



Sexually Speaking

Curriculum Unit 81.03.01

by Lee Hotchkiss

If a course in sexual education is based only on a knowledge of the sex organs, menstruation, contraceptives and fear and guilt tactics to prevent pregnancies and venereal diseases, then the course will be insufficient. Adolescents need guidance in understanding their own sexuality and practice in learning to make decisions and determining their personal values. The main objectives of a human relations-sexuality program should encompass increasing student self-awareness and self-esteem. Also, teachers' increased awareness of students' levels of moral development can help adolescents acquire skills needed to make responsible decisions about sexuality.

There is a need for adolescents to explore their values with their family and peers. Peer group pressure is an important influence. Therefore, teachers must set the stage for good communication. Exchanging ideas with each other, adolescents become aware of interpretations different from their own. They become sensitive to the feelings and thoughts of other people.

Teenagers come from varied backgrounds both in knowledge and experience and in value and attitudes. Thus, it is wise to use several teaching techniques. Useful techniques include role playing, group interaction to a specific situation, values clarification, storytelling, interviewing, and debating.

When factual information is to be presented or reviewed, sensory aids are most helpful and useful in learning as outlined in the work of Piaget. ¹ These skills that we all first used in sensing our environment include seeing, touching, listening, and speaking. Plastic or rubber models of male and female anatomies as well as a model to explain contraceptive devices would be a most useful teaching tool.

The media can be utilized and very helpful. Television, movies, magazines, and music all relate to sexuality. The use of audio-visual appeals to most students and is an effective way to involve most of them. It can also be a way of introducing a topic that might be somewhat controversial.

For the older adolescent, especially, an effective program of sexuality should be based on how and what teenagers want to learn. Students need to get directly involved in learning the truth about sex and sexuality. Students need to understand the physical and sexual drives, effect of peer pressure, parents roles, their feelings towards themselves and others and how to cope with adverse feelings. Above all in these times of great social freedom, they alone must be as best equipped as possible to make decisions that will be right for each one.

To be effective, I think, sexual education should be based on an overall view of how each age group learns and reacts to the environment. Levels of cognitive abilities and decision making skills cannot be used at all grade levels. The important issue is to start the process at the earliest age possible. Young children can begin to acquire skills in gathering information by asking questions, observing and listening. By the time a student has reached high school years, most have reached a stage where they can master concepts and generalizations and consider a range of possibilities in a specific situation.

In the appendix is a summary of the comparative developmental stages of cognitive stages of learning, moral development and how it evolves and allows for abstract thinking and reasoning, and the way one develops socially. This chart is not only useful for the teacher in planning more effective curricula but can be used as a guide for young parents as to what can realistically be expected from their child. The works of Piaget, Kohlberg, Erikson and Freud can shed a lot of light on sexuality as a developmental process from birth to old age.

According to Freud, the greatest period in our lives for receiving and reproducing impressions, occurs from birth to age seven or eight. He calls this the period of “infantile amnesia” and states that the very impressions we have forgotten have left the deepest traces on our mind and have a determining effect upon the whole of our later development. ² Is it too late, by adolescence, to overcome early life impressions which may be preventing or hindering young people from making decisions that will be right for them?

We know that love is essential to human development. In order for infants to achieve healthy growth, they need being talked to and held. In order for the infants to attain intellectual growth, they need to be stimulated by their environment.

It is the families that are responsible for early life impressions where some young people learn detachment from people and learn instead, attachment to things. Some adolescents claim they even feel like things—possessions of their parents,” to quote one seventeen year old. Some parents use negative aspects of love, helping to create a selfish youngster. Guidance is needed to help a youngster make a distinction between selfishness and self-esteem. That is the kind of self-love that is necessary before one can love someone else. That kind of love requires identifying and finding positive feedback so that one can like and accept oneself.

According to Montague and Matson, “The family should be the principal locus in which to apply one’s love, for the only way in which children learn to love is by being loved.” “They also state that the school should be re-perceived and reconstructed as an agency second only in importance to home—and sometimes superior to it—for the teaching of the science and art of love.” Or in the words of another great teacher of children, Henrich Pestalozzi, “without love, neither the physical nor the intellectual powers of the child will develop naturally.” ³

Sexual guidance is a great challenge for any teacher. Belief in the value of honesty in sex education is the basic ingredient for establishing good communication. It is very important for the teacher to have a sincere interest and enthusiasm for the subject and an openness to continued learning.

