

# Topic 4 — The Truth About Desire

## Introduction

This topic begins the discussion about being sexual. Rather than a focus on the dangers and risks of pregnancy and disease, we start from a position that being sexual is a potentially good part of our lives. By ‘admitting’ this, we can raise young people’s expectations that sex should be consensual, mutually enjoyable, and at a time of their choosing. This is not a ‘porn’ lesson – but it could be the precursor to a discussion on the kinds of messages one gets from porn by presenting a realistic picture of human sexual desire.

The other key intention of this topic is to examine the myths about sexual desire and their effect on our identities and relationships. Young people identify the existence and power of sexual myths and double standards, for example:

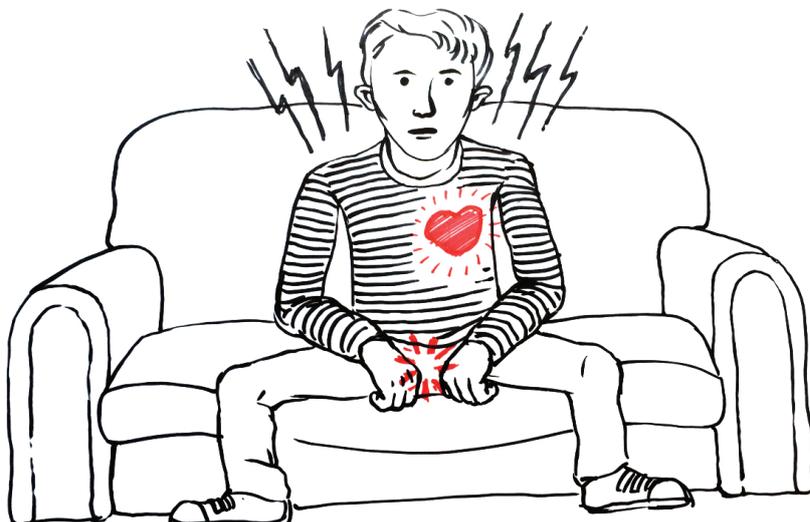
- the fear and consequences of being labeled a slut or frigid for girls;
- the pressure on boys to ‘get’ sex for the sake of male friendship and belonging;
- that boys need sex and girls put up with it; and
- that sex is a ‘doing to’ rather than a ‘sharing with’ kind of experience.

## Activities

1. Name that Myth (about Desire) Quiz
2. The Truth about Desire
3. Words

## Time

60 minutes



## Handouts

- H1: Name that Myth (about Desire) Quiz Cards
- H2: What is sexual harassment?

## Slides

- S1: The Truth About Desire

## Video

- "The Truth about Desire"

## Background Material

- Video transcript: *Desire*

# ACTIVITY 1: NAME THAT MYTH (ABOUT DESIRE) QUIZ

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Overview:** This is a quick warm-up game. The students will participate in a fun quiz show and discover some facts about sexual function.

## Key Messages

- Sexual desire is not only a physical experience but affected by emotional and social factors.
- There are many myths and misinformation about female and male sexuality that contribute to negative experiences of sex and relationships.

## Preparation and Materials

- 1 copy of H1: *Name That Myth* quiz cards for the Game Show host.
- 3 buzzers/whistles/bells/horns.

## Method

1. You need a student willing to act as Game Show Host and 3 contestants. Make sure the students know this is a quiz about sex and desire before they volunteer. If you have three buzzers handy that really livens things up. Alternatively you can have the students make an animal noise as their buzzer. You are the referee and must make the final call.
2. Here are the rules of the game. The Host reads out the questions, the contestants buzz in, and answer True or False. If they 'buzz' they have to be willing to explain the reason for their answer. They are allowed to 'phone a friend' once, each time they attempt to answer a new question. They can choose someone from the audience to help them out. They get a point if they come reasonably close to the correct answer. **WARNING: THIS ACTIVITY GETS LOUD.**
3. You can finish the game of *Name That Myth* in two ways. One, the Host gets to be the winner because they hold the answers for the truth about desire. Or the actual winner, wins.

## ACTIVITY 2: THE TRUTH ABOUT DESIRE

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Overview:** Depictions of sex and desire are readily available but not always realistic. Some convey misinformation, such as the notion that sex is only a physical experience rather than an emotional one as well. This activity attempts to combat those messages with an honest and fun discussion of sexual desire.

### Key Messages

- Sexual desire is a common human experience and having sexual feelings does not make a person good or bad.
- It is a 'free-floating feeling' that can involve attraction and wanting, but it doesn't have to be acted on to enjoy it.
- Sometimes we do not feel desire and that's normal too.
- Desire is intense and exciting but it is not in control. You're the driver.

