

Topic 7 — Communication

Introduction

While promoting verbal communication is central to any relationships education program, non-verbal communication remains a key feature of many people's sexual experiences. Accurately reading cