. Give each student a copy of the **Am I Ready?** handout.
2. Give students time to answer the 11 questions in the section "How do I know if I am ready for sexual activity?"

3. Go over the explanation at the bottom of the handout outlining that students who have answered yes to 1,3,4,5,6 or 7 or no to 2,8,9,10 or 11 may want to think more about whether they are ready.
4. Remind them that it can be helpful to talk to a supportive adult (such as a parent, other relative, teacher or school counsellor) about sexual decision making. Students who want more health information can visit a local health centre, sexual health clinic, family doctor or health care provider.

Although teens may challenge their parents' ideas, they want to hear their parents' opinions and values. Research shows teens see their parents as their role models for sexuality and sexual health, not celebrities from movies, TV, music or sport. Many personal values are learned and reinforced at home. Invite students to discuss this topic with their family and encourage open dialogue.

F. Family Values Interview

Invite students to interview a member of their family about family values.

1. Give each student a copy of the **Family Values** handout.
2. Ask them to complete the assignment with a parent, guardian or other supportive adult in their life.

Keep in mind that not all students have equal opportunities for open discussion with family or other adults in their life. Although it is best for students to complete this assignment with a supportive parent or guardian, it may not be possible. Be sensitive to the needs of your students.

Due to the sensitive nature of human sexuality topics, it is recommended that homework is reviewed or discussed but not graded.

G. Question Box

Answer any questions from the [question box](#) in the previous lesson. Have students submit any new questions and address them next class.

Addressing the questions at the next class allows you time to review the questions and prepare responses.

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:

- identify various sources of pressure that may influence one's decisions about sexual behaviour?
- clarify family values about sexuality?
- look at their options and use their values to make decisions about sexuality?
- recognize signs of sexual peer pressure?

Skills:

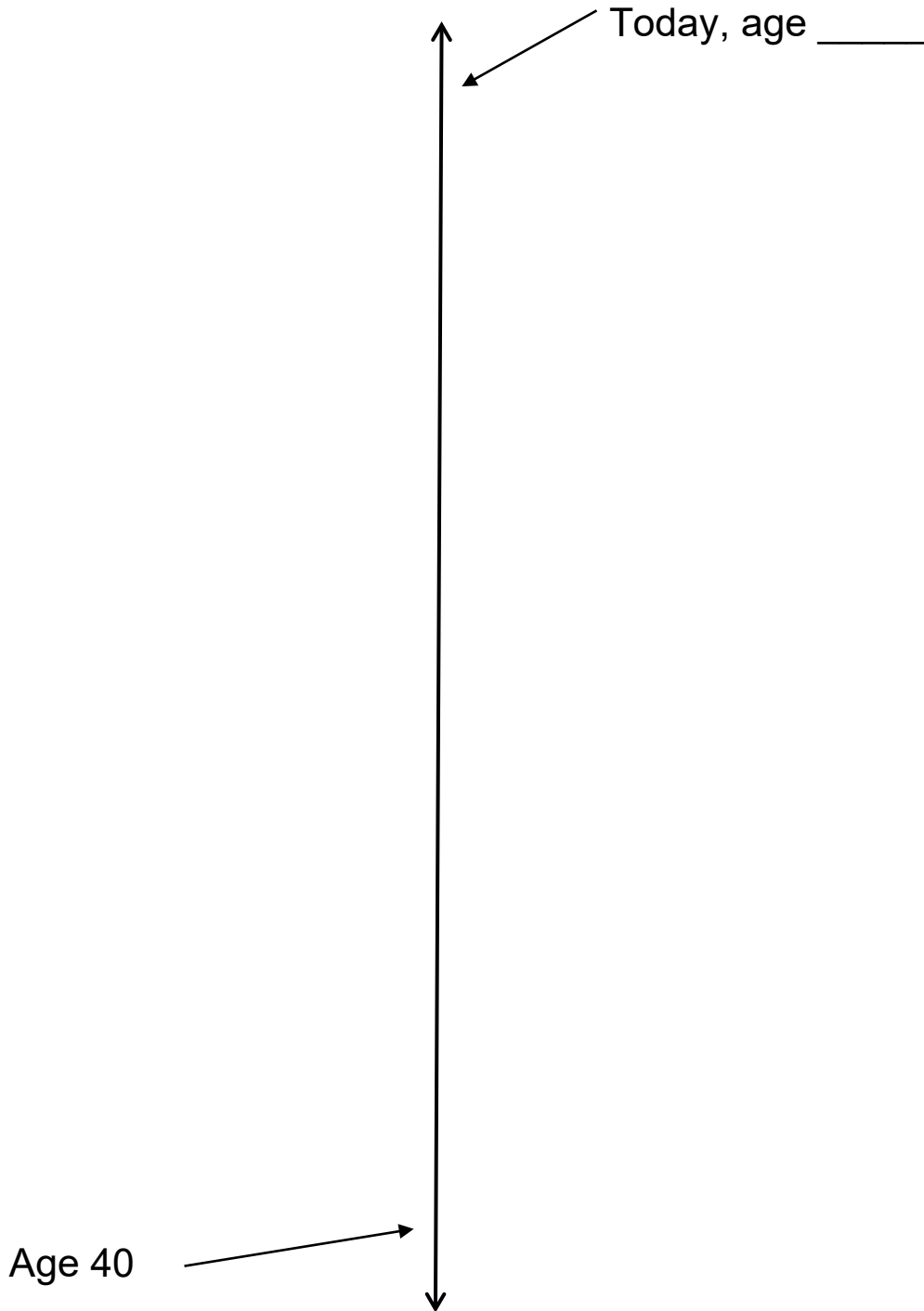
- use a decision-making framework to learn how to set goals and make decisions?
- make personal decisions about abstinence or postponing sexual activity?
- set some life goals and discuss the impact that becoming sexually active might have on these plans?
- use assertiveness skills to effectively deal with sexual peer pressure?
- make personal decisions regarding becoming sexually active?