The teacher should try and make the classroom a community in which all the participants will learn and live together in security and harmony having respect for one another. Establishing a democratic classroom where the students participate making rules to benefit all. Have a suggestion box that gets looked at and answered periodically helps a great deal to let the student know you are concerned. Frequently discuss contemporary issues that involve moral decisions, trying to get each student to articulate his thoughts and his reasons. Have

students represent their problems through drawing or role playing a life experience. In this way, the student can get feedback from the group and perhaps see the problem from a different perspective.

Students today, especially our adolescents, no longer want an authority figure doing the thinking and deciding for them. There are times when they need facts so that they can make the distinction between myth and fact. The classroom experience cannot provide students with answers to the moral questions which will arise in their future. However, students may find in the classroom an appreciation of their self worth and of their sexuality. This appreciation is a foundation for healthy moral development. We should support and guide our students as they acquire the self-confidence and the self-discipline necessary for making wise decisions.

Some Curricula for the Program

The following exercises or activities are excerpts from material I have found helpful to encourage active participation, introspection, stating and examining values, gaining factual knowledge, correcting misinformation, evaluating the effect of the media on their lifestyle, and practice at decision making. There is a tremendous range of material for the teacher of Human Sexuality and Family Life. In the appendix will be a survey of multi-media materials and educational aids available.

Useful Equipment

Overhead projector—useful to keep students focused on subject under examination
Slide projector
Tape recorder
16 mm projector
Butcher paper, felt pens, tape and 3x5 cards
Models, charts, or felt board

Activity #1: Getting to Know You

Objectives

1. To help establish a sense of togetherness.
2. To introduce students to one another.

Procedure

1. Teacher hands out 3x5 cards and instructs students to make a square in the center with four lines radiating from each corner. No names on cards.
2. Teacher instructs students to write three one-word ideas that tell about themselves. On the fourth line, write something about themselves that they do not mind telling others about.
3. Teacher collects cards, mixes them up, and hands each person a card.
4. Have students try to find the owner of the card they have been given. When they find the person who matches the card, have them return it.
5. When everyone has his/her own card, ask to have each one read their statement.

Conclusion

1. What clue helped you find the person?
2. Were there other ideas you could have put down?
3. Did anyone's statement surprise you?

Activity #2: On Being Human

Objectives

1. Student identifies what is meaningful to each one.
2. Student will demonstrate that there are similarities and differences with other students.

Procedure

1. Copy Table 1 from overhead. (Below)
2. List at least three things for each category.

Table 1

- b. *Kiddie language* ; sweet little words used to disguise and save being embarrassed.
 - c. *Street talk* ; rough words that won't be found in a medical book.
 - d. *Vague words or phrases* ; like, having sex, etc.
4. Get ready for brainstorming; think up as many words as possible when the teacher says a sexual word. Brainstorm with your group and write down all the synonyms your group can think of using any of the languages of sex. Have one person record. When the teacher says to stop, count up the words. The most words win for the group. (Give students two to three minutes to record.) The recorder of the winning group should read off the list.
5. The list of words could include: Breast, Penis, Anus, Nocturnal emissions, Intercourse, Ovaries, Pregnancy, Testicles, Uterus, Menstruation, Vagina, and Clitoris.

Conclusion

1. What is your feeling about reading the words aloud?
2. Which words had more synonyms—those pertaining to the male or the female?
3. What kind of language do adults use the most?
4. Why do you think the sexual parts of our anatomy have more words?

Activity #4: What Does It Mean To Be A Man Or A Woman?

Objectives

1. To find out what advantages or disadvantages there are to being a man or woman.
2. To have students identify and recognize advantages of their own sex.

Procedure

1. Divide the group by sexes.
2. Have the boys (each) write at least four advantages of being a female. Then write the disadvantages of being female.
3. The girls should write the advantages and disadvantages of being a male.
4. Have each group write about *what bothers you most about the opposite sex*.
5. When completed, have the sexes exchange papers and make comments about each statement.

