

**OUTREACH GUIDE 9**

***Enhancing Parent-Child  
Communication***



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



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## **INTRODUCTION**

### ***Keep communication lines open***

- Parents often have a difficult time communicating with their teenagers because they do it poorly.
- Negative communications like lecturing and making them feel bad about themselves can end up in an exchange of angry shouting or teens closing themselves off.
- Positive communication can keep the dialog open and increase understanding between parents and teens.

### ***Have frank and open discussions about sex***

- Teens want to learn about sex from their parents, but parents are reluctant because they are very shy to talk about sex.
- Parents may mistakenly think talking about sex will encourage teens to have sex.
- Parents hope their children will not have sex until marriage, but this is every unlikely.
- Teens are less likely to suffer from making bad decisions about sex if their parents have frank and open discussions with them about sex.

### ***Prepare young people to resist sex***

- Young people are often unprepared to resist pressure to have sex.
- Parents often prefer to ignore the reality that young people are urged to have sex by their peers and by adults.
- Increasing the awareness of young people about the pressures they will face will help them resist them.

### ***Be calm but firm***

- Giving a lecture or getting into a heated argument with a teenager usually doesn't help resolve conflicts.
- A calm discussion that involves an exchange of points of view and builds understanding and confidence tends to work best.
- Keeping communication lines open with teenagers by discussing calmly but firmly is best.

### ***Honesty and openness work best***

- Keeping communication lines open with teenagers is important.
- Lecturing and scolding can make it hard to communicate.
- Honesty and openness are better than fear and secrecy.
- Teenagers respond best to love, understanding and support.

### ***Trust is hard to build if there is fear***

- Parents of teenagers are often frustrated when their children don't behave the way they want them to.
- It is a normal reaction to feel anger, to shout and to punish them.
- Parents even say they want to "beat some sense into the child."

- Though the parent might feel better after letting out their anger, the end result might make things worse.
- Making children fearful or less confident may make it difficult to communicate with them and be trusted.

## **EXERCISE 1 - Skills for communicating**

### **OBJECTIVE**

To learn about the positive and negative ways to communicate with children.

### **BACKGROUND**

Parents often have a difficult time communicating with their teenagers. Negative communications can end up in a shouting match or in having the teen close off and not listen to anything. Positive communication can keep the dialog open and increase understanding between parents and their teenage children.

### **MATERIALS**

None

### **TIME**

30 minutes

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

#### **STEP 1**

Tell participants there are negative and positive ways to communicate with teens. Negative ways tend to close communications and positive ways tend to open them. Ask questions (positive) / Lecture or preach (negative)

#### **STEP 2**

Read the following list of ways to communicate with teenagers and ask participants to indicate whether it is positive or negative. It is also possible to print out the list and have participants write a “+” sign next to those that are positive and a “-” sign next to those that are negative.

- Listen (+)
- Understand the problem or issue (+)
- Don't let them speak (-)
- Use punishment or anger (-)
- Assure confidentiality and build trust (+)
- Share alternatives and options (+)
- Judge their actions (-)
- Give facts and correct information (+)
- Tell them what to do without options or discussion (-)
- Force your own values (-)
- Be able to say “I don't know” (+)
- Respect their opinions (+)

- Give wrong or incorrect information (-)
- Make them feel bad about themselves (-)
- Help them identify their feelings and opinions (+)
- Build up their self-confidence and self-esteem (+)
- Force them to attend church (-)
- Laugh at them (-)
- Tell them their behaviour is stupid (-)
- Set an example (+)
- Tell them you love them no matter what (+)
- Respect their opinions (+)
- Let out your anger and yell (-)
- Give choices (+)
- Share your faith (+)
- Blame them for everything (-)
- Share personal information about them without their consent (-)

## **STEP 2**

Stimulate a discussion by asking the following questions:

- *What are the advantages of being positive when communicating with teenagers?*
- *What are the disadvantages of being negative when communicating with teenagers?*
- *Why is it so important to keep communication lines open with teenagers?*

## **STEP 3**

Summarize the discussion and make the following points:

- Parents often have a difficult time communicating with their teenagers because they do it poorly.
- Negative communications, like lecturing and making them feel bad about themselves, can end up in an exchange of angry shouting or teens closing themselves off.
- Positive communication can keep the dialog open and increase understanding between parents and teens.



*Parents often repeat their own parents' mistakes when dealing with children, like beating them while drunk instead of calmly discussing feelings and behaviours.*

## EXERCISE 2 - Repeating parent errors

### OBJECTIVE

To better understand how to avoid repeating parenting errors of the past.

### BACKGROUND

Parents often think that the best way to deal with teenagers is the way their parents dealt with them. The problem is that they might have forgotten that they didn't like how strict and forceful their parents were at the time. Also, times have changed and what worked then won't necessarily work now.

### MATERIALS

None

### TIME

30 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### STEP 1

Ask participants to make a list of things they liked about the way their own parents treated them. Give the example of "praise for good work in school".

#### STEP 2

Ask participants to make a list of things that they didn't like about the way their parents treated them. Give the example of "beatings for talking back".