Attitudes:

- recognize that each person needs to make a conscious choice about becoming sexually active or not?
- accept one's right to say no to sexual pressure or to make informed decisions that are right for the individual?

My Personal Life Line

The line below represents your personal life line. Add in events as directed by your teacher.



Sticky Situations

Complete this worksheet as a group, using one of the “Sticky Situations”.

Situation # _____

	Abstinence Option	Sexually Active Option
Describe the situation in your own words.		
Decide what happens next.		
Give two reasons someone might make this choice.	1. 2.	1. 2.

	Abstinence Option	Sexually Active Option
Write three things that might happen if someone makes this choice.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Write two things the person will have to do to make this option work.	1. 2.	1. 2.

Sticky Situations

Choose one of the following situations for your group to use to complete **The Sticky Situations** handout.

Situation 1

A bunch of friends have come over to your house. Your best friend has to go home, but your friend's partner, Chen, stays with a few others. As people begin to go home you realize that it is only you and Chen in the house. You have always had a secret crush on Chen, and now they seem to be flirting with you. What do you do?

Situation 2

You are at a party that is winding down. You have been flirting with Mason and they seem to like you. Your parents are out of town, and Mason wants to go to your house after the party. However, you have a feeling that things could start to move too quickly for you once the two of you are alone. What do you do?

Situation 3

You and Nuru have been together for two months. Nuru said in the past they aren't ready for sex. You are kissing, and Nuru says "Let's have sex." The two of you haven't really discussed becoming sexually active yet. What do you do?

Am I Ready?

Only you can decide when you are ready for sexual activity including sex (anal, oral, or vaginal).

Are you ready for sexual activity?

- The answer to this question is different for every person.
- There is no 'magical' age when you are ready.
- There is no natural time in a relationship to start sexual activity or having sex with your partner.
- There is no rule which says you must engage in sexual activity with someone, even if you have been dating for a long time.

Sexual activity should be a joyful, comfortable and guilt-free experience for both you and your partner.

- Respect yourself and know what you want.
- The right person will wait for you.
- Remember, you always have the right to say "No" to sexual activity, even if you have said "Yes" before

How do I know if I am ready for sexual activity?

Here are some questions to help you decide.

1. Am I feeling pressured into sexual activity by my partner, my friends or TV/movies/media?
2. Will sexual activity now fit with my religious or moral beliefs?
3. Will I feel guilty if I engage in sexual activity?
4. Do I want sexual activity to get love, affection or attention?
5. Do I want sexual activity to prove that I am sexually attractive?
6. Am I afraid that my reputation will be hurt if I have sex?
7. Is the only reason I want sexual activity because I hope it will bring my partner and me closer together emotionally and physically?
8. Do my partner and I both want the same things from sexual activity?
9. Can I talk to my partner about sexually transmitted infections and how we can protect ourselves?
10. If applicable: Can I talk to my partner about birth control and can we share the responsibility for birth control?
11. If applicable: If birth control fails, are we ready to deal with an unplanned pregnancy?

If you answer "**yes**" to: **1,3,4,5,6 or 7** or answer "**no**" to questions: **2,8,9,10 or 11**, then you may want to think more about whether you are really ready for sexual activity.

Sometimes, it is also helpful to talk to a trusted adult, such as a parent, teacher, school counsellor or health care provider, about your decision.

Family Values

The decisions you make about sexual activity will be based, at least in part, on your family values. Talking with your family about these values can help you to make decisions about sexual activity. Use this handout as a guide to interview a supportive adult in your life about the values they would like to share with you.

1. Take this handout home. Share it with a parent, guardian or other supportive adult, and ask that person if you can complete it together.
2. Schedule at least half an hour with the adult for the interview. Give the adult this handout so that they can think about the answers before the interview.
3. Interview the adult using the questions provided.

Questions

What three personal or family values would you like to share with me?

Over the next five years, how can I use these values to make good decisions about sexual activity?