

Introduction to Human Sexuality

Supplementary Resources

- ▶ Teacher Reference: Ground Rules
- ▶ Teacher Reference: Answering Student Questions
- ▶ Teacher Reference: Tips for Addressing Questions about Sexuality
- ▶ Teacher Reference: The Question Box: An Effective Health Education Tool
- ▶ Handout 1: Ground Rules

Please note: Teacher Reference materials available by clicking on the title



Parents must be informed that instruction in Human Sexuality will occur. Parents have the right to request that their child not participate in these lessons. Alternate instruction must then be arranged.

Experience

Students will show respect for people and opinions that are different from their own.

Choose one or more of the following options that best suit the level and needs of your students.

Option 1. Introductory Discussion

1. To set the tone for the classes ahead, discuss the following questions with your students:
 - a. What does it feel like talking about human sexuality right now?
 - b. Is anyone here getting uncomfortable or feeling like his or her face is getting red?
 - c. Why is it so difficult to talk about this?
 - d. How do we act when we are embarrassed / uncomfortable?
 - e. Does everyone here know everything you need to know about sexuality?

Option 2. Establishing Respect / Ground Rules

Human Sexuality 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 atmosphere. Effective ground rules are:

- ▶ appropriate for the age and developmental stage of your students;
- ▶ agreed upon by everyone;
- ▶ well explained so that students are very clear about the expectations;
- ▶ posted clearly in your classroom; and
- ▶ referred to at the beginning and throughout the sexual health unit.

1. Explain to your students that sexuality is taught to people who are becoming more grown up and responsible. Many topics in this class are private. We have created rules for making it safer to talk about private subjects. It is important to distinguish between talking about private issues in the classroom versus talking about private issues outside the classroom.
2. Also explain that everyone grows slowly and the changes we experience in this growing time are the subject of this class.
3. Then show the ground rules that will be used in the classroom by pointing to the Ground Rules poster (See Teacher Reference: Ground Rules).

Sample Set of Ground Rules

- ▶ *Listen to each other.*
- ▶ *No “put downs.”*
- ▶ *It’s OK to pass.*
- ▶ *No personal questions.*
- ▶ *Use correct words.*
- ▶ *It’s all right to laugh “with” but not “at” other people..*

4. Discuss in detail each Ground Rule in order that students understand each rule clearly and are able to explain them to their parents or guardians. Ask your students if there need to be more ground rules. The students should all agree to the ground rules.
5. Read the following situations and after each one, have your students identify the problem and try to name the ground rule that would prevent a problem like this. As students make suggestions, write them on chart paper or on the board.
 - a. During class, Pat asks if sperm have eyes to find the egg. All the students laugh and say, “What a dumb question!”
 - ▶ Problem: *Pat’s feelings are hurt. This situation might make students afraid to ask questions.*
 - ▶ Ground Rules: *No “put downs” and it’s all right to laugh “with” but not “at” one another.*
 - b. During class, Bernie asks the teacher if she shaves her legs.
 - ▶ Problem: *The teacher feels embarrassed.*
 - ▶ Ground Rule: *No personal questions. Students should not ask the teacher personal questions and the teacher should not ask students personal questions. It is inappropriate.*
 - c. During class, the teacher holds up a picture and asks Jamie to name the private parts of a woman’s body. Jamie can not remember the words and feels uneasy. The teacher tells Jamie to answer the question.
 - ▶ Problem: *Jamie is embarrassed and uncomfortable.*
 - ▶ Ground Rule: *It’s OK to pass. Everyone has the right to pass on any question or activity. Also, the teacher may choose to “pass” because (s)he may not want to cover that topic or may not be allowed to answer because of school guidelines.*
6. Have the ground rules poster displayed during each class so that it can be referred to easily. Even if students can not read, the poster itself can serve as a reminder.

Adapted from Changes in You, 1991.

Information

Students will distinguish between “sex” and “sexuality.” They will also understand that their sexuality is a normal and healthy part of their lives.

Choose one or more of the following options that best suit the level and needs of your students.

Option 1. Sex and Sexuality: Understanding the Difference

1. Write the word “Sex” on the board or on a flip chart. Ask your students to share thoughts, ideas or feelings that come to mind when they hear that word. Record their responses.

Sex

Sex refers to whether a person is male or female, whether a person has a penis or vagina. Sex is also commonly used as an abbreviation to refer to sexual intercourse.

2. Now write the word “Sexuality” on the board or on flip chart paper. Again, ask your students to share their thoughts, ideas or feelings that come to mind when they hear that word. Record their responses.

Sexuality

Sexuality refers to the total expression of who you are as a human being, your femaleness or your maleness. Everyone is a sexual being. Your sexuality is an interplay between body image, gender, identity, gender roles, sexual orientation, relationships, etc. It includes attitudes, values, knowledge and behaviors. Families, culture, society, values and beliefs influence how people express their sexuality.

3. Ask your students:
 - a. Do sex and sexuality mean the same thing? If not, how are they different?
 - b. Where do you learn about sexuality? (*Parents, friends, media, teachers, religion, etc.*)

Option 2. The Things I Like

1. Depending on gender, ask your students to complete one of the following sentences:
 - a. The things I like about being a female are ____.
 - b. The things I like about being a male are ____.
2. Let your students know that these things are all part of their sexuality.

Application

Students will feel comfortable asking questions about sexuality.

Question Box

The process of asking questions is an important learning activity that helps students clarify and validate information being presented. There are many advantages to the question box. Anonymity provides a way for students to ask questions related to sexuality without risking embarrassment or self-consciousness. The time between lessons allows teachers to prepare

an answer ahead of time and to avoid being caught off guard. Finally teachers can capitalize on "teachable moments" which can enrich the classroom experience.

(See Teacher References: [Answering Student Questions](#), [Tips for Addressing Questions About Sexuality Topics](#), and [The Question Box: An Effective Educational Tool](#).)

This activity will have students practice using the question box.

1. Hand out identical slips of paper to each student (a small notepad works well).
2. Ask the students to write down any questions.
3. In order to prevent those with pressing questions from feeling uncomfortable, all students should write something on their slip of paper. If they don't have questions, encourage them to write feedback about how the class is progressing.
4. Pass around a container (e.g. a shoebox with "mail slot" in lid). Tell the students that you will answer the questions at the beginning of the next class period. This will give you time to research and prepare answers and to rephrase questions containing slang or shock terms.

Action

Choose one or more of the following options that best suit the level and needs of your students.

Option 1. Coming Up with Questions

1. With their parents or guardians, have students come up with three questions to go in the question box.

Option 2. Ground Rules Discussion with Parents

1. Create a handout of the ground rules established with your students.
2. Pass this handout to your class and have them take it home to their parents or guardians. Together they can review the ground rules. Students will have the opportunity to explain the ground rules to their parents or guardians.
3. Have the parents or guardians and the student sign the handout as a contract to follow for the upcoming sexuality classes.



Keep in mind that all students do not live in a "traditional" family nor do they have equal opportunities for open discussion with their "family." 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.

References

Siegel, Peggy C. (1991). **Changes in You: An Introduction to Sexuality Education Through an Understanding of Puberty**. James Stanfield Company, Inc.

The Calgary Health Region would like to acknowledge the Calgary Catholic School District for its contribution to this resource.

Ground Rules

- ▶ **Listen to each other.**
- ▶ **No “put downs.”**
- ▶ **It’s OK to pass.**
- ▶ **No personal questions.**
- ▶ **Use correct words.**
- ▶ **It’s OK to laugh “with”
but not “at” other people.**