

We Need to Talk

A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum

Fostering responsibility by respecting young people's rights to honest sexuality education.

NSES ALIGNMENT:

By the end of 8th grade, students will be able to:

SH.8.IC.1 – Demonstrate the use of effective communication skills to reduce or eliminate risk for STDs, including HIV.

PR.8.IC.2 – Demonstrate the use of effective communication and negotiation skills about the use of contraception including abstinence and condoms

TARGET GRADE: Grade 8
Lesson 5

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Laptop or desktop computer
- LCD projector and screen
- **PowerPoint: “Communication Skills”**
- Role Play Scenarios – one handout per every three students, each cut into individual scenarios (three scenarios per triad)
- Pencils in case students do not have their own
- Homework: “Let’s Talk” – one per student

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

- Print out and cut up the role play scenarios as indicated below. Each triad should receive all three scenarios.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Name at least two characteristics of effective listening.
[Knowledge]
2. Name at least two characteristics of effective communication.
[Knowledge]
3. Demonstrate proficiency with using effective listening and communication skills in scenarios relating to sexual decision-making and safer sex. [Knowledge, Skill]

A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE:

Language is really important and we’ve intentionally been very careful about our language throughout this curriculum. You may notice language throughout the curriculum that seems less familiar - using the pronoun “they” instead of “her” or “him”, using gender neutral names in scenarios and role-plays and referring to “someone with a vulva” vs. a girl or woman. This is intended to make the curriculum inclusive of all genders and gender identities. You will need to determine for yourself how much and how often you can do this in your own school and classroom, and should make adjustments accordingly.

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1: Say, “Today we will be discussing how people communicate, specifically around sexuality-related issues. A lot of times when we try to figure out the best way of communicating with people, we focus on what we say, and how we say it. And that’s really important. What we also need to keep in mind, though, is that listening is just as important as speaking. We’re going to talk about both today, starting with looking at how we can be good listeners when someone is speaking with us – especially about something really important like making decisions about sexual behaviors.” (1 minutes)

STEP 2: Start the PowerPoint, “Communication Skills.” Explain that there are five things we should all do when someone is speaking with us to ensure we understand what they’re saying – and they feel like they’ve been heard and understood.

Go through the slide, “Listening is Key!” point by point. Once you are done, ask for a student who you know to be a strong participator in

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class to come to the front of the room and sit with you. Ask this student to talk about one of the things they most love to do. As the student speaks with you, model doing all five of the points on the slide **WRONG**. Once you are sure you have done all five poorly, stop, look at the class and ask, “What did you notice about what I did as [student’s name] was speaking?”

After the students reflect back how they noticed you modeled each of the points on the slide, ask the student how they felt as they told you about what they enjoy doing. Ask if they felt like you were listening to them. What about what you did made them feel like they were not being listened to?

Ask them to start talking again. This time, model all five of the points on the slide **CORRECTLY**. Once you are sure you have done all five, stop, look at the class and ask, “What did you notice this time as [student’s name] was speaking?”

After the students reflect back how they noticed you modeled each of the points on the slide, ask the student how they felt as they told you about what they enjoy doing. Ask if they felt like you were listening to them. What about what you did made them feel like they were not being listened to? (10 minutes)

STEP 3: Say, “Once you know how to be a good listener, you need to be a good communicator, too – especially when you’re talking to someone about something you feel strongly about.” Go through the second slide in the PowerPoint, titled, “So Is Being Clear!” Model this by asking another student to come to the front of the room. Say, “I want you to pretend to be the teacher, and I’m the student. My grades are slipping and I want to ask you to give me an opportunity to do some extra credit, okay?”

As in the previous example about listening, go through modeling the four points poorly. For example, you may wish to be really unclear about what you want from the “teacher;” to use “you” statements, such as, “you never want to help me improve my grades!;” to interrupt when the “teacher” speaks; and to not be willing to compromise.

Once you have done this, ask the class, “So, how effective of an exchange was that? What could I have done better?” After they have provided some responses, turn to the student who role-played the teacher and ask whether they would add anything else.

Turn back to the class and ask whether anyone would like to try asking this “teacher” for extra credit. When the volunteer comes to the front of the room, remind her/him that they are to try to do the steps well. Give them a few minutes to ask their “teacher” for extra credit, keeping the slide up so the student can refer back to the points.

Once the student has completed their request, ask the rest of the class and the “teacher” how they think the student did. After the feedback, say, “So, to summarize – any kind of discussion between people involves paying attention to both what we say and how we listen. If we miss any of these steps, that’s when misunderstandings can happen.” (9 minutes)

STEP 4: Say, “These examples were about something fairly easy to talk about – grades and extra credit. Let’s look at what it’s like to apply these tips to a conversation about sexuality.”

