

Sex 101 FOR PARENTS

How To Communicate With Your Child About Sex



Development of this workshop was made possible by a grant from the Public Health Agency of Canada

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

These materials are not to be reproduced, distributed or altered without written permission from SIDA-AIDS Moncton.

“Many young people have no models for communicating about sex....consequently, many young people are having sex but are unable to discuss their behaviour with their partners...a common explanation given by pregnant teenagers for not discussing contraception with their boyfriends is that they didn’t know him well enough”

Getty, Grace. SWAT: Sex Without AIDS Today; Peer Education Training Manual. Facilitators Guide, UNB p. 46-51

**If this surprises or concerns you, you’ve come to the right place.....
come on in.....**

WELCOME TO SEX 101 - FOR PARENTS!

Notes To The Facilitator

This manual was designed by the **Sex 101 Parent's Committee**, a group of dedicated and loving parents who hoped that it would help other parents become more comfortable with educating their children about an important and natural aspect of their humanity – their sexuality. This work stems from research showing that when parents communicate well with their children about sex and sexual health, youth are more likely to postpone sexual activity, and are more likely to adopt safer practices once they do choose to become sexually active – a win-win situation. Many youth involved in work at SIDA-AIDS Moncton identify that it is from their parents they most want to receive accurate information about sex – another compelling reason to foster communication skills around this issue!

Working in conjunction with the parent's committee was the **Youth Educating Sexually Committee**, who ranged in age from 14 – 25. These youth have been highly committed to educating their peers, and they acted as “advisors” as the parent's committee researched and developed this workshop. Their input resulted in a workshop that reflects the skills and information youth would most like their own parents to have and use. The process of having the youth and parent's committees work together to create this manual is a testament to the idea that if parents and children can focus on healthy communication and a vision of sex as a natural part of life, great things can happen!

Now, just a few notes on the layout of this manual:

Workshop materials – can be found on the front-facing page for each section of the workshop.

Handout materials – some sections of the workshop have related handouts. These can be found on the opposite side of the workshop page to which they apply.

Parent's Kit materials – These can be found, ready for photocopying, in section 10 of the manual. These are given to parents at the end of the session as extra materials to take home. They mostly deal with issues the parent's committee felt were important, but didn't have time to include in the presentation.

Youth Kit materials – These can be found, also ready for photocopying, in section 10 of the manual. These are given to parents at the end of the session as materials to take home to their kids.

We would like to extend our gratitude to SIDA-AIDS Moncton and the Public Health Agency of Canada for supporting us through the creation of this manual, and its focus testing. We are confident that this work will help open the doors of communication around sexuality between many youth and their parents.

Finally, we would like to thank all facilitators/parent-peers who deliver this workshop to parents in their community, as well as those parents who participate in this workshop. You are by extension doing the next generation a great turn - one that we hope will manifest in healthy futures for the youth in your lives.

We wish you all a fun and rewarding learning experience!

The SEX 101 Parent's Committee

Sex 101 – For Parents!

Sex 101 – For Parents!

Communicating With Youth About Sex

Overview

Note – This session adapted from materials located at Public Health Agency of Canada websites: http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ttm-pm/communication_e.html and http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ttm-pm/attitudes_e.html
Planned Parenthood of Fredericton, SexualityandU (Web resource), Sexual Health Moncton, SIDA-AIDS Moncton – Peer Education Program.

Goal

This workshop will enable parents to better communicate with their children/teens on the subject of sexuality.

Summary

Parents will be invited at the outset to be “Co-facilitators” and “Parent Experts” on the subject of their own children, with facilitators acting as guides and a source of information throughout the workshop. By participating in the workshop's suggested activities, parents will become more adept at understanding the dynamics of communicating with their children. They will also learn more about the necessary principles to respect which will help ease dialogue on sexuality. Parents will become more aware of their own limitations and strengths as well as the non-verbal messages they convey in matters related to sexuality.

Themes

Effective communication, non-verbal language, review of positive attitudes.

Suggested activities

Exercises, discussions, questionnaire, role-playing, exposés.

General objective #1:

The workshop will help parents develop their ability to discuss sexuality with their children/teens.

Specific objectives:

By the end of the workshop, parents should be able to:

- 1.1 List the main characteristics of adolescent communication;
- 1.2 Name the principles to respect when discussing sexuality with your child;
- 1.3 Recognize the principles of communication that they use as well as those that they do not (their strengths and weaknesses).
- 1.4 Have increased awareness about their attitudes toward sex and sexuality (negative or positive), and how attitudes impact on discussions with their children.

General objective #2:

The workshop will help parents become aware of their listening skills, their non-verbal language as well as their reactions to the questions of adolescents.

Specific objectives:

By the end of the workshop the parents should be able to:

- 2.1 Recognize their ability to listen effectively;
 - 2.2 Assess the impact of non-verbal messages;
 - 2.3 Explain their reactions to questions.
-

Sex 101 – For Parents!

Food For Thought...What Would YOU Do?