Homework Assignment Write an essay on “What I Like and Dislike About Being ME.” Discuss later what can’t be changed.

Activity #5: On Dating

Objectives

1. To examine recent changes in dating.
2. To determine qualifications to be a good date.
3. To initiate discussion of specific dating problems.

Procedure

1. Topic is best handled as a take home assignment.
2. Filmstrip from Sunburst Communications, “Values for Dating,” helped to identify the peer group and personal values that encourage and discourage sex.

Conclusion

1. Define the new morality.
2. Does a double standard exist in your life? Explain.

Activity #6: On Love

Objectives

1. To examine the many meanings of the word *love* .
2. To determine what *love* means to each student.

Procedure

1. Express *love* in poetry.

Conclusion

1. Poetry turned out to be an excellent way to express the students' feelings.
2. With the author's permission, the poems were put into pamphlet form.
3. Show Part III: in filmstrip, "Values for Dating," on love and friendship (15 minutes).

On Masturbation

Masturbation usually means self-stimulation of the sex organs, often referred to as "auto-eroticism." Masturbation occurs in all age groups. In all probability, most everyone has masturbated at some time in their life. It has been noted in one survey, that genital play has occurred in more than half the infants under one year. It seems a very pleasurable act, for certainly no researcher has ever mentioned infants crying while masturbating.

A more conscious auto-eroticism is sometimes started at around five years of age on. Usually, though, masturbation can be the release that helps young men during puberty preceding ejaculation.

Unfortunately, masturbation is a topic that is one of the taboo subjects (like homosexuality and incest). Early Victorian attitudes still persist for many teenagers as well as for some adults. However, the work done by Kinsey, Masters and Johnson has shown that masturbation is a natural sexual experience and appears not to cause mental or physical problems, except perhaps from guilt feelings he/she has been made to feel from some myths and misconceptions that other generations have perpetuated.

Activity #7: Facts and Fallacies of Masturbation

Objectives

1. To give a few facts.
2. To relieve anxiety caused by masturbation.
3. To examine how attitudes have been affected by society, the media or peers.

Procedure

1. Pass out the following quiz:

T F 1. Masturbation can eventually cause feeble-mindedness.

T F 2. People are more understanding of masturbation than they used to be.

T F 3. Many who do masturbate feel guilty.

T F 4. Masturbation can cause acne and pimples.

T F 5. The problem with masturbating too much is that you won't have a good adult sex life.

T F 6. When a person masturbates, it is always done alone.

T F 7. Masturbation is acceptable behavior if it doesn't interfere with your normal personal relationships and become compulsive.

T F 8. People stop masturbating after they get married.

T F 9. Masturbation can weaken your body and mind.

T F 10. Masturbation can relieve tensions.

T F 11. Masturbation can cause homosexuality.

T F 12. Masturbation is part of our normal sex experience.

Adapted from: Burt Saxon and P. Kelman, *Modern Human Sexuality*, (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976).

1. F; 2. T; 3. T; 4. F; 5. F; 6. F; 7. T; 8. F; 9. F; 10. T; 11. F; 12. T.

Activity #8: Give a Response To . . .

You come home unexpectedly one afternoon and passing the bathroom you happen to find your brother masturbating. You are both alone in the house. What is your reaction? Do you say anything to him? Do you say anything later? If so, what do you say? Will you tell your parents? Indicate if you are a brother or sister. No name is necessary.

On Abortion

No other sexuality question seems to be as controversial and emotionally packed as is abortion. The gamut of feelings runs between the right of the unborn to live to the woman's right to choose whether she wants to end an unwanted pregnancy. There are several ways of having an abortion and they are relatively simple if done before the twelfth week of pregnancy. Later abortions are a more difficult procedure and carry greater risk. Frequent abortions could lead to serious consequences.

To make valid decisions about abortion, it is necessary to get all the facts. There is a great deal of literature on the subject and various organizations ready to help.

There are many questions to ask. What is meant by a live fetus? When is a fetus considered a person? What harm could come to the woman? How does the father feel about the situation? What happens if the mother gives birth to an unwanted child?

Activity #9: What Options Does She Have?