#### STEP 3

Ask the following questions to stimulate a discussion about the lists:

- *What would you have liked your parents to have done differently when parenting you as a teenager?*
- *How are teenagers different today than when you were a teen?*

- *How are parents different today than when you were a teen?*
- *Why do you think being strict and disciplining strongly doesn't work as well with teens today?*
- *What difference would it have made to you if your parents had listened more and had been more supportive and encouraging?*

#### STEP 4

Summarize the discussion and make the following points:

- Parents often think the best way to deal with teenagers is the way their parents dealt with them
- They may have forgotten they didn't like strict and forceful treatment when they were teens.
- Times have changed and things that worked with teens back then don't work now.

## EXERCISE 3 - Learning about sex

### OBJECTIVE

To reflect on the role of parents in sex education.

### BACKGROUND

Teens want to learn about sex from their parents but parents are often reluctant to help because they are very shy. They mistakenly think that talking about sex will only encourage teens to have sex. Parents of teens prefer to ignore the sexual realities of the teenager and hope that their children will not have sex until marriage. The truth is that teens are very likely to have sex before they turn 20 and that parents can be helpful in helping their children make good decisions about sex.

### MATERIALS

None

### TIME

30 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### STEP 1

Explain to participants that it is better that teens learn about sex from their parents rather than from people their own age or not at all. Stimulate a discussion by asking the questions listed below. (If the parents are too embarrassed to discuss these questions together, they can be divided into separate groups of women and men.)

- *How did you first learn about sex?*
- *What did your parents tell you about sex (if anything)?*
- *How would you describe your parents' attitudes about sex?*

- *What would you have liked your parents to have done differently when it came to teaching you about sex?*
- *Why are parents so reluctant to talk to their children about sex?*

## STEP 2

Summarize the discussion and make the following points:

- Teens want to learn about sex from their parents, but parents are reluctant because they are too shy to talk about sex.
- Parents may mistakenly think talking about sex will encourage teens to have sex.
- Parents hope their children will not have sex until marriage, but this is every unlikely.
- Teens are less likely to make bad decisions about sex and have problems if their parents have frank and open discussions with them about sex.



*It is better if teens are prepared for pressures to have sex before the pressures start, though parents may not feel completely comfortable with the topic.*

## EXERCISE 4 - Role playing parent-child discussions

### OBJECTIVE

To reflect about different ways to handle problems with children.

### BACKGROUND

Too often when a problem arises between a parent and a teenager, the parent either gives the child a lecture and the teenager is silent or a heated argument follows. What is best is a calm discussion of the situation that builds confidence and keeps the communication lines open between the parent and the child. This exercise allows parents to practice communicating calmly but firmly.

### MATERIALS

None

### TIME

1 hour

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

### **STEP 1**

Explain that role playing means pretending to be another person and then making up a conversation that that person might have. For example, one adult participant will play the role of a father and another will play the role of his daughter. They will act out a conversation about not going out after dark.

### **STEP 2**

Read the following stories one at a time and have participants volunteer to act them out. After the stories are acted out for a minute or two, ask the questions listed below to stimulate a discussion about the role playing. (The stories can also be printed and given to participants who are divided into small groups and who practice their role play before presenting it to the others.)

#### **Story 1:**

A daughter asks her mother if she was a virgin on her wedding night. The mother is embarrassed at first, but decides to be frank and honest about her first sexual experiences and the mistakes she made.

#### **Story 2:**

A son has had a wet dream and doesn't know what it is. He is confused about what is happening to him in his vivid dreams about sex. He asks his father about his experiences with vivid dreams.

#### **Story 3:**

A 15-year-old daughter tells her parent she is in love with an older boy. The parent suspects that he maybe pressuring her to have sex and wants to find out more without driving her away.

#### **Story 5:**

A 15-year-old boy is seen by a parent pressuring a young girl to have sex with him in a rough way. The parent wants him to understand that his behaviour is disrespectful and unacceptable.

#### **Story 6:**

A daughter is complaining about her first menstrual cramps. Her parent reassures her and tells her what she can do to cope with it.

#### **Story 7:**

A teenage girl is starting to show that she is pregnant though she was an active member of the abstinence club. Her parents try to find out what went wrong.

#### **Story 8:**

Parents find that their daughter is buying nice clothes, has a cell phone, and is going out often. They decide to ask her where she is getting her money.

**Story 9:**

A mother is cleaning her teenage son's shirts and finds an unused condom in the pocket. She suggests to her husband that they punish their son but her husband thinks it is a good sign that he is protecting himself.

Questions to ask participants:

- *What do you think of the way the parent handled the situation?*
- *How did the parent react to the teenager?*
- *How did the teenager react to the parent?*
- *What is the problem with lecturing and arguing loudly?*
- *How could the parent have handled it differently?*

**STEP 2**

Summarize the discussion and mention the following points:

- Giving a lecture or getting into a heated argument with a teenager usually doesn't help resolve conflicts.
- A calm discussion that involves an exchange of points of view and builds understanding and confidence, tends to work best.
- Keeping communication lines open with teenagers by discussing calmly but firmly is best.

## EXERCISE 5 - Responding to difficult questions

**OBJECTIVE**

To prepare parents for responding to difficult questions asked by teenagers.

