

Topic 5 — When is the right time?

Introduction

- Among the Australian 15-17 year olds who have had sexual intercourse, most had positive feelings after sex. Those who had not had sex, had positive feelings about not having sex (Mitchell 2013). These findings confirm (again) that being sexually active is not always a terrible experience for young people.
- The majority of students are doing well, even in the area of managing the risks of sending and receiving sexual images. But. Here's the bad news. Twenty five per cent of young people who had had sex, had experienced unwanted sex. More young women (28%) than young men (20%), but the numbers of young men are still notable.
- The following activities paint a broad picture of the conditions that contribute to positive sexual decision-making, to help students reflect on how they'd like the first time, or the next time, to be.

Activities

1. Check the facts

Time

40 minutes

Handouts

H1: Check the facts Q&A Cards



ACTIVITY 1: CHECK THE FACTS

Time: 40 minutes

Overview: The following activity allows young people to make sense of research results and theorise the reasons for the results. It allows students a one-step-removed entry into the discussion of people's sexual experiences and the factors that contribute to a positive or negative experience.

Key Messages

- Results from research with young people suggest that positive experiences of sex are not a result of physical performance but based on more complex factors such as feeling safe, comfortable, and able to talk each other.
- Young people who hadn't had sex felt good and happy with their circumstances too, largely because they felt they had personal responsibility for their choices.
- 'Unwanted sex' was usually a result of feeling pressured into sex or because of being drunk at the time.

Preparation and Materials

- *H1: Check the facts Q&A Cards.* There are 6 different cards. Print 1 card per group. Each group should have a different card.

Method

1. Introduce the session by explaining to the students: *"In previous sessions we've talked about being in a relationship with someone and some of the basics of what you'd expect and hope for in the way that we treat one another. In this session we're considering factors that effect people's decisions about if and when to 'be sexual with someone'**.

While 'be sexual with someone' is a clumsy term, I'm choosing it as a device to highlight that we may not only be discussing sexual intercourse. Our discussions about 'having sex', or feeling pressured to 'have sex' are relevant to a range of sexual activities, such as deep kissing, sharing sexual images, anal sex, oral sex, or genital touching.

2. Divide students into groups of three or four. Allocate each group a Q&A card. Ask one member of each group to volunteer as the Chairperson. The

Chair reads the first question and invites the group members to guess the answer. The Chair provides the answer. Then the Chair asks the group to discuss their interpretation of the research findings (using the discussion starter question on the card). After the group has contributed ideas, the Chair can read back some other theories included on the card.

3. At the end of the task, ask each group to report back to the class on the question and some of their theories to explain the results. As some groups have had the same card/issue to discuss, allow time for both groups to feedback, reporting on anything different from the other group.

H1: CHECK THE FACTS Q&A CARDS

QUESTION 1:

Of those students who have had sexual intercourse, how many enjoyed their last sexual experience?

Answer: Most felt good about their last sexual experience. Almost half said that they felt extremely good (46%), happy (43%), fantastic (41%) or loved (44%).

QUESTION 2:

What factors might contribute to 2 people having a positive experience of sexual intercourse?

Young people who enjoyed their last sexual experience were more likely to say they were in a relationship. This suggests that 'happy' sex is not a physical performance but that factors make a big difference such as: both people feel ready and aren't pressured into it; both people want sex; are able to talk to each other (young men said this as much as young women); have trust; it feeling comfortable and safe.

Source: Mitchell et al., 2014

QUESTION 1:

What percentage of sexually active young people have had unwanted sex? 'Unwanted sex' includes sex that people regret, as well as forced sex (sexual assault).

Answer: 25% of those students who had sex, have had unwanted sex at some time. There were more young women (28%) than young men (20%), but the numbers of young men are still notable.

QUESTION 2:

What are the three top reasons people identified for unwanted sex.

The research tells us:

- Pressure from a partner (53%)
- I was drunk (49%)
- I was frightened (28%)
- Drug-related (20%)
- Influence from peers (13%)

Source: Mitchell et al., 2014

QUESTION 1:

Are the rates of notified chlamydia infections down for young people?

Answer: No. The rate more than tripled between 2000 and 2008, with the biggest increases in the 15–19 and the 20–29 years age groups.

QUESTION 2:

Why might the rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) be going up? (Think of at least three reasons.)

Some possible reasons include: more people are having sex with multiple partners; fewer people are using condoms; with STIs rates higher it is more likely people will come into contact with someone who has one.

Source: Department of Health & Human Services, 2011

QUESTION 1:

What percentage of sexually active young men (Years 10 and 12) use condoms every time?

Answer: 61%

Source: Mitchell et al., 2014

QUESTION 2:

Why don't most young men use condoms every time? (Think of at least three reasons.)

This is a really good result, but we definitely need more young people to use condoms because it is so easy to get an STI.

The reasons given for not using a condom include: the cost of condoms; too drunk or high at the time; they leave it up to the girl to worry about pregnancy and STIs; they think if the girl is on the Pill they don't have to worry; they think if they are having sex with another male that neither of them have to worry.

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011

QUESTION 3:

Another reason may be that it can change the feeling of having sex. What are 3 solutions for a young man who is worried about condoms 'ruining the moment'?

Using more water-based lubricant, especially a little bit on the penis before the condom is rolled on; practice at getting the condom on smoothly; getting his partner to put it; doing other sexual touching and not having anal or vaginal intercourse that time.

References in this section

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2011). *Young Australians: Their health and wellbeing*. Canberra: Australian Government.

Hillier, L., Jones, T., Monagle, M., Overton, N., Gahan, L., Blackman, J., & Mitchell, A. (2010). *Writing Themselves In 3: The third national study on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people* Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society.

Hillier, L., Turner, A., & Mitchell, A. (2005). *Writing Themselves In Again: 6 Years On*

The 2nd national report on the sexual health & well-being of same sex attracted young people in Australia. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society.

Mitchell, A., Patrick, K., Heywood, W., Blackman, P., & Pitts, M. (2014). *Fifth National Survey of Secondary School Students and Sexual Health 2013*. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society