

WISER Junior Cycle Relationships and Sexuality Programme

The two overarching aims of the programme are: to give young people the knowledge and skills they need to make informed choices about their non involvement or involvement in sexual activity that will support their happiness, health and well being; to build responsible and respectful attitudes towards gender and sexuality. The programme is based on evidence of best practise as developed by UNESCO (2009) the WHO (2015) and data gathered from Irish young people as to their sexual health education needs (O'Higgins, 2010). The workshops are interactive and participatory with discussions, quizzes as well as practical activities. This creates varied sessions which hold the interest of the young participants and increases their ability to integrate the learning. Towards the end of each session we ask the students to write down any questions they have and put them in a hat. Providing a question hat is a good way to complete the learning within each session. Often students are embarrassed to ask a question in front of the class. Using the hat allows students to be anonymous. It also has the added benefit of allowing the facilitator time to reflect on how to answer the students' questions which will be answered during the following session.

The workshops are age appropriate with materials and exercises being adjusted in order to meet the developmental stage, educational ability and needs of the participants. It also compliments the RSE component of SPHE already provided in schools.

Ideally we would like to work with:

- No more than 20 students per group
- Spacious room with chairs in a circle and tables against the wall
- Session 1 = 3 x 40mins (this is our longest session introducing our way of working, the topics and establishing a safe space in which to explore relationships and sexuality)
- Session 2 = 2 x 40mins
- Session 3 = 2 x 40mins

Outline of the workshops

Session 1 Puberty & Reproduction

Workshop 1 - duration 2hrs

This workshop explores how the body works, through an exercise on the physical changes young people are experiencing as they progress through puberty. The menstrual cycle is explained and an increased understanding of fertility and conception is facilitated. The development of sexuality is discussed as being unique to each person and that gender identification and sexual orientation fall on a continuum. Pornography is also discussed and the negative impact it may have on relationships highlighted. Students are encouraged to explore fully the issue of consent, how to give it; how to retract it, and how to recognise when someone *is* consenting and is *not* consenting. Students are made aware of the law on consent and the legal age of consent.

Learning Outcomes:

- Have an understanding of the terms Relationships and Sexuality
- Understand 'Sexual Competency' (Protection/contraception, Pleasure, Deciding for yourself, no Regrets, Consent)
- Be able to identify the physical emotional and social changes that occur during puberty
- Have the correct information about their bodies, masturbation, body hair, and how the reproductive system works
- Appreciate that everyone can feel sensitive about their bodies and that we need to be respectful of each other's feelings
- Be challenged on the images and ideas portrayed in pornography and be able to distinguish between fantasy and reality
- Have an enhanced awareness of the meaning of consent
- Understand the importance of respect with regards to a person's sexual orientation and gender identity

Procedure

1. Introduction

Facilitators introduce themselves and give an outline of the overall programme, beginning with a definition of relationships and sexuality. During this session discussion is facilitated on how young people use social media to relate to one another, and what the advantages/disadvantages may be. The concept of becoming ‘Sexually Competent’ is introduced with an emphasis on consent.

Contract

Note: During the setting of the contract the importance of confidentiality is discussed and also the importance of the facilitators duty to follow child protection guidelines where they deem necessary.

Ice-breaker – name game and group’s game.

2. Puberty Cards

Students are divided into groups of 4/5 and sets of cards are distributed with different stages of puberty written on them. They are asked to put them in order of what they think happened first. The facilitator then reads out the correct order and a discussion is facilitated around each card. Topics discussed: masturbation, body image and pornography.

- **Note: Masturbation** is discussed as a healthy normal activity for both males and females. Young people can benefit from hearing that it’s normal to explore their bodies and learn how they work. When they do become sexually active with a partner later in life, their sexual self-awareness will help them to communicate their needs to their partners so they can enjoy a more satisfying sexual relationship. Masturbation also allows adolescents and teens to relieve sexual urges without a partner and with no sexual health risks.
- **Note:** It is explained that sex in **pornography** is often very different from how people have sex in real life. People in porn are acting and putting on a performance so things are exaggerated and the lines between consent, pleasure and violence are often blurred. Consent has already been broached at the beginning of the session and its importance highlighted throughout the programme.

3. Reproduction

Students are divided into groups of 4/5 and both internal and external laminates of the reproductive system are distributed and the participants are asked to label them. Students will already have a certain level of knowledge about human reproduction; however some of this may be incorrect or incomplete. This exercise revises if necessary how the human reproductive system works, explains how conception takes place and gives a better understanding of male and female fertility.

- **Note:** Many young people think of sex as penetrative vaginal intercourse. It is important to broaden this perspective to include all sorts of intimacy and support safer sexual behaviour. Vaginal, Anal and Oral sex is discussed, the risks highlighted and the importance of consent when engaging in any sexual activity.

4. Sexuality

This exercise is designed to encourage young people to explore the meaning of sexuality and recognise that there are lots of different sexualities. It also enables participants to understand and respect different sexual orientations.

(a) Divide the group into smaller groups. Ask them to discuss what is meant by the term Sexuality and arrive at a definition which the group agrees on.