**BACKGROUND**

Because they are embarrassed, parents often don't want to discuss sex with their children, even if the children are seeking guidance. One of the worst things a parent can do is ignore his or her child when asked a question about sex. Though it may be difficult, parents are better off talking about sex with their children when they start asking questions about it.

**MATERIALS**

None

**TIME**

30 minutes

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

### **STEP 1**

Explain to participants that parents are often reluctant to answer questions their children have about sex because they are embarrassed. Ask the questions listed below to stimulate a discussion. If there are many participants, they can be divided into groups of 10 and each given several questions to discuss and then report back their conclusions.

- *What is the problem with ignoring a child asking questions about sex?*
- *What is the advantage of referring the child to a trusted uncle or auntie to discuss sex?*
- *How can parents get over their embarrassment of talking about sex with their children?*
- *Why do parents mistakenly think talking about sex will increase the desire of children to have sex?*

### **STEP 2**

Summarize the discussion and make the following points:

- Questions from children are opportunities to discuss important sexual issues.
- Admit that you may not know all the answers but offer to find correct answers.
- Discussing sex with children openly and frankly can save their life.
- The younger the child is, the easier it is to talk about sex.
- It is best to start talking about sex before children start having sex.

## **EXERCISE 6 - Getting comfortable with the vocabulary**

### **OBJECTIVE**

To make parents more comfortable with using words related to sex.

### **BACKGROUND**

It is impossible to discuss sex without using words to describe sexual activities and parts of the body like sexual organs. Learning what those terms are and getting comfortable using them, will make it easier for parents to talk with their children about sex.

### **MATERIALS**

None

### **TIME**

30 minutes

## INSTRUCTIONS

### STEP 1

Read the following terms and ask the participants to describe in other words what they mean and why they are important in preventing HIV/AIDS. (If there are many participants divide them into groups of 10 and give them each a portion of words to work with.) Give participants the following example:

*“Casual sex (Boako / Thobalano e e senang kelelelo) means having sex with someone you don’t know or have just met and is important to HIV/AIDS because HIV is more likely to be transmitted through casual sex.”*

- |                                     |                                                                |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Penis                             | bonna                                                          |
| • Vagina                            | bosadi                                                         |
| • Sexual intercourse                | thobalano/tlhakanelo – dikobo                                  |
| • Orgasm                            | go gopola badimo / go tla/ gonesa pula                         |
| • Semen                             | peo ya senna / metsi / seeledi                                 |
| • Tuberculosis                      | kgotlholo e tona                                               |
| • Immune system                     | masole a mmele                                                 |
| • Mother to child transmission      | go fitisetsa mogare go tswa Mo go mma ngwana go ya ko ngwaneng |
| • Voluntary counselling and testing | kgakololo le go tlthatlhobela mogare ka boithaopo              |
| • Role model                        | go nna sekao                                                   |
| • Fellatio (blow job)               | go momona bonna                                                |
| • Genital warts                     | dikakana tsa bonna/bosadi                                      |
| • Candidiasis                       | bogwata                                                        |
| • Chancroid                         | diso                                                           |
| • Herpes                            | ntho ee nang le matute / molelo wa badimo                      |
| • Peer pressure                     | thotloetsoka – patiko ka balakane                              |
| • Abstinence                        | boikago mo thobalanong                                         |
| • Casual sex                        | boako / thobalano e e senang kelelelo                          |
| • Partner reduction                 | go fokotsa palo ya bakapelo                                    |
| • Uncircumcised penis               | bonna jp bo sa kgaolwang letlalo                               |
| • Clitoris                          | nawa/letlopa                                                   |
| • Vaginal fluids                    | metsi a a tswang mo bosading                                   |
| • Testicles                         | mae a senna                                                    |
| • Labia                             | mabota a bosadi                                                |
| • Chlamydia                         | lebusa le le tswang ka fa bosading                             |
| • Life skills                       | dikitso tsa botshelo/ dithuto tsa botshelo                     |
| • Behaviour change                  | phetolo maitsholo/ go itsala sesha                             |
| • PLWHA                             | batho/motho yo o tshelang le mmogare kana le seemo sa aids     |

- |                            |                                                    |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| • Gender issues            | dikgang tsa bong                                   |
| • Coercion                 | go patelediwa                                      |
| • Defilement               | go dirisa/robala ngwana                            |
| • Fidelity                 | go ikanyega mo lenyalong                           |
| • Consequences             | di tla morago                                      |
| • Casual partner           | chungama, sepoko, le one nite                      |
| • Unwanted pregnancy       | boimana jo bo sa batlegeng                         |
| • Alcohol abuse            | iphitiso dino/ tagi                                |
| • ARVs                     | melemo e e ritibatsang mogare wa hiv/aids          |
| • Sex work                 | go ithekisa mmele, go gweba ka mmele               |
| • Condom                   | khondomo(no more sekausu)                          |
| • Oral sex                 | go hupa bonna kgotsa go momona bosadi              |
| • Anal intercourse         | matanyola (thobalano ya mo maragong)               |
| • Masturbation             | ponyaponyana                                       |
| • Rape                     | petelelo, ithubetso, go tsaya, tlhobalo ka dikgoka |
| • Incest                   | go ija motlhana, go robalana losika la mosadi      |
| • High risk                | bodiphatsa jo bo tona                              |
| • Personal risk assessment | go itshekaitshaka bodiphatsa jwa gago              |
| • Drunk                    | botagwa go nwa phetelela botlhapelwa               |
| • Family planning          | tlhatlologanyo tsholo, katologanyo                 |
| • Myths                    | diphirimisi, polelo ee seng ya nnete               |
| • Casual sex               | thobalano ya nakwana/ one night stand              |
| • Aggressive               | go nna dikgoka, seganka                            |
| • Passive                  | go palelwa ke go bua mahattha a gago               |
| • Assertive                | go ipuelela mo go tshwanetseng                     |
| • Negotiation skills       | bokgoni jwa go ipuelela                            |
| • Gonorrhoea               | resephiphi                                         |
| • Syphilis                 | thosola                                            |
| • Sexual partner           | motho yo o robalanang le ene                       |