1. *Food For Thought...What Would YOU Do? - Questionnaire*

The facilitator introduces him/herself and gives a quick overview of the subject matter and the workshop objectives

In order to get participants thinking in concrete terms about their role and responsibility in the sexual health of their children, the facilitator invites them to consider hypothetical situations they may encounter with their children by use of a multiple choice questionnaire (Food For Thought...What Would YOU Do?).

Participants are invited to:

“Take a few minutes to consider the situations in this multiple choice questionnaire, and choose an answer that most closely resembles what you think your immediate response would be. You won’t be sharing your answers (unless there is a specific one or two you’d like to discuss before leaving tonight). This exercise is simply intended to get you thinking about realistic situations and the role you play in your child’s sexual health education.”

Length: 5

Corresponding objective: 1.3

Facilitator's role:

- Opening exercise
- Inviting parents to think concretely about their role/responsibilities in the sexual health education of their children

Required material:

- Questionnaire: Food For Thought...What Would YOU Do?

Sex 101 – For Parents!

SCORE For Your Child's Sexual Health

2. SCORE For Your Child's Sexual Health - Session Icebreaker

In order to help ease the atmosphere, the facilitator asks the participants to introduce themselves, then.....

To educate participants about some key issues youth face regarding sexual health, participants are invited to play “SCORE For Your Child’s Sexual Health”.

How to play the game:

- Split group into two teams, and get each to give their team a name (get creative here!)
- Ask each team a question, and if they get it right, they SCORE for sexual health (mark on flipchart). The team who SCORES the most wins
- The important part of each question is the information/stats given with it, so be sure to share this with each response
- Prizes given to the winning team - or to all for participating - if possible.
- Questions can be selected that have the most relevance to the group of participants, &/or to fit within given time constraints.

Length: 15 - 20 minutes

Purpose: Breaking the ice and warming-up

Facilitator's role:

- Showing interest in and enthusiasm for the subject
- Encouraging the parents to express themselves
- Participating in the exercise
- Remembering the participants' names to ease further exchanges

Required material:

- Name cards for each person's seat
- Flipchart – divided into two – one side for each team
- “SCORE For Your Child’s Sexual Health” questions
- Prizes

NB: End the game by stressing the importance of parental involvement in their children’s sexual health education. Highlight key information from the discussion to emphasize this point.

Sex 101 – For Parents!

Let's Talk About...Communication

3. Discussion on Communication

In order to rapidly assess the participants' needs and expectations, the facilitator leads them into a discussion by asking the following (suggested) questions:

- Does your child/adolescent communicate easily?
- What are some common issues you have difficulty discussing with your child/adolescent and what do you think are the barriers?
- Is sexuality more difficult to discuss with your child/adolescent than other subject matters?
- Have you ever had trouble communicating with your child/adolescent? Does your child/adolescent also appear to have trouble in this area?

Length: 15 minutes

Corresponding objective: 1.1

Facilitator's role:

- Inviting parents to express themselves
- Encouraging exchanges
- Creating an atmosphere of trust
- Record responses on flipchart

Required material:

- Flipchart
- Markers

Sex 101 – For Parents!

Opening The Lines of Communication

4. Opening The Lines of Communication: Brainstorming

- The facilitator asks the parents to identify communication difficulties that are more specific to adolescents, such as trouble verbalizing their emotions and difficulty expressing their requests clearly. He/she writes the answers on the board and completes the information with the help of “Communication – Opening The Door”
- Or**
- In small groups, participants brainstorm and record what they feel are some communication difficulties of adolescents. Have them return to the larger group (after about 5 minutes) to share their ideas.
 - Facilitator then asks participants what attitudes parents may have that could affect open communication (eg. Not sure of an answer, afraid to say the wrong thing, self-conscious etc.).
 - Facilitator may state (if appropriate): “So, here’s what we’re faced with...the challenges our children have in talking with us, and the challenges we ourselves have communicating with our children....when we take these challenges into discussions about sex, it may become quite uncomfortable and difficult.”
 - The facilitator concludes the activity by citing / asking for examples of phrases parents use to either open up or shut down communication with their children.
 - After discussion, facilitator hands out a copy of “Communication – Opening the Door”.

Length: 15 minutes

Corresponding objective: 1.1

Facilitator’s role:

- Presenting the facts in a clear and precise way
- Getting /giving specific examples for every characteristic
- Encouraging parents to participate in the discussion

Required material:

- Board/Flip Chart
- Markers/chalk
- Copy of “Communication – Opening the Door”

Sex 101 – For Parents!

Let's Talk About...Sex

5. Let's Talk About...Sex: Dialogue Guidelines

- The larger group is divided into smaller groups (3-5 people in each. For small group, just do the exercise with the whole group). Each group is asked to create guidelines for discussing sex (or any other potentially delicate topic) with their children. Participants are also asked to provide examples from their own experience of when each guideline was used, or when it could be used.
- Facilitator can start this activity by providing a couple of examples from the “Dialogue Guidelines” document.
- Small groups return to large group and discuss their lists. Facilitator ensures that “Dialogue Guidelines” are covered as part of this discussion – if necessary.
- Facilitator hands out web-site resources and Dialogue Guidelines documents at conclusion of this activity.

