Sexual Decision Making

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

Fostering respect and responsibility through age-appropriate sexuality education.

[This lesson is adapted and reprinted with permission from Our Whole Lives: Grades 7-9, second edition, Unitarian Universalist Association, 2014. Original OWL 7-9 author is Pamela M. Wilson and the author of this lesson is Al Vernacchio.]

TARGET GRADE: Grades 9/10

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Handout "Sexual Readiness" – one per student
- One copy of each of the role-play scenarios 1-5
- Pencils in case students do not have their own
- Markers for whiteboard or chalk for chalkboard

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Identify various reasons why teens choose to engage or not engage in sexual behaviors. [Knowledge]
2. Identify at least three questions whose answers can help determine if they are ready to engage in sexual behavior with a partner. [Knowledge]
3. Articulate a message about sexual boundaries with a partner during a role-play activity. [Knowledge]Reflect on their own feelings about rape and sexual abuse. [Knowledge, Affect]

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: Introduce the lesson by asking, "Has anyone ever struggled to make a really tough decision?" After a few students have raised their hand go on to ask, "Has anyone ever made a really tough decision and even after you made the decision you weren't 100% sure it was the right one?" Go on to explain that, "Making decisions can be difficult and making decisions about sex can be even more difficult since everyone has different values and beliefs about this topic. That is what we're going to talk about today." *(2 minutes)*

STEP 2: Ask students, what are some decisions people can make when it comes to sex? Make sure the following are mentioned:

- Whether and when to have it (whether to be abstinent or not)
- With which partner
- How to prevent pregnancy and STIs/HIV

Ask students, "When do you think someone is ready to have sex - either oral, vaginal or anal – with their partner?" Take a few responses and ask, "What would have to be in place with their relationship?" Take a few responses and say, "People choose how they express themselves sexually at various points through their lifetime. Sometimes people are interested in only holding hands or kissing, some people aren't interested in sex at all and are abstinent, other people have sex, but then decide the time isn't right for them and go back to being abstinent. We choose to be sexually active, in different ways, and choose to be abstinent at many points throughout our lives both now and as we grow older."

Lastly, ask, "What kinds of questions should young people ask themselves before taking that step?" Take a few responses and then distribute the handout "Sexual Readiness" to each student. Ask for a few volunteers to read some of the questions in the handout aloud. Then ask students to turn around and talk with someone they are seated near about their reactions to the handout. Give the students five minutes to discuss and when time is up, process the activity by asking the following questions:

- What was it like to do that? What was [easy, surprising, interesting–fill in answers] about it?
- Which questions do you think are most important to talk about with a partner? Which are least?
- Which questions surprised you?
- Any questions you think are missing?
- How do you think it would be for a couple to talk through all these questions? *(10 minutes)*

STEP 3: Explain that next students will do some role-playing to practice making healthy decisions about sexual behavior. Remind students that in general healthy relationships are:

- Consensual and non-exploitative
- Concerned about consequences such as STDs and pregnancy
- Respectful and caring

Then explain, "The class will be divided into five teams. Each team will get a role-play involving a couple that is making a decision about sex. Each group should read and discuss their scenario and decide who will role-play the scenario. The other members will be coaches. The goal is to have the role-play worked out so the couple reaches a decision quickly. Groups will have five minutes to prepare your role-play and then you'll act it out for the class."

Divide the class into five groups and give each group a different scenario. Circulate among the groups while they are working offering support as needed. After five minutes, gather students' attention and explain how the role-plays will be presented by saying, "Each team will present their role-play in order. Just at the point at which the couple have made their decision, I'll say 'freeze-frame' and the role-play will stop. Then the class will answer the following questions based on the role-play they just saw."

Note to the Teacher: *It can help to have these questions written on the board to refer to after each role play.*

1) What are the possible consequences for this couple if they follow through with their decision?

2) Do you think they made a healthy decision? Why or why not?

After the class answers these two questions, the next group will present their role-play and follow the same process. Follow the process described for role-plays of scenarios 1-5. *(23 minutes)*

STEP 4: Process the entire activity by asking:

- Actors, how did it feel to play these roles?
- How realistic were the consequences the class predicted?
- If you could go back and make another decision again, what would you do differently? *(10 minutes)*

STEP 5: In closing, remind the class of the following take-home points, "It's important for each of you to figure out where you stand about decisions regarding sex so you can not only be clear for yourself but also find ways to be clear with any future partners." Thank class for their hard work and close lesson. *(2 minutes)*

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

The initial discussion meets the first learning objective while the role-play fulfills the second learning objective.

HOMEWORK:

None.

Handout: Sexual Readiness

Here are some questions to answer before making a decision to have sex (oral, anal or vaginal) with a partner:

1. How do I feel about sex? When do I think it would be right for me? Under what conditions and with what kind of person?
2. How does the other person feel? How do their feelings fit in with my own?
3. Is there any chance that I'm pressuring or exploiting the other person? Could they be pressuring or exploiting me?
4. What do I expect sex to be like? What if it's bad and I don't enjoy it? How would I feel about myself or my partner?
5. How would my partner and I feel if others found out about our sexual relationship, specifically those very close to me?
6. Do I trust my partner? Completely?
7. Am I comfortable being vulnerable in front of my partner, for example being naked with them?
8. What if this turns into a strictly sexual relationship and that's all we ever do? How would I feel then?
9. What extra pressures might I (or we) feel once we have sex?
10. How will I feel if we break up?
11. What will I do to prevent STDs?
12. What would I do if I got an STD?
13. If my partner is another gender and we have vaginal sex, what will I do to prevent pregnancy?
14. What would I do if a pregnancy resulted from having vaginal sex? How would my partner and I feel?
15. How would my family feel if they found out about my sexual relationship? How would I feel about their knowing?