## STEP 2

Ask the following questions to stimulate a discussion:

- *Why do parents have trouble using these words?*
- *How comfortable would you feel using these words with your children?*
- *What is the advantage of being able to talk openly and frankly about sex with children?*

### STEP 3

Summarize the discussion and make the following points:

- It is impossible to discuss sex without using words to describe sexual activities and parts of the body like sexual organs.
- Getting comfortable with those terms will make it easier to talk about sex and answer questions openly and frankly.
- Being embarrassed is a poor excuse when discussing sex with your child because it may save his or her life.



*Deciding when to have sex for the first time is a difficult decision for young people and they need support in resisting temptations to have sex.*

## **EXERCISE 7 - Ways for improving parent-teenager communication**

### **OBJECTIVE**

To understand how to communicate well with teenagers.

### **BACKGROUND**

The more a parent is prepared to answer questions about sex when asked by their children, the better they will be able to do it well. If a parent is not listening well, he or she won't understand what the child means. If the parent gives answers that are overly complex or superficial, it won't be useful to the child. Following simple communication steps helps.

### **MATERIALS**

None

### **TIME**

30 minutes

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

### **STEP 1**

Read the following list of ways for improving parent-teenager communication one at a time. Stimulate a discussion by asking the related questions for each one. After the discussion, share the points listed below each statement and the related questions.

#### **Understand the question being asked.**

- *Why is it important to understand the question being asked?*
- *What can be done to make sure the question is understood?*
- *Why does asking for clarifications about the question help?*
  - Ask questions that will help you better understand the question.
  - Don't judge the question or make fun of it.
  - Think about why the question is being asked.

#### **Give a clear and simple answer.**

- *Why is it important to share what you know?*
- *Why is it a problem to be embarrassed and avoid the truth?*
- *Why is it difficult to talk about sex?*
  - Try to respond as honestly and directly as possible.
  - Use language a young person will understand.
  - Keep answers short and simple.

#### **Make sure the answer was understood.**

- *Why is feedback important?*
- *Why is it important not to judge the child?*
- *What is the best way to get feedback?*
  - Ask if the child understands the answer and have him repeat what was said back to you.
  - Listen carefully to what was said.
  - Correct any misunderstanding or seek clarifications with a question.

#### **Share your values.**

- *Why is it important to share values, including moral beliefs?*
- *What can be done if the child is not interested in values?*
- *Why is it important to set an example with behaviour as well as words?*
  - Sharing values and morals sets limits, but you have to live by them too.
  - Do not lecture or expect children to automatically accept your values.
  - Listen to what children say about values and morals without judgement.

#### **Build confidence and trust.**

- *Why is building confidence and trust so important?*
- *Why is it important that children feel comfortable talking about sex with parents?*
- *What can parents do to build confidence and trust?*

- Thank the child for asking the question.
- Take the time to listen and discuss, and give full attention.
- Let the child know it is a good idea to discuss sex.
- Reassure the child that no one else will be told about the discussion.

## **STEP 2**

Summarize the discussion and make the following points:

- Improving communication skills make talking about sex easier.
- Getting over shyness when talking about sex is a big challenge for parents.
- Talking about sex with children can't be ignored in a world with HIV.



*It is better for parents to talk about sex with their children before someone tries to take advantage of them sexually.*

## **EXERCISE 8 - Answers to common questions**

### **OBJECTIVE**

To practice responding to difficult questions about sex.

### **BACKGROUND**

Many parents aren't sure how to respond to questions about sex because they never had discussions about sex with their own parents. Parents are also very embarrassed when talking about sex, especially with their children. By thinking about how they would reply when asked about sex beforehand, parents are better prepared if their children ask them questions.

### **MATERIALS**

None

### **TIME**

1 hour

## INSTRUCTIONS

### STEP 1

Ask participants to make a list of questions that their children have asked them about sex or that they think their children might ask them about sex. (If there is a large group of participants, they can work in groups and report back to the others.) Give them the following examples:

- *How do you know when you are in love for real?*
- *How do you decide when to have sex with someone?*

### STEP 2

Ask participants to read their list of questions and to think of ways to answer them. Get everyone to agree on the best way to answer the questions. Give the following example:

- *How do you know when you are in love for real?*

ANSWER: It is very difficult to separate real love from lust or only being sexually attracted to someone. Some people often think they are in love when they don't know the real person very well. Real love means knowing a person well, respecting each other, and being each other's best friend.

