

Let's Talk about Sex

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:

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:

Middle School – Lesson 11

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- White board and markers
- *Assertive Communication #1-5* worksheets (one per group of three students)
- **Homework:** *“Talking by Text: What Do You Mean?”* (one per student)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Describe three different types of communication people use. [Knowledge]
2. Demonstrate how to effectively use assertive communication in relationships. [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: Ask the students, “**How many of you have mastered the skill of reading people's minds?**” The students will likely look confused, and a few might raise their hands, realizing you are joking. Say, “**Exactly. We can't read each others' minds so if we want to have good relationships with people, we need to learn how to communicate with them effectively. That includes family relationships, friendships, romantic relationships, and committed relationships such as marriage. Today, we're going to be focusing on communicating about sex and sexuality.**”

Ask, “**What can sometimes make communicating about sex difficult?**” Some possible responses might include:

- “I'm too embarrassed to talk about it.”
- “I don't want to upset the other person by bringing something up.”
- “I'm nervous if I bring something up they'll break up with me.”
- “It's too much work.”
- “I don't want to pry, and I don't want them asking me things that might be none of their business.”

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Say, **"While these are certainly all reasons why people are often unable to communicate in a relationship, no relationship can last without communication. When it comes to communicating about sexual behaviors or intimate relationships, there's also more at stake because you're talking about avoiding STIs and/or pregnancy."**
(5 minutes)

STEP 2: Explain that HOW we express ourselves is just as important as WHAT we are trying to communicate. Say, **"We can communicate aggressively, passively, or assertively."** As you say this, write the words Aggressive, Passive, and Assertive on the white board. Explain the terms:

Being **AGGRESSIVE** is when someone tries to get what they want by bullying the other person into it.

Being **PASSIVE** is when a person is timid or unclear in expressing their needs—or when they won't speak up about what THEY want but just go along with what the other person wants.

Being **ASSERTIVE** is when we say what we want or mean without being hurtful to the other person.

Ask, **"What if someone asked you out and you weren't interested in that person. If you were PASSIVE, how might you react?"**

Possible responses might include:

- "I'd probably say yes even though I didn't want to."
- "I'd say, 'Let me think about it—can I text you later?' and then never text them."

Ask, **"Why isn't that an effective way of responding?"**

Possible responses might include:

- "Because you'd end up doing something you don't want to do."
- "Because it's not fair to the other person."

Ask, **"How would you respond to the same question if you were AGGRESSIVE?"**

Possible responses might include:

- "Go out with you? Are you kidding? Loser!"
- "Um... no."

Ask, **"Why isn't that an effective way of responding?"**

Possible responses might include:

- "Because it's rude, and can make the other person feel bad"
- "Because it becomes all about what I want and relationships should be about what both people want."

Ask, **"How would you respond to the same question if you were ASSERTIVE?"**

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Possible responses might include:

- “I’m actually interested in someone else, but thanks.”
- “I really like you as a friend, just not as more than that.”

Ask, “**Why is this an effective way of responding?**”

Possible responses might include:

- “Because both people’s needs count”
- “Because the person said what they meant, but didn’t offend the other person”

***Note to the Teacher:** It’s possible that some students will insist that aggressive communication is the way to go, looking only at the result, which is getting what they want. If this happens, try to facilitate a discussion about this. Ask “**If you can get what you want without hurting the other person, might it make more sense to do it that way? Why or why not?**” You can also talk about situations where it can be appropriate to speak in a more aggressive tone, reinforcing the previous lesson about sexual assault and bullying prevention.*

Say, “**So, it’s easy to define terms. What we are going to do now is practice actually communicating with a partner about sex.**” (8 minutes)

STEP 3: Break the class up into small groups of three (no more than four) per group. Ask them to decide who in the group is going to be the writer. Hold up one of the “*Assertive Communication*” worksheets and say, “**I am going to give each group a sheet that has a statement made by a person to their romantic partner that has something to do with sex or sexuality. This person’s name is ‘Partner A.’ You are ‘Partner B.’ Your job is to respond to Partner A in an ASSERTIVE (not aggressive, not passive) way. Partner B wants to stay in the relationship with Partner A.**”