If you cannot answer all of these questions with confidence, you aren't ready for sex yet. You're the only one who can make the decision, make it wisely.

Freeze Frame Role-Play Scenario 1
Hannah and Jonathan

Hannah and Jonathan have been together for about six months. They have a good relationship but only get to see each other about once a month, because Jonathan just moved to a town about an hour away from Hannah. Since his move, Hannah has begun to hint that she's ready to have sex. Plan a role-play in which Jonathan talks with Hannah about having sex and they make a decision.

Hannah: You like Jonathan a lot and you're glad that he doesn't pressure you about sex. Still, you've decided to go ahead and have sex with him because it might make the relationship stronger, now that he's moved away.

Jonathan: You're crazy about Hannah but don't think things will work out now that you live in two different places. You want to be honest with Hannah and don't want to mislead or hurt her. Recently, Hannah has hinted that she's ready to have sex, but you're wondering if she's just trying to hold onto the relationship. Talk with Hannah about what you're sensing.

Freeze Frame Role-Play Scenario 2
Morgan and Terence

Morgan and Terence met several months ago at a party. Morgan identifies as queer and is very active in the LGBTQ group at his school. Terence isn't sure whether he's straight or bisexual and has only dated girls. But both Morgan and Terence know they are attracted to each other. Plan a role-play in which Morgan talks to Terence about what's going on and they make a decision about whether to have sex.

Morgan: You and Terence live in the same apartment building and are in the same homeroom. Terence has dated girls and seems straight, but he also seems attracted to you. Last week, you bumped into him in the laundry room in your building and after a lot of "accidental touches" you ended up kissing. But then he stopped and left. Now he just sent a text asking if you'd meet him in the laundry room. You decide to go because you want to have an honest conversation. You don't want to begin anything with someone who is so confused.

Terence: You date girls you like, but haven't done much sexually with them; you've kissed a couple of them, but didn't find it very exciting. Now you feel very attracted to Morgan. When you kissed him last week, it felt wonderful, but also confusing. You just can't stop thinking about Morgan and imagining his touch. You think you want to have sex with him, but you don't want your family or friends to find out, because they would disapprove.

Freeze Frame Role-Play Scenario 3
Graham and Marina

Marina and Graham have been going out for four months. Marina's family immigrated from Russia five years ago. Marina speaks English well, thinks of herself as American, and argues constantly with her parents about many of their beliefs, which she finds old-fashioned. Graham and Marina are crazy about each other. Plan a role-play in which Graham talks with Marina about having sex and they make a decision.

Graham: You feel lucky to have Marina as your girlfriend. She is beautiful and so nice to you. You like the fact that you come from different cultural backgrounds. You love touching Marina and want to have vaginal sex with her. You want to do it right, though. You want to go with her to get birth control and you plan to use a condom too.

Marina: You've in heaven because Graham is such a nice, caring and sensitive guy. He's the first American you've ever dated, but your parents don't like him. They don't want you dating at all. When you and Graham kiss and touch each other, it feels great. You want to have sex, but you've always told yourself and your parents that you would wait until you were married to have sex.

Freeze Frame Role-Play Scenario 4
Andie and Diana

Andie and Diana are two girls who just met last weekend at a party. They had fun together, and now they've hooked up again this weekend. They're alone in Andie's basement. Plan a role-play in which Diana asks Andie about having sex and they make a decision.

Diana: You think Andie is a lot of fun and really cute. You're not interested in a relationship. You know that you're both really turned on. You decided some time ago that you weren't ready for oral sex, so you know that's off-limits for you. But you can think of a lot of other wonderful things that you and Andie can do to express your feelings for each other. Talk it over with Andie.

Andie: You think Diana is great and feel that this could be the relationship you've always wanted. You've never felt like this before and don't want to do anything to turn Diana off. You feel open to all kinds of things with Diana, including commitment and sex. You plan to use protection if you and Diana decide to have sex.

Freeze Frame Role-Play Scenario 5
Sydney and Zee

Sydney is a trans girl who has a big crush on Zee. Both are free thinkers who don't like labels. Sydney and Zee have been hanging out together for a few weeks and enjoy a lot of the same things. It's clear that they're attracted to each other, but they've never kissed or touched. Plan a role-play in which Sydney talks with Zee about having sex and they make a decision.

Sydney: You were assigned male at birth but have never identified as a boy or a man. You are a girl, but not a "girly" girl. You really like the fact that Zee is kind of androgynous, but you aren't sure how to get things started. You decide that the two of you should talk about your feelings.

Zee: Biologically you were assigned female at birth but you hate all of the boxes that society puts people in and identify as genderqueer. You work hard to have a gender-nonconforming appearance and style. You enjoy gender-bending and you feel like with Sydney you have finally met someone who really "gets you".