- *How do you decide when to have sex with someone?*

ANSWER: It is best to wait until you know a person very well and trust them before having sex with them. By waiting until marriage, you will know that person well and know that they want to be with you for a long time. Having sex with someone you don't know well and trust can lead to regret and heartbreak.

### STEP 3

Tell participants that they will now be given a list of questions that young people commonly ask their parents about sex. The participant should first think of how they would respond to the question, and then compare their response to the one given below the question. If there is a large group of participants, divide them up into groups and assign several questions to each group.

- *How are babies made?*

ANSWER: When a man and a woman love each other very much, they make love which means the man puts his penis in the vagina of the mother. The little seed of the father meets the egg of the mother and a baby grows in the mother's tummy. It then comes out of her vagina when it is born.

- *Does kissing someone mean that you are going to have sex with them?*

ANSWER: Men and women usually kiss before having sex, but young people can kiss without having sex. Sometimes boys can misunderstand what a girl wants and after kissing and touching, force her to have sex even though she doesn't want to. This is wrong.

- *Can you get pregnant the first time you have sex?*

ANSWER: Some people mistakenly think a girl can't get pregnant the first time she has sex. Boys will even lie to girls who are worried about getting pregnant to convince them to have sex. But a girl risks getting pregnant every time she has sex.

- *Why do boys say anything or do anything to convince girls to have sex?*

ANSWER: Boys feel strong urges to have sex and will often lie, make false promises, pretend they are in love, or give gifts to convince girls to have sex. This is not honest or respectful of girls. Girls have to be very careful regarding the pressure put on them to have sex.

- *Why do people think that young people should not have sex until marriage?*

ANSWER: It is best to delay having sex until you know a person very well and you love and trust them. The problem with having sex with many different sexual partners before marriage is that you might get pregnant or get someone pregnant, and not know the other person very well. The other risk is in getting a sexually transmitted infection and not being able to have babies after getting married. People who have sex before marriage with many partners are more likely to get infected with HIV. In that case, you can infect your new marriage partner or your babies after getting married.

- *There is a boy at school who loves me and I love him. But he says he will get another girlfriend if I don't have sex with him. What should I do?*

ANSWER: The boy may be in love but he is not showing respect. Respect is important in a healthy and happy relationship. It looks like he is more interested in sex than in you as a person. It is not right to try and force someone to have sex by threatening them.

- *The other boys are saying that I am not a real man because I have never had sex. I want to be accepted by them. What should I do?*

ANSWER: Having sex has nothing to do with being a real man. Boys should have sex when they are ready and have a partner whom they love and respect. The friends who are teasing about not having sex are not respectful. It might be time to find new friends who will let you be who you want to be.

- *Sometimes I touch my sexual parts and it feels good. Does this mean I am strange or doing something wrong?*

ANSWER: Touching your own sexual organs is called masturbation. It is normal and not harmful unless someone is thinking about it and doing it all the time. This is a way to relieve sexual tension especially for boys. There are some churches that believe it is an immoral act and should be discouraged.

- *Why is there a difference between what boys and girls want in a relationship?*

ANSWER: Boys and girls both want to be loved and love someone else. The difference between the two is that boys feel pressure to have sex more, and often want to have sex right away. They also might like sexual variety and get bored more quickly after having sex. Some girls may be thinking of what they can get out of a relationship like money or presents. The best relationships are the ones when boys and girls want the same thing like companionship, friendship and mutually respect each other.

- *When is it OK to have sex?*

ANSWER: When two people are married, sex is a beautiful expression of their love. It is a way a husband and wife can give each other pleasure and get close. Many couples love each other and intend to get married. They may have sex while they are waiting to have enough money to get married. This is acceptable for some people but considered immoral by other people.

- *Do many people have sex before marriage?*

ANSWER: Many people do have sex before marriage. Some are engaged to be married and some are not. Marriage makes people feel more secure when they have sex especially if there is mutual respect, faithfulness and trust. The important thing is to know the person well before having sex, and not to rush into sexual relations too young or too fast.

- *What difference does it make for a young person when they have sex?*

ANSWER: Having sex makes relationships more complex. Emotions are stronger and the chances of being hurt or suffering from heartbreak are greater. The pressure to have sex is different once you have had sex. It is easier to resist having sex if you have never had it. There are more worries when you have sex, like an unwanted pregnancy or catching a sexually transmitted disease like HIV.

#### STEP 4

Summarize the exercise and make the following points:

- Questions about sex from children provide an opportunity for discussing it because they show interest.
- Being honest and straightforward about answers is best.
- If you can't think of a way to answer a question, tell them you want to answer but need time to think about it, and then ask friends how they would answer the question.



*Young people need to understand the importance of good communication within couples to keep the love alive.*

## EXERCISE 9 - What does it take to make a relationship healthy and strong

### OBJECTIVE

To be able to communicate to young people what it takes to make a relationship healthy and strong.

### BACKGROUND

Relationships that don't work are usually ones where the couple has little in common except sexual attraction, and have little trust, confidence and respect for each other. Communicating what it takes to make a relationship healthy with young people helps them understand why it is better to wait before having sex.