(b) Discuss the definitions and consider the following questions:

What is the meaning of:

Asexuality

Heterosexuality

Homosexuality

Bisexuality

Pansexual

Transgender (it is highlighted that this is not a sexual orientation)

Any other terms the groups have come up with

(c) Explain to participants: The term sexuality becomes easier to understand when it is divided into three parts:

1. Sexual orientation (a person's sexual attraction to the same, opposite or both sexes)
 2. Sexual identity (how people see themselves)
 3. Sexual behaviour (what a person does sexually) this does not always match a person's sexual identity or orientation. (FPA resource, 2009).
- **Note: Transgender** is an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression or behaviour does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth. Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female or something else; gender expression refers to the way a person communicates gender identity to others through behaviour, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics. "Trans" is sometimes used as shorthand for "transgender." While transgender is generally a good term to use, not everyone whose appearance or behaviour is gender-nonconforming will identify as a transgender person.

5. Questions and close of session

Students are given the opportunity to write down any questions they may have regarding relationships and sexuality. These will be answered at the beginning of the next session.

Session 2 Relationships & Contraception

Workshop 2- duration: 1hr 20mins

The difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships is discussed and an exercise involving sexting facilitated. This session also looks at the variety of contraception available (including emergency contraception) and how the different methods work. A condom demonstration is facilitated and each student is given the opportunity to participate.

Learning Outcomes:

- Have explored the vital role of respect, communication and trust within friendships, more intimate relationships and be able to recognise an unhealthy relationship
- Have reflected on the qualities of a healthy relationship and the time it can take for these qualities to develop.
- Be aware of the personal and legal consequences of sexting
- Have a greater understanding of the different methods of contraception available and some of their advantages and disadvantages
- Know how to use a condom
- Be able to communicate effectively with partners about using contraception

Procedure

1. Reproductive Quiz

Re-cap of previous session through reproductive quiz, this can be done as one group or divide into two groups.

2. Answer questions from previous session

3. Friendships (B4udecide)

Ask each person to think of a current friendship or one in the past and think about the following questions:

What qualities do you bring to the friendship?

What qualities does the other person bring?

What positive role does the friend play in your life?

Ask each student do write one positive thing the friendship gives them on a post-it and stick it on the board.

Looking at the 'friendship wall' ask students, what qualities/characteristics might also be important in romantic relationships?

Case Studies: Friendship Dilemmas

- (a) Divide the class into pairs and assign each pair one of the Friendship Dilemmas. Give the pairs 10mins to read the dilemmas and discuss their answers to the questions
- (b) Go through each of the dilemmas with the class, allowing the pairs/groups to read out their dilemma and summarise their responses to the questions

4. Contraception

- (a) The contraceptive kit is used to show students the different types of contraception available, they are passed around and students are encouraged to discuss the advantages and disadvantages.
- (b) The facilitator does a condom demonstration after discussing the vital role that condoms play in the prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections once they are used consistently and effectively.
- (c) The students are then invited to do a condom demonstration themselves. Safer sex negotiation skills are discussed and where to go for support if someone has an unplanned pregnancy.

Note: The consistent and correct use of condoms is an important strategy to protect oneself and one's partner from unintended pregnancy and STIs, including HIV. Male and female condoms are currently the only method that provides dual protection (protection against pregnancy and STIs, including HIV). It is also possible to use a male or female condom with another method of contraception to maximize protection, such as the pill or other hormonal methods.

Offering a condom demo is important as it gets students familiar with condoms **before** they engage in sex, increasing the chances of consistent and correct condom use.

Students not only need demonstrations on how to put on and take off a condom; this teaching model is effective at debunking the myths that condoms decrease pleasure and that they don't fit well. (Safer Sex Education, 2015).

The WISER programme would advise students to contact Positive Options for support in the case of an unplanned pregnancy.

5. Sexting

This exercise introduces the concept of sexting and explores the potential social, emotional and legal consequences of sexting and how to manage sexting related issues.

- (a) Divide the class into small groups and hand out laminates of cartoon images that may be sent or received via social media
- (b) Ask each group to give feedback on what images they may think are most harmful/least harmful and why?
- (c) List concerns about sharing images and where to go for support

Note: The WISER programme follows guidelines from Lockers (information and resources for schools around the sharing of explicit self-generated images).

6. Questions and close session

Session 3 Sexually Transmitted Infections and gender roles

Workshop 3 - duration 1hr 20mins

This session looks at STI's, with information on their prevalence, transmission and symptoms as well as appropriate treatments. Gender roles are explored and discussed. Values as presented in the mass media and public health are explored in relation to the messages young people receive.

Learning Outcomes

- Have a better understanding about the various categories of STI's
- Know the transmission routes and treatment of STI's
- How to access services and understand some of the barriers to approaching these services
- Understand what is meant by gender roles
- Be able to challenge gender roles
- Demonstrate their learning on all the issues raised by the programme through a sexual health table quiz

Procedure

1. Recap of previous 2 sessions and answer questions
2. Sexually Transmitted Infections

Ask the students to call out all the STI's they've heard of, and if they can identify whether they are caused by a bacteria, virus or parasite. Go through the most common STI's and inform students of how they can be contracted, available treatments and where to go for support.

3. Gender Roles

Ask students to list advantages and disadvantages of being a man/woman e.g. men's sport is taken more seriously?, boys who have sex are cool, girls are 'easy'? Men don't express their feelings? Men should initiate sexual activity? Have a discussion around each point made which will enable students to clarify their attitudes towards gender roles.

4. Sexual Health Quiz

Students are split into teams for a sexual health quiz that will cover questions on all topics relating to the programme. This will reinforce learning from the 3 workshops delivered.

5. Evaluation

The feedback from student evaluations gives the participants the opportunity to voice their opinions on the information delivered and have input in the improvement of future programmes.

References:

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