### Preparation and Materials

- Post-it notes
- Slide presentation, S1: *The Truth about Desire*

### Method

1. Tell the students we are going to try and come up with a definition for sexual desire using a non-sexual example.
2. Hand out Post-it notes and markers.
3. Tell the students to think of time when they really, really wanted something, and they really looked forward to - chocolate, a holiday, a glass of water, or an event. Ask:

- What are some words that describe of the emotional and physical feelings (such as excitement, fear, tingling, anticipation) they experienced. Ask the students to write down each word or draw an image on Post-it notes.

4. Students stick their Post-Its on the wall. Ask:

- *When you had these feelings, could you think about anything else?*
- *What other observations would you make about feeling excitement?*  
*Examples include:*
  - *Sometimes the anticipation is better than the thing itself.*
  - *You can feel it on your own and it is still really enjoyable.*
  - *Sometimes sharing the feelings of excitement make it even better.*
  - *If you get sick it can take away your interest (for the time being).*
  - *Can everybody experience these feelings, regardless of body shape, skin colour, finances, gender, religion?* [Students often observe that some of these factors may affect your excitement eg negative feelings about your body shape might affect how much excitement you feel. This is an excellent point and demonstrates the link between emotions and desire.]

5. Check out the contributions to see if they might be an approximation of the experience of sexual desire. Expect laughter!

6. Now for the next part of the story – tell the students that the thing that they were looking forward to has been canceled. The trip has been called off, someone else ate all the chocolate...Ask:

- How does it feel when you don't get what you want? Take answers from the group, which may include: anger, disappointment, sadness, foolish?

- Ask, 'Will you survive without it?' The answer is – yes – you will be disappointed, maybe sad, but you will survive.

7. Close with slide presentation, S1: *The Truth about Desire*

## ACTIVITY 3: WORDS

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Overview:** The purpose of this activity is to help students to describe how self esteem, intimate relationships and social safety and equality are affected by gender stereotypes. We are specifically concerned with the effect of calling girls derogatory names because of their presumed sexual activity.

### Key Messages

- Sexual stereotypes have a negative effect on a person's rights, health, and wellbeing.
- Harassment or bullying of a girl because she is seen to like sex/have sex is equivalent to saying girls should not have sex or be sexual.
- Harassment or bullying of a boy for not fitting into a sexual or gender stereotype is a similar kind of 'gender policing'.
- Young people can choose not to make sexual comments and perpetuate double standards.

### Preparation and Materials

- Video: "*The Truth about Desire*" (4 mins)
- Butchers paper, textas
- Copies of *H2: What is sexual harassment?*, 1 per student

### Method

1. Students get comfortable to watch the four-minute video 'the truth about desire'. There is some swearing ('slut' and 'softcock').
2. The video identifies two key myths: that boys 'have desire' and girls don't. It goes on to say that boys and girls are punished for not fitting sexual stereotypes. Ask: Is this true for young people today?

3. Divide the students into four groups and give each group a sheet of paper with one of the following statements already written at the top:
  - Names for girls who have sex
  - Names for girls who say 'no' to sex
  - Names for boys who have sex
  - Names for boys who say 'no' to sex
  
4. Give the small groups 5 minutes to brainstorm all of the responses they can think of to the statement at the top of their sheet. Once the groups are finished, have them switch lists with another small group and give them 1 minute to add any terms not already listed. If time allows, rotate again and again until every small group has had an opportunity to review each of the 4 sheets of paper.
  
5. Bring the whole group together to discuss the lists. Have each small group share their list and process with the following questions:
  - What did you notice about the lists?
  - Are there more negative names for girls than for boys who have sex?
  - What is the risk for boys who say 'I don't want sex right now'?
  - What effect might these words on your lists have on women and their relationships?
  - What effect might these words on your lists have on men and their relationships?
  - Do any of these names fight back against sexual double standards?
  
6. Explain that this kind of name-calling can shift from teasing to bullying to sexual harassment. Handout 'what is sexual harassment?'
  
7. Ask:
  - Do you see examples of these kinds of harassment for boys and girls at your school?
  - What could students do if this was happening to a friend or someone else at school?
    - Pulling a friend out of an uncomfortable situation

- Asking the victim how you can help
  - Bystanders can help by speaking up
  - Formally reporting the name calling and harassment
  - Ignoring it can suggest that we approve of the harassers' inappropriate behaviour.
  - Texting and social-media can allow rumours and harassing pictures to spread faster and reach larger groups of people, often having a bigger impact.
  - Find out what their school's sexual harassment policy is and how it's enforced
- What can schools do?
    - As a student you are entitled to an education free of sexual harassment. The same applies to teachers - they are entitled to a workplace free from harassment. Schools have an obligation to deal with sexual harassment and all other forms of bullying. What might work at your school?