Possible questions for facilitator to address parents' strengths and difficulties:

- Which of these elements do you tend to apply systematically?
- Which of these elements would you most like to correct?
- Do you believe that these guidelines are generally easy to follow?
- According to you, which would be the reasons for these difficulties?
- What do you think of this list?

Length: 25 minutes

Corresponding objectives: 1.2 - 1.3

Facilitator's role:

- Soliciting parents' participation
- Encouraging exchanges
- Creating an atmosphere of trust
- Distributing the lists of guidelines on how to speak to adolescents about sex

Required material:

- Handout - Dialogue Guidelines
- Handout - List of web site references

BREAK: 10 minutes

Sex 101 – For Parents!

Attitudes About Sex

6. Sexuality...Negative or Positive?

Introduction: Planet Eros – Sex Versus Food; Why the Difference?

- Facilitator reads (in a very lively and animated way) the story of life on Planet Eros aloud to participants as a way to humorously point out that sex and eating are both natural human drives/functions.
- The story could be introduced by saying: “We’d like to share a story with you now about a world very similar to our own, but as you’ll see, it is also different in a very interesting way.....”
- Briefly ask participants what they thought of the story and the “analogy”.

Activity:

Each participant is given the “List of Associations with Sexuality” and two pens of different colours. They are asked to circle items seen as positive in blue, and those seen as negative in red. The facilitator asks the parents to reflect on their list. The facilitator then leads into a discussion based on some of the following questions:

- Does your list reflect a more positive or negative view of sexuality? Do the colours on your list surprise you?
- What do you think of your list? What influenced your choice of words? (Your values, education, experiences, present situation, the word, the action etc.)
- Is there a specific theme to the items on your list? (Mainly biological, psychological, emotional, pleasure-based, moral, preventive, humanistic, etc.). Discuss the flip-chart display of the various foci (eg. Genital focus, preventive focus, biological focus and pleasure focus – see below for exact wording for preparing this flip chart page).
- How could your perception affect the way you approach your adolescent in matters of sexual education?

The facilitator ends the segment by:

- Explaining the importance of becoming aware of one's perceptions before discussing the topic. Doing so, as some of the following examples show, would have an enormous impact on the way one educates: (it is at this point we may choose to integrate “values”).

(DISPLAY ON FLIP-CHART – and discuss after participants have reviewed the list of associations with sexuality) Giving examples of each might help make it more concrete.

- **A genital focus** – Are you overlooking the emotional dimension?
- **A mostly preventive focus** – Are you neglecting some of the positive aspects of sexuality as well as your child's real needs?
- **A pleasure-based focus** – Are you overlooking the risks of some sexual practices?
- **A focus on the bodily changes through adolescence** – Are you limiting an understanding of the variety of adolescent concerns?

- Displaying the following “formula” on a flipchart to give participants a visual of how attitudes affect outcomes (of discussions – or anything, potentially!):

Our Attitudes → (determine) our Behaviours, which → (determine) our Outcomes.

Therefore....

Our Attitudes → → → → determine → → → → Our Outcomes

Length: 20 minutes

Corresponding objectives: 1.4

Facilitator's role:

- Creating an atmosphere of trust
- Ensuring that all parents participate in the discussion
- Respecting the participants' opinions

Required material:

- List of Associations with Sexuality
- Two sets of pens of different colour

Sex 101 – For Parents!

Video and Discussion

7. Video - Nightmare On AIDS Street

- The facilitator displays and discusses current statistics on HIV/AIDS and sexuality relevant to youth populations as an introduction to the film.
- The facilitator plays the “Nightmare on AIDS Street” video after explaining that it dramatically but realistically shows why healthy communication with our children about sexuality is important.
- After the film, the facilitator debriefs participants. The following are some suggested discussion starters:
 - What did you think the young girl was getting tested for at first?
 - How would you feel if you were that girl’s parents?
 - What might you have done differently?
 - What steps could the girl have taken to avoid what happened?
 - What responsibilities were hers? What were the young man’s?

Length: 15 minutes

Corresponding objective: 1.4

Facilitator’s role:

- Deliver relevant and current statistics
- Sharing a youth-relevant film about substance use, sexuality and HIV/AIDS
- Debriefing group after viewing film

Required material:

- Video, TV, VCR/DVD
- Facts and Figures re: Levels of teen sexuality, drug and alcohol use in NB, rates of HIV/AIDS knowledge (NB), and research on parent/teen communication and delay of sexual activity/increase in safer sex practices.
- Proposed Questions to lead discussion

Sex 101 – For Parents!

Evaluation

8. Oral Evaluation

The facilitator wraps up with some of the following questions:

- How did you feel throughout this workshop?
- What was your specific interest in this workshop?
- What have you learned?
- How will this new knowledge help you? Please tell me about it?

Length: 5 minutes

Facilitator's role:

- Encouraging the parents to respond
- Noting comments to improve future workshops

Required material:

- None

9. Written Evaluation

The facilitator distributes the written evaluation to the participants (*Feedback sheet*)

Length: 5 minutes

Facilitator's role:

- Encouraging the participants to fill out the evaluation
- Distributing "Feedback" sheet

Required material:

- Feedback Form
-