### MATERIALS

None

### TIME

30 minutes

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

### **STEP 1**

Ask participants to make a list of things that they think are important to make a relationship healthy and strong. Give them the following examples:

- *Time spent together to get to know the other person well and become friends.*
- *Mutual respect and understanding when both feel like equal partners.*

### **STEP 2**

Compare the list of the participants with the following list:

- *Trust and honesty mean being truthful and faithful and having confidence in each other.*
- *Support means finding strength in each other for getting through tough times.*
- *Fairness is finding an equal balance between giving and taking, and not always getting what you want.*
- *Separate identities allow couples to be together but be themselves at the same time and not have to change to suit the other person.*
- *Good communications is talking openly and honestly about thoughts and feelings.*

### **STEP 3**

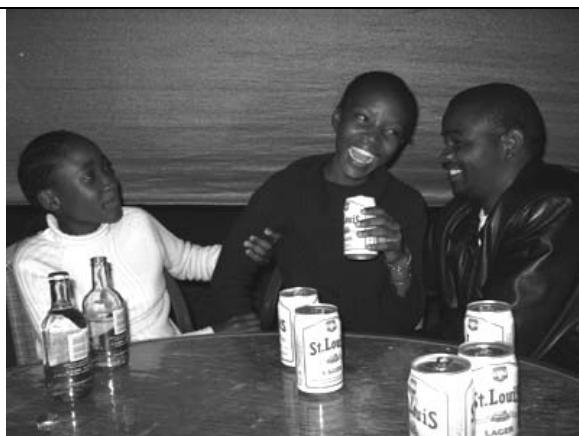
Stimulate a discussion by asking the following questions:

- *Why are these things important for having a healthy and strong relationship?*
- *What can be done if some of these important things are missing when starting a relationship?*
- *Why do people start relationships even when there are things missing that make them unhappy?*

### **STEP 4**

Summarize the discussion and make the following points:

- Not all relationships are perfect. Compromises have to be made.
- It is better not to start a sexual relationship if there are not many signs of things that make a relationship healthy and strong.
- Encouraging young people to think about what their ideal relationship would be like, helps them to delay having sex and avoid making mistakes when choosing partners.



*Parents can help their children understand the link between drinking alcohol and risk of getting infected with HIV.*

## EXERCISE 10 - Communicating with children about alcohol abuse and sex

### OBJECTIVE

To better understand the link between alcohol abuse and sexual risk behaviour, and communicate with children about it.

### BACKGROUND

Getting drunk tends to increase the desire to have sex and the likelihood that people will have casual sex. Young people are particularly vulnerable since they are often not used to drinking alcohol, and end up getting too drunk and doing things they regret later. Communicating with children about the link between getting drunk and sexual risk behaviour prepares children to avoid both problems.

### MATERIALS

None

### TIME

30 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### STEP 1

Tell participants that they will now be given a list of questions that young people might ask their parents about drinking alcohol and sex. The participant should first think of how they would respond to the question and then compare their response to the one given below the question. If there is a large group of participants, divide participants up into groups and assign several questions to each.

- *Adults drink alcohol often, so why shouldn't young people?*

Drinking too much alcohol is bad for your health at any age. Young people are more likely to lose control when they drink than adults because they are not used to it. Boys who get drunk are more likely to get in fights and rape girls. Girls who get drunk are more likely to get pregnant by a stranger and be raped.

- *What should I do if all my friends are drinking alcohol and they want me to drink too?*

It is possible to drink less than others and drink lots of water at the same time to avoid getting drunk. The best way to resist pressures to get drunk is to stand by your convictions and avoid drinking at all.

- *What is the problem with accepting alcohol from people who want to buy it for you?*

Accepting alcohol bought by other people may cause you to drink more than you want to. Men and boys may be encouraging girls to get drunk so that they will agree to have sex with them, or get so drunk they won't resist if they force them to have sex.

- *What is the problem of being with people who get drunk even if you don't drink yourself?*

A person who doesn't drink any alcohol, but goes to places where other people are getting drunk, can run into problems. Young men may find others who are drunk, want to beat them, whereas young women may find that they are risking being raped.

## **STEP 2**

Stimulate a discussion by asking the following questions:

- *Why is it important to communicate with young people about the problems of alcohol abuse and sexual risk?*
- *What is the best way to communicate with children about the problems of alcohol abuse and sexual risk?*
- *Why is it important to provide a good example and not get drunk in front of children?*

## **STEP 3**

Summarize the discussion and make the following points:

- Simply ordering children not to drink alcohol may not be as effective as discussing the dangers of getting drunk with them.
- Young people may want to take alcohol to feel more grown up.

- Young people need to understand the responsibilities and risks of drinking alcohol.
- Children tend to behave like their parents. If you don't want your children to abuse alcohol, it is best not to abuse it yourself.



*Honesty and openness are better than fear and secrecy when communicating with a teen. Teenagers respond best to love, understanding and support.*

## EXERCISE 11 - Teaching children how to resist sex

### OBJECTIVE

To provide parents with suggestions of ways to help their children resist sex.

### BACKGROUND

Young people are often not prepared to resist pressure to have sex. Parents often prefer to ignore the reality that young people are urged to have sex by their peers and by adults. Increasing their awareness about the pressures they will face, and providing them with ways to resist them, increases the chances they will be able to resist those pressures.

### MATERIALS

None

### TIME

30 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### STEP 1

Explain to participants that young people are often not prepared to resist pressure to have sex. Ask participants to make a list of things they can tell their children to resist pressure to have sex. (Write the list on a blackboard or flip chart paper if available. If there are many participants, they can be divided into groups. Each group should make its own list and report back to the others.) Give them the following examples:

- *Don't accept gifts because sex may be expected in return.*
- *Ignore those who say you aren't grown up unless you've had sex.*

## STEP 2

Compare the list prepared by the participants with the following list:

- *Don't accept rides in cars from people you don't know.*
- *Don't be alone with someone you don't know well.*
- *Avoid going alone to someone's home.*
- *Avoid walking alone at night.*
- *If going out let others know where you are going.*
- *Know your own limits and stick to them.*
- *Don't take alcohol.*
- *Say no firmly and clearly.*
- *Run away if forced to have sex.*
- *Watch out for neighbours or relatives who are overly friendly.*
- *Leave if someone is making comments about sex that make you uncomfortable.*

## STEP 3

Summarize the discussion and make the following points:

- Young people are often not prepared to resist pressure to have sex.
- Parents often prefer to ignore the reality that young people are urged to have sex by their peers and by adults.
- Increasing the awareness of young people about the pressures they will face will help them resist them.

# EXERCISE 12 - Keeping communication lines open

## OBJECTIVE

To prepare parents to help their children avoid sexual risks.

## BACKGROUND

There are different ways to help teenagers avoid sexual risk activities. Some believe that being very strict, restrictive and firm with teenagers will keep them in line. Others think that understanding rather than fear works best, and the most important thing is to communicate openly and honestly. This does not keep parents from setting rules and clear guidelines.

## MATERIALS

None

## TIME

30 minutes

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

### **STEP 1**

Read the following story to the participants:

#### *Story*

A parent finds their 15 year old daughter preparing to go out with friends and putting on sexy tight shorts, a tank top and make-up. The parent is angered by the teenager and immediately tells her to change and wash her face in a loud voice. The teen is struck with the back of the parent's hand, told she looks like a prostitute, and that the parent is embarrassed to have a daughter like her that dresses in such a vulgar way.

### **STEP 2**

Stimulate a discussion by asking the following questions:

- *What do you think of the way the parent responded to the daughter?*
- *What do you think the response of the daughter will be?*
- *What do you think would have been a better way of dealing with the daughter?*

### **STEP 3**

Ask participants what are the advantages and disadvantages of the following negative reactions to the behaviour of their teenagers:

- *Changing the topic when sex is mentioned out of embarrassment.*
- *Lying about sex when asked about it.*
- *Teasing or making fun of a child's question about sex.*
- *Threatening with a beating for dressing in a sexy way.*
- *Avoiding the subject of sex in case it encourages the child to have sex.*
- *Yelling and scolding a teen when caught alone another teen.*
- *Disciplining teenagers by striking them when angry.*

### **STEP 3**

Ask participants what are the advantages and disadvantages of the following positive reactions to the behaviour of their teenagers:

- *Choosing a good time to talk when not angry or drunk.*
- *Listening well to the point of view of the child.*
- *Trying to understand how the child feels.*
- *Clarifying what has been said to make sure you understand.*
- *Finding a solution to a problem that suits both parent and child.*
- *Reassuring your child that you love them and want what is best for them.*
- *Discussing rules with teenagers and setting clear limits together*

### **STEP 4**

Summarize the discussion and make the following points:

- Keeping communication lines open with teenagers is important.

- Lecturing and scolding can make it hard to communicate.
- Honesty and openness are better than fear and secrecy.
- Teenagers respond best to love, understanding and support.

## EXERCISE 12 - Negative vs positive messages

### OBJECTIVE

To practice communicating positive messages.

### BACKGROUND

Parents of teenagers are often frustrated when their children don't behave the way they want them to. It is a normal reaction to feel anger, shout and punish them. Parents even say they want to "beat some sense into the child." Though the parent might feel better after letting out their anger, the end result might even make things worse. Making children fearful or less confident may make it difficult to communicate with them and be trusted.

### MATERIALS

None

### TIME

45 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### STEP 1

What follows is a list of things that parents say to their teenagers when they are frustrated and angry. Give them the following examples of negative and positive statements:

- **Negative statement:** You will regret it if you speak to me like that again.  
**Positive statement:** Why are you speaking to me like that? It is not respectful.
- **Negative statement:** How can you be so stupid and ignorant?  
**Positive statement:** Why do you think you acted like that? What were you thinking?
- **Negative statement:** You listen to me or I will show you the back of my hand.  
**Positive statement:** I am trying to talk with you. I am listening to what you have to say and would appreciate if you would do the same.