When you get your sheets, talk among yourselves about what an effective, assertive response would be that refuses the behavior. Once you have decided on a response, write it on the second line, marked Partner B. You only have about two minutes, so you need to work quickly. PLEASE DO NOT MOVE ON TO THE NEXT LINE! Once everyone has written their first response, I will give you further instructions. Please keep in mind that this activity needs to follow school rules—no violent dialogue, no swear words, nothing inappropriate.”

Answer any questions about the instructions, and then distribute the sheets, instructing students to wait until all the sheets have been distributed. Tell students to get started, and remind them that they only have two minutes in which to come up with a response for Partner B. Walk around as they work, answering questions and reminding them not to move on. As you walk around, check some of the language to be sure they are on task and not writing anything silly or inappropriate.

After two minutes, have everyone stop writing. Ask each group to pass their sheet clockwise to the group next to them. Say, “**Now that you’ve been Partner B, you’re going to become Partner A. Read through the original type-written line and what the group before you came up with as an assertive response for Partner B. Then, as a group,**

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come up with a new response for Partner A just beneath the last response from Partner B. Keep in mind that Partner A may really want to have sex or is strongly considering it. Once you've come up with what you feel is an effective response, write it down. You only have two more minutes for this. Please do NOT go beyond Partner A."

After a few minutes, stop the students and again ask them to pass their sheet clockwise to the group next to them. There, they will become Partner B again and have to come up with a response to Partner A that again assertively refuses the behavior. Continue the activity until all the sheets have been filled. Allow a little more time for each round so that students can read through the previous lines before writing their responses. Remind the students as necessary that their responses should be assertive, rather than passive or aggressive. Once the sheets have been filled, have them pass their sheets one more time. Then give the groups one minute to read their completed sheets within their small groups. (18 minutes)

STEP 4: Ask each group to select two volunteers who will come to the front of the room to read their dialogues. After each group has read their sheet, be sure to have the class applaud for each. Take a moment to ask the class how realistic a discussion they thought this was and whether Partner B remained assertive throughout.

After all the groups have read their dialogues, process by asking the following questions:

- **"What was it like to do that?"**
- **"Was there anything that surprised you in what you heard?"**
- **"What did you think of the ways in which Partner A and Partner B communicated?
What are some specific examples you heard?"**
- **"What were some of the things you heard Partner B say that you really liked or thought would be particularly effective?"**

Note to the Teacher: In most cases, the two people students select to read their group's dialogue at the front of the room will be a boy and a girl—with the boy being Partner A. If this happens, point it out to the students:

- **"What did you notice about the pairs that came up to the front of the room?"**

Ask the students whether anyone else assumed the partners were each a particular gender and why. Ask if they think it is realistic for a girl to put pressure on someone to have sex or for a boy to want to refuse it. Ask what they think these scenarios would look like in a same-sex relationship—what would they have expected had Partners A and B been two guys or two girls?

Note to the Teacher: It is likely that two students of the same sex will come to the front of the room from time to time. If there are two boys, for example, one of them may act the way he perceives a girl would act so that there is a male and a female partner, even though the worksheets do not indicate any genders. This may produce

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some laughter from the class. If this were to happen, it would be important to point out the laughter and ask the class, "Did the acting portray an accurate picture of how a girl talks or acts?" Ask the class what they think the actors are trying to convey. In most cases, they will admit that they were trying to show a gay couple. If that is the case ask, "What can happen when we stereotype people in this way?" and process responses. Please don't be punitive! This can be a great opportunity for discussion if you show them you are open to exploring this, rather than acting as if someone is in trouble. (This scenario may also happen with two girls, one acting stereotypically like a boy, but this is less likely to cause a stir). (15 minutes)

STEP 5: Summarize the lesson by making the following points:

- Being in a relationship does not mean that a person has to give up who they are and their own needs.
- In a healthy relationship, both people should be able to express themselves openly and be able to listen to, appreciate, and accept the other person's needs.
- Compromise is a part of every relationship. This means that both partners give in at times. But if one person is giving in more often than the other, it is an unequal and unhealthy relationship.
- It is important to stick to what you believe in and the decisions you make, even if they're different from what people around you are saying.
- These negotiation skills can help people form strong friendships and healthy, committed relationships such as marriage.
- No one should do anything sexual in a relationship that they do not feel 100% ready to do.

Explain that a lot of times people communicate more by text than in person, so the homework assignment will be to look at some examples of people texting each other and students are to evaluate how effective they think they are. Distribute the homework sheets and ask them to complete them and bring them to the next class. (4 minutes)

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

Going through the types of communication will achieve Learning Objective 1. The "Assertive Communication" worksheets are designed to achieve Learning Objective 2.

HOMEWORK:

Students should complete the "Talking by Text: What Do You Mean?" homework sheet to apply the skills they learned in class about assertive communication to communicating via text message.

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION #1

Instructions: Partner A really wants something from Partner B. Partner B, however, doesn't want to do what Partner A wants to do. Work with your group to come up with an assertive next line in this dialogue. When instructed to, pass the sheet to the next group and await further instructions. **Please only fill in one line. Do NOT complete the entire form.**

Partner A: "I saw Sam and Kayla earlier. They said they've decided to have sex. I know you and I said we'd wait, but if they're going to do it, wouldn't it be okay for us to?"

Partner B

Partner A

Partner B

Partner A

Partner B

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION #2

Instructions: Partner A really wants something from Partner B. Partner B, however, doesn't want to do what Partner A wants to do. Work with your group to come up with an assertive next line in this dialogue. When instructed to, pass the sheet to the next group and await further instructions. **Please only fill in one line. Do NOT complete the entire form.**

Partner A: **"Why don't we just have oral sex? You can't get STIs from it."**

Partner B

Partner A

Partner B

Partner A

Partner B

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION #3

Instructions: Partner A really wants something from Partner B. Partner B, however, doesn't want to do what Partner A wants to do. Work with your group to come up with an assertive next line in this dialogue. When instructed to, pass the sheet to the next group and await further instructions. **Please only fill in one line. Do NOT complete the entire form.**

Partner A: "It's our first time having sex, we don't need to use condoms."

Partner B

Partner A

Partner B

Partner A

Partner B

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION #4

Instructions: Partner A really wants something from Partner B. Partner B, however, doesn't want to do what Partner A wants to do. Work with your group to come up with an assertive next line in this dialogue. When instructed to, pass the sheet to the next group and await further instructions. **Please only fill in one line. Do NOT complete the entire form.**

Partner A: **"If you're not willing to hav sex with me, then I'll just go find someone else who will."**

Partner B

Partner A

Partner B

Partner A

Partner B

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION #5

Instructions: Partner A really wants something from Partner B. Partner B, however, doesn't want to do what Partner A wants to do. Work with your group to come up with an assertive next line in this dialogue. When instructed to, pass the sheet to the next group and await further instructions. **Please only fill in one line. Do NOT complete the entire form.**

Partner A: **"I don't want to use condoms when we have sex. It's like you're saying I'm dirty or something!"**

Partner B

Partner A

Partner B

Partner A

Partner B

Talking by Text: What Do You Mean?
Homework (Lesson 8-8)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: The following are examples of texts between two people. In the space provided, explain what you think Person Two means by their responses. What could they have texted that would have been clearer and easier to understand their meaning?

1. Person One: "Liked hanging w you last night"

Person Two: "Thx"

2. Person One: "Hey, I was just thinking about you!"

Person Two: "K"

3. Person One: "Are you mad at me?"

Person Two: "???"

4. Person One: "Wanna hang out later?"

Person Two: 