Objectives

1. Comparing options.
2. Getting students to look at a problem.

Procedure

1. Have student write only Male or Female on paper.
2. Put the following statements on the overhead or board: *If a sixteen year old girl is pregnant , . .*
 - a. It is best for her to have an abortion if . . .
 - b. It is best for her to get married and have the baby when . . .
 - c. It is best for her to give the baby up for adoption when . . .
 - d. It is best for her to keep the baby and stay unwed when . . .

Conclusion

1. Have students read off some of the answers.
2. Are there any patterns of similarities or differences?

Audio-visual Suggestions

1. "Teenage Father." 30 minutes. Planned Parenthood, League of Connecticut Film focuses on the innermost thoughts and feelings of a seventeen year old boy who is involved in an unplanned pregnancy.
2. "Young, Single and Pregnant." Story of four teenagers and how they resolved their pregnancies—objective and non-judgemental. Guidance Associates, 757 3rd Ave., New York, NY 10017.

Activity #9: How Do You Feel About Abortion?

Objective

1. This exercise helps students give reasons for their opinions.

Procedure

1. On the overhead are some of the statements that some people feel compelled to write.
2. Think about what kind of a message you would like to write.
3. Hand out the worksheet as printed in Michael Silver, *Facing Issues of Life and Death* (St. Louis, Mo.: Milliken Pub. Co., 1976).
4. Student is to decide on his feelings and give his reasons based on medical, social, ethical and/or religious, or legal considerations.
5. Student would write the best reason for supporting or opposing abortion.

Comments

1. The above mentioned book in the Contemporary Values Series has other interesting situations for students to consider.

Guilt and Shame

Guilt is one of our most destructive emotions, and especially for adolescents who are only learning to cope with all the other stresses of life today. Guilt is experienced when you do something that goes contrary to the moral codes of the family or society or your own conscience.

Some feeling of guilt can keep a check on our responsibilities to home, school, work, and the people we contact. The other side of the guilt coin can result in very serious outcomes if the guilt is undeserved. The adolescent might not only keep hidden his hostility but even consider destructive means of getting rid of his innermost feelings—forever.

Where do feelings of guilt and shame have their source? According to Helen Block Lewis in her book, *Psychic War in Men and Women*, the human culture is passed on with the first social relationship between mother or caretaker and infant. It is in this close relationship where sex roles are established. Affectionate bonds are nourished or broken with this little bundle of a sexual, affectionate human being. When those bonds are broken, then trouble can begin. This is when little girls and boys first sense differences in mother's attitude. ⁴

It was most interesting, to me, to find that girls and boys are programmed to the differences that exist between them by the way in which the mothers handle their babies. It seems easier for mothers to cuddle their same sex babies. Little boys have to identify with a different sex caretaker and this appears to matter a great deal in sexual identification.

When affectionate bonds are broken for little girls, they respond inwardly and feel a loss of love and therefore try to get back in good favor by trying to please. By two years of age, they have learned that being good, quiet and obedient gets the desired results most of the time. They also have learned their female subservient role somehow.

Little boys learn, when bonds are broken, they can get their mother's attention by loud, aggressive behavior. The older child carries aggression to hostility and gets back the dignity of his ego by downgrading someone.

It is all too obvious how very dependent a child is on his/her parents to shape their future mental and physiological and sexual health. The father's role is especially important in forming good opposite identification as well as being a good same sex model for the boy. However, the mother does seem to be the most vital link just by her earliest and most constant association with the infant.

Activity #10: Which Sex Is Better?

Objectives

1. Do males feel superior?
2. Do females consider the males are superior?

Procedure

1. Put the following questions on the overhead:
 - a. Which do you prefer, a male or female doctor?
 - b. Which sex are you?
 - c. Which do you prefer, a male or female nurse?
 - d. Which sex is better? Why?
2. Get a class count.
3. Categorize the answers.
4. Any surprises in the answers?
5. What conclusions could you make?

Homework Assignment

Have students question and get data on different age groups.

Activity #11: Finish the Sentence . . .

Objective

1. Trying to find shame vs guilt reactions.

Procedure

1. If someone verbally hurts me I feel . . .
2. When I have a bad report card I . . .
3. Prostitution is caused by . . .
4. The reason I hate to tell my parents I've done something wrong is . . .
5. If I am caught in a lie I . . .
6. I say "yes" when I want to say "no" when . . .
7. If someone embarrasses me I . . .