For more information about developing a sexual harassment policy for your school go to:

[www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/rightsed-tackling-sexual-harassment-resource-sheet-developing-sexual-harassment-policy](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/rightsed-tackling-sexual-harassment-resource-sheet-developing-sexual-harassment-policy)

## WELCOME TO TONIGHT'S EPISODE OF NAME THAT MYTH (ABOUT DESIRE).

The rules of the game. I'll read out a statement and our lovely contestants have to press their buzzers (make their animal noise) and answer True or False.

But here's the catch. If they 'buzz' they have to be willing to explain the reason for their answer. They get a point if they come reasonably close to being correct. They are allowed to 'ask a friend' once, each time they attempt to answer a new question. They can choose someone from the audience to help them out. Let's get started...

Welcome to our contestants.

### QUESTION 1: TRUE OR FALSE

**Question:** The most powerful sexual organ is your.....  
skin!

**True or false?**

**Answer:** False. The brain is the most powerful 'sexual' organ. Sexual desire is fuelled by hormones AND emotions – so if you aren't feeling right/safe/happy, your brain can block those sexy chemicals. Emotions are a big part of sex for males as well as females.

## QUESTION 2: TRUE OR FALSE

**Question:** Men can get 'blue-balls' if they don't ejaculate (have an orgasm).

**True or false?**

**Answer:** True. Blue-balls is a real thing for some men. It refers to the discomfort from swelling that males get when they are turned on and they don't have an orgasm. Women can suffer from it too (although its not called blue-balls. Blue-vulva?). Everyone gets swelling if they become sexually and genitally aroused. They don't always or often get pain if they don't orgasm. But it can happen.

Sometimes one partner will tell another they have given them "blue balls" and that therefore, they must "give them" an orgasm or else they will curl up and die. This is not true. It is not harmful. A person can take care of their own 'blue-balls'. And they won't die.

## QUESTION 3: TRUE OR FALSE

**Question:** We don't talk about this part of the female body much but here goes - most of the clitoris is inside the female body.

**True or false?**

**Answer:** It's true! The part of the clitoris on the outside of the body is just the tip of the iceberg! It's part of a much larger system of nerve fibres, which wrap themselves around the vagina like a wishbone and swell when a woman gets sexually aroused.

Men and women are a lot more alike than most of us realise. All embryos have the *exact same* genital tissue. At about 6 weeks, the genitals begin to turn towards a penis shape or labia (pronounced LAY-BE-AH) shape. So, in a sense, the clitoris and penis are the same materials put together in a different way.

That's the end of the game folks.

Time to tally the scores.

Did you learn anything?



## H2: WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Sexual harassment is any unwanted or uninvited sexual behaviour that is offensive, embarrassing, intimidating or humiliating. It has nothing to do with mutual attraction or friendship.

Sexual harassment is serious – and against the law. Sexual harassment can take many different forms – it can be obvious or indirect, physical or verbal. It includes behaviour that creates a sexually hostile or intimidating environment.

### *For Example:*

- unwelcome touching
- staring or leering
- suggestive comments or jokes
- sexually explicit pictures, posters, screensavers, calendars
- unwanted invitations to go out on a date
- requests for sex
- intrusive questions about a person's private life or body
- insults, name-calling or taunts based on your sex
- derogatory graffiti
- sexually explicit emails, text messages, etc.

### *Where does it happen?*

Sexual harassment can occur in the workplace, in schools, colleges and universities, in clubs, or when buying goods or receiving services, seeking or obtaining accommodation, as well as when using Commonwealth services.

Female students are protected against sexual harassment in schools under the federal Sex Discrimination Act. Male students are likely to be protected from sexual harassment by other students under state and territory laws.

### *What's the legal situation with sexual harassment?*

#### **At school**

As a student you are entitled to an education free of sexual harassment. The same applies to teachers – they are entitled to a workplace free from harassment. Schools have an obligation to deal with sexual harassment and all other forms of bullying.

## **Sexual harassment by a member of staff**

Regardless of your age, it is unlawful for a teacher to sexually harass you.

## **Sexual harassment by another student**

Regardless of your age, it is unlawful for an adult student to sexually harass you. Certain types of bullying, about sex or sex-based characteristics, may also be sexual harassment.

## *Who is responsible?*

Anyone aged over 16 years is considered an 'adult student', which means they are personally liable for sexually harassing another student or teacher. If you are harassed, you may be able to lodge a complaint against the student and, in some cases, against the school.

A complaint of sexual harassment can't be made against another student if the harasser is under 16 years of age. In these circumstances, however, you may be able to make a complaint against the school as it has a duty of care to protect students from harassment and discrimination.