**STEP 2:**

Ask participants to consider each negative statement and turn it into a positive statement:

- *You never do what I say.*
- *You have got to learn some manners in a hurry.*
- *That was an idiotic idea.*
- *You will end up in jail or dead if you keep this up.*
- *You'll be sorry if you don't show more respect.*
- *You are not too old to be beaten.*
- *You will be kicked out of this house if you don't change.*

**STEP 3**

Compare the list of positive statements with the following:

- *I really appreciate it when you behave responsibly.*
- *You are a wonderful child and I love you but sometimes you make being your parent harder than it should be.*
- *I hope we can settle our differences.*
- *It is important to me that we find a way to work this out.*
- *What do you think is the best way for me to react to this?*
- *What do you think the problem is?*

**STEP 4**

Stimulate a discussion by asking the following questions:

- *Why is it difficult to for parents to communicate calmly and positively with their teenagers?*
- *Why do discussions between parents and teenagers often end up with shouting, scolding and punishments?*
- *What can be done to improve communications between parents and teenagers?*

**STEP 5**

Summarize the discussion with the following points:

- Parents of teenagers are often frustrated when their children don't behave the way they want them to.
- It is a normal reaction to feel anger, shout and punish them.
- Parents even say they want to "beat some sense into the child."
- Though the parent might feel better after letting out their anger, the end result might even make things worse.
- Making children fearful or less confident may make it difficult to communicate with them and be trusted.

## EXERCISE 13 - Body language

### OBJECTIVE

To improve communication by taking into consideration body language.

### BACKGROUND

Body language is communicating how you are feeling by gestures and facial expression. For example, folded arms and a frown communicate frustration and anger. The problem arises when parents are trying to reach out to their teenagers and encourage them to talk, but their body language is seen as being cold and hostile.

### MATERIALS

None

### TIME

30 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### STEP 1

Read the explanation of body language given in the “background” information above to participants.

#### STEP 2

Explain that they are each going to be given an emotion or feeling and they will act it out without using any words. The others in the group will try to guess what it is. For example “boredom” maybe acted out by looking sleepy and pretending to yawn. The list of emotions or feelings:

- Love
- Hate
- Pain
- Shyness
- Disappointment
- Joy
- Pleasure
- Sadness
- Regret
- Interest
- Doubt
- Confidence
- Rage

## STEP 2

Stimulate a discussion by asking the following questions:

- *Can you think of examples where what you are saying doesn't match your expression or body language? (For example: expressing love but looking fearful)*
- *What happens if what you say doesn't match your expression or body language?*
- *Why is body language important?*

## STEP 3

Summarize the discussion and make the following points:

- Wanting to listen well but looking bored is bad communication.
- Teenagers won't believe what you are saying if your body language and expressions tell another story.
- Body language reinforces what we are saying and can build confidence.

# EXERCISE 14 - Reading reactions

## OBJECTIVE

To better understand how negative body language can block communications.

## BACKGROUND

Body language is communicating how you are feeling by gestures and facial expression. When someone else is talking, body language is very important in communicating how interested you are in what is being said. If parents are angry, thinking about what they are going to say next, or bored and not listening, their teenagers will sense it and be less reluctant to talk.

## MATERIALS

None

## TIME

30 minutes

## INSTRUCTIONS

### STEP 1

Have participants select the numbers one, two or three by counting off one after the other.

### STEP 2

Ask all the participants who are "ones" to meet together in corner of the room. Ask all the "twos" to meet in another corner and the "threes" to meet in another corner.

### **STEP 3**

Go around to the different groups and give them the following instructions:

#### **Group 1:**

Tell this group of participants that they are the talkers, and tell them that they are to talk for two minutes each about some problem that occurred in the family with the children. The story can be about a child coming home later than expected; a child caught telling a lie; a child being disrespectful to a grandparent; or something else.

#### **Group 2:**

Tell this group of participants that they are positive listeners, and that they will use the following types of body language while listening to the participants from Group 1 talk:

- Lean towards the speaker.
- Give your full attention.
- Nod and shake your head in agreement.
- Check out the exact meaning of what is said by asking questions.
- Try to figure out what the speaker is feeling and verify it with them.
- Make a verbal response like saying “uh huh,” “yes” or “go on.”
- Look the speaker in the eye.
- Have a friendly, interested expression on your face.
- Ask the speaker to clarify by asking a question.

#### **Group 3:**

Tell this group of participants that they are the negative listeners and that they will use the following types of body language while listening to the participants from Group 1 talk:

- Lean back with arms crossed.
- Look around the room to see what else is going on.
- Look impatient and check the time frequently.
- Say “hmmm” in a tone of doubt in your voice.
- Interrupt the speaker to give your opinion.
- Move around restlessly in a chair.
- Criticize the things the speaker did in the story.
- Roll your eyes when surprised.
- Try to change the subject.
- Get up and look for a piece of paper.
- Ask for time to go to the toilet.

### **STEP 4**

Ask participants to form groups of three that include one person who is a “one,” another who is a “two” and another who is a “three.”

**STEP 5**

Ask the “ones” to tell their story while the “twos” and “threes” listen.

**STEP 6**

Stimulate a discussion by asking the following questions:

- *Ask the “ones” how they felt about the different ways participants reacted to their stories?*
- *Why is it important to react in a positive way when listening?*
- *What is the problem with reacting in a negative way when listening?*

**STEP 7**

Summarize the discussion and make the following points:

- How well you are listening is communicated by gestures and facial expression.
- Looking bored, thinking about what you are going to say next, or not listening, discourages speakers.
- Teenagers can sense it when parents aren’t listening well and maybe less reluctant to talk.

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