Break the class into groups of three. Tell them that two of them will be practicing their communication and listening skills using a scenario you will provide, and the third person will

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observe in order to tell them how they did. Let them know that they will be given three different scenarios, and that they will switch each time so that everyone will be the observer once.

Switch to the third PowerPoint slide and keep it posted as a reminder to the students as they role play. Distribute the scenario and ask them to decide who will play each role. Tell them they will have approximately 3 minutes in which to role play.

Once 3 minutes have elapsed, ask students to stop their role plays and the observers to comment on how the first two students did. After about 2 minutes, thank the observers and ask the students to decide who will be playing which roles for the next scenario. Distribute scenario #2 to the students.

Repeat the process as before, reminding the students who are participating in the role play that they have approximately 3 minutes. After 3 minutes, ask them to stop and have the observer weigh in on what they saw. After 2 minutes, thank the observers and ask the students to switch so that the student who has not yet been the observer is now the observer and the other two students can participate in the final scenario role play. Distribute the scenario and remind them they have about 3 minutes in which to role play. As before, ask students to stop after 3 minutes and ask the observer to share their impressions. After about 2 minutes, thank the observers. (17 minutes)

STEP 5: Process the experience by asking the class, “When it came to your small groups which of these things [indicating the PowerPoint slide] do you feel you tended to do well? Not as well? Why do you think that is?” (5 minutes)

STEP 6: Ask everyone to take out a piece of paper and something to write with. Ask them to put their names at the top. Then ask them to write down which of the points about speaking and which of the points about listening resonated with them the most. Then ask them to write down one way they plan to use what you just did in class out in their own lives. Let them know they have about 5 minutes in which to write their answers. (6 minutes)

STEP 7: After approximately 5 minutes, ask the students to pass up their reflection sheets. Explain the homework assignment, which involves having a conversation with a parent/caregiver and practicing the skills you learned in class. (2 minutes)

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

The small group role plays will achieve the first two learning objectives and provide an opportunity for students to receive feedback on their understanding of the communication and listening skills discussed in class. In addition, the brief self-reflections at the end of class will achieve the third learning objective and enable the teacher to ascertain which of the points resonated with the students and how they intend to use these skills in the future.

HOMEWORK:

“Let’s Talk” worksheet – ask students to complete the worksheets and bring them to the next class with them.

Scenario One

Person one: You are at the beginning of a relationship with someone and are thinking it might go to the next level sexually. You don't think they've been with anyone else so you don't think you need to use a condom. You're excited to tell your friend about your plans!

Person two: Your close friend is at the beginning of a new relationship and is thinking of taking it to the next level sexually with the person they're seeing. Unfortunately, they have zero interest in using condoms. You want to try to convince them that it's important to do so if they want to avoid STIs and/or pregnancy.

Scenario Two

Person one: You have every intention of staying abstinent until you're older. That doesn't mean, however, that you're against showing affection in other ways that don't carry a risk for STIs and/or pregnancy. Person two is the person you've been seeing – and who wants to start having sex with you. How can you let them know you want to stay in the relationship but stick with your decision to wait to have sex?

Person two: You have never had sex before, but you've dated and kissed and made out with people. You really like person one and have been spending a lot of time together. You feel like if there's anyone you could have sex with, it's them – but they seem to want to wait. Can you see whether you might be able to get them to change their mind?

Scenario Three

Person one: You and person two have talked about it and think you're ready to have sex for the first time. Neither of you has ever had sex before. I mean, you've done other stuff with people, but not sex. Do you need to speak with person two about safer sex or are you good? How do you do that?

Person two: You and person one have talked about it and think you're ready to have sex for the first time. You haven't really had intercourse before – I mean, there was that one time when you got pretty close to it – but that doesn't really count, does it? Do you need to speak with person two about safer sex or are you good? How do you do that?

Homework: Let's Talk...

Dear Parent/Caregiver:

Today in class, we learned some new communication and listening skills. Because our unit now is on human sexuality, we practiced those skills within the context of sexual decision-making.

For homework, we'd like you to have a brief conversation with your 8th grader about something you'd like them to know relating to sexuality. Not sure what to ask about? Here's a list of some possible topics:

- At what age do you think it's okay for people start having sex and why?
- What's the best way of making sure you treat a romantic partner with respect – and that you are also treated with respect?
- When you are ready to be in a sexual relationship, what's the best way of talking about safer sex with your partner?

Please know that you will not be asked to share the content of your conversation, so it can be about any of these or a totally different sexuality-related topic.

Once you've had this conversation, please sign below and ask your 8th grader to respond to the question that follows. Then ask your child to return it during the next class.

Student Name: _____

Parent/Caregiver Signature: _____

Dear Student,

Which of the listening and communication skills did you use in your discussion with your parent/caregiver? How did it go?