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## S1: THE TRUTH ABOUT DESIRE SLIDES



SEXUAL DESIRE IS AN INTEREST IN, AND AN EXCITEMENT ABOUT  
BEING SEXUAL, EITHER BY OURSELVES OR WITH ANOTHER PERSON.  
IT IS A FEELING THAT CAN INVOLVE ATTRACTION AND WANTING,  
BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE ACTED ON TO ENJOY IT.

S1: THE TRUTH ABOUT DESIRE SLIDES



SOMETIMES SEXUAL DESIRE GETS A BAD REPUTATION.

IT IS PART OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

ALL PEOPLE CAN FEEL A LOT OF DESIRE (OR NOT).

## S1: THE TRUTH ABOUT DESIRE SLIDES



DIPS IN DESIRE CAN OCCUR BECAUSE OF LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES  
— FEELING ANXIOUS, A BUSY LIFE, MEDICATION, OR A  
RELATIONSHIP THAT'S NOT GOING WELL.

JUST LIKE CHANGES IN MOOD, THE REASONS FOR LOSS OF  
DESIRE CAN BE HARD TO PIN DOWN.

## S1: THE TRUTH ABOUT DESIRE SLIDES



WHEN IT COMES TO SEX, IF THERE IS NO DESIRE (OR VERY LITTLE) FOR BOTH PEOPLE INVOLVED THEN THEY SHOULD **PROCEED WITH CAUTION.**

S1: THE TRUTH ABOUT DESIRE SLIDES



FEELINGS AND DESIRES ARE INTENSE. THEY ARE NOT IN  
CONTROL OF YOU — YOU'RE THE DRIVER.

## B1: 'THE TRUTH ABOUT DESIRE' TRANSCRIPT

Today we're going to talk about the impact of stereotypes on people's sexual satisfaction and happy relationships.

WHAT?

Let me explain...you're riding a rhinoceros...

What?

It's a metaphor for sexual feelings, the rhinoceros

It's not an out of control rhinoceros

But is a powerful rhinoceros

It's not necessarily a male rhinoceros

It could be a female rhinoceros

But it is a powerful beast.

Grrrrrr.

Everybody's watching.

Making judgements.

Not literally watching, that would be awkward.

But, you know, the judgements in your head,

I'm the guy, I'm s'posed to be 'ooh yeah, can't wait, get in her pants, err me hearties'

I'm the girl and I'm supposed to be 'erm, I don't know, I'm not sure, ooh um'

That's normal, right.

That's how it's supposed to be, right.

Just what I expected.

What happens if we do this!!!!!!!!!!!! (swapping rhino faces)

I'm a girl and now I'm keen (what are ya?) Keen (what are ya?), keen.

SLUTTTT (whisper)

I'm the guy and I'm, uh, I don't know

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, SOFTCOCK (whisper)

What if we're two girls or two guys. People get really angry about that stuff. You can get beaten up.

I don't know whether your gonna kiss me back or punch me in the face.

STOP!

Desire.

It's natural for all humans to have sexual feelings. All humans. Straight or gay. Not just guys.

Girls say 'It's a wanting. A big wanting. Kind of like a fire.

It's when my body says yes, yes, yes'.

And that's a good thing.

Are you kidding, that's a glorious thing.

It's about being allowed to grow up and have sexual feelings – it's not even about having sex.

But it's so frigging complicated. I'm in danger of being called a slut, even if I don't have sex.

Yeah well, I'm supposed to be a stud, think with my dick and have no heart.

The story goes that boys want it so much they can't control themselves.. I'm not allowed to want sex.. Cos that makes me a slut.. Sometimes I think its better if I get pissed... Then I can say (whisper) 'I can't remember, I didn't know what I was doing' then I'm not a slut.

Unless they decide to call you a slut.

Yep. That's messed up.

I've got to be hard - I can't be that worried, uncertain, real person underneath. It makes it impossible to be just normal - your own normal, able to be honest with your friends normal, not some idea of normal.

## NORMAL.

In life we have many faces, we play many roles.

We behave in certain ways because we think that's what we're supposed to do.

We think we might have to be a certain way for our parents,

A certain way for our partner,

Our friends.

We think we might have to be hot,

Or cool,

Or strong,

Or weak.

It's a hall of mirrors.

Sometimes those roles help drive us in a good way, but the stuff about being a boy or a girl can bugger up how we treat ourselves and each other.

## PRESSURE.

All these clowns piling up on my life.

It's crushing. Telling us how to be, what to be, who to be.

But it's also a bit like the story of the Emperor's New Clothes.

There is power in saying stuff out loud.

When we name it, we can see it. Its not just you caught in this stuff.

And you can say, 'oh shit I always do that'.

This is not gonna happen. Those people are just too heavy to throw off like that.

But maybe, just maybe, if we're aware, we can be a little more free.