Conclusion

1. By sharing the answers, are there any similarities in the sentence fragments?
2. Are there any surprises?

Homework Assignment

Write a paragraph on the following questions:

1. When you are about to do something wrong, how do you know whether to do it or not?
2. Can you think of any way to get rid of feelings of shame or guilt?

Conclusions

The activities presented are but a sampling of some of the ways to get the students involved. Other techniques could be supplemented. To name a few, reverse role playing on “What if the Male Carried the Fetus?”. Or perhaps present a group activity that would consist of lining up a sequence of events such as in menstruation or perhaps the birthing process. I have found this to be a valuable tool in teaching the concept of mitosis both using models and a felt board. The whole group gets involved trying to correct any mistakes. Perhaps the use of the “one liner”—a question that can help to bring the group together or just to settle a group before class. A provocative question to lead to later discussion or a lead into a topic for the day might be “What Was the Greatest Risk You Ever Took?”

The bibliography offers several sources to help guide the teacher who wants to help adolescents develop reasonable and healthy attitudes about their sexuality that will help them make the right decisions— for ultimately, they make their own choice.

NOTES

1. David Elkind, ed., *Children and Adolescents: Interpretive Essays on Jean Piaget* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).
2. Sigmund Freud. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* . Standard Edition, Vol. 7.
3. A. Montagu and F. Matson, *The Human Connection* . McGraw-Hill Book Co.
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Suggested Teacher's Bibliography

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The Diagram Group. *Woman's Body—An Owner's Manual* . New York: Bantam Books, 1977.

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The Diagram Group. *Man's Body—An Owner's Manual* . New York: Bantam Books, 1977.

Additional Curriculum Aids

Gordon, Sol. *Facts About Sex for Today's Youth* . John Day Paperback (\$1.90). Comic representation of facts.

Silver, Michael. *Facing Issues of Life and Death* . Contemporary Values Series. St. Louis, Missouri: Milliken Publishing Co. Useful ideas.

Tidow, Ned. *Learning Facts and Attitudes About Human Sexuality* . Portland, Maine: J. Weston Walch Publishers.

Helpful ideas.

Newsweek. *Teen Age Sex—The New Morality Hits Home* . (Sept. 1) 1980.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc., 810 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10019 and also 129 Whitney Avenue, New Haven, Connecticut 06510. Offers some very good pamphlets:

- a. *Sex With Love*
- b. *The Family Book About Sexuality*
- c. *What Teens Want to Know but Don't Know How to Ask*
- d. *Are You Kidding Yourself?*
- e. *Teen Sex? It's O.K. to Say, No Way* .

Time. *Abortion—Battle A "Life" vs. "Choice"*. (April 8) 1981.

What's Happening (\$1.00). Grady Memorial Hospital Family Planning Publications, 80 Butler Street, Atlanta, Georgia 30303. Good at answering some teenage questions.

Audio-Visual Material

Planned Parenthood offers some good films:

- a. *It Couldn't Happen to Me* . Color, 16 mm, 28 minutes. Focuses on reasons for not using birth control during sexual relations and the consequences.
- b. *A Family Talks About Sex* . Good role model.
- c. *Adolescent Sexual Conflict—Are We Still Going to the Movies?* 16 mm, 14 minutes. Good to study communication.
- d. *Are You Ready for Sex?* 16 mm, 24 minutes. Helps to clarify personal values and make responsible decisions.
- e. *Teenage Father* . 16 mm, 30 minutes. Excellent film, finally recognizes the male's feelings and thoughts.

f. *What About McBride?* 16 mm, 10 minutes. Useful film to introduce homosexuality and to examine peer thinking.

Sunburst Communications, 39 Washington Avenue, Pleasantville, New York 10570, offers some very thought provoking film strips and cassettes:

- a. *Values for Dating* . Very good to examine peer pressure forces. Good on examining “love”.
- b. *Becoming Responsible* . Investigates problems and stresses consequences.
- c. *The Gentle Art of Saying No: Principles of Assertiveness* . Helps students to find a way of rejecting destructive behavior and attitudes.

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