

DECISION MAKING

Lesson 1

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LEARNER OUTCOME¹

- 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. 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.



lesson.

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](#)

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:

NOTES:

A. Ground Rules

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.

(5 - 15 min)

B. Setting Sexual Limits

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 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.
4. Display the SLIDE: A Model for Decision-Making. Ask students to read and discuss the HANDOUT: Using the Decision-Making Model 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 handout An Important Decision. 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.

C. Discussion Questions

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.

(25 – 30 min)



Sexual limits are discussed in [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 various 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.



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.

(15 - 20 min)

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: early age of first intercourse, higher number of sexual partners, and younger age at first pregnancy.²
- **Relationship consequences** may mean that the relationship changes. When sexual activity becomes important, the need for deeper friendship intimacy that is not sexual may diminish. 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. S/he may feel that they have betrayed their values or beliefs in favour of sexual activity. If pregnancy or STI result the emotional consequences may be far reaching.

What role does effective communication play in any or all of the 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 SLIDE: Talking about Sex.³

D. Optional activity – ‘Being Assertive

(20-30 min)

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 SLIDE: Ways of Communicating.
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 handout Being Assertive. 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 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.



You may have examined the topic of communicating assertively 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 like to review assertiveness skills using some of the material included.



Students who are developmentally delayed or have physical handicaps 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)

If time permits, address student questions.



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

² Canadian Cancer Society. (2010). *Causes of cervical cancer*. Retrieved from: http://www.cancer.ca/Alberta-NWT/About%20cancer/Types%20of%20cancer/Causes%20of%20cervical%20cancer.aspx?sc_lang=en&r=1

³ Alberta Health and Wellness. (2011). *Am I ready for sex?* Retrieved from <http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/sex-am-i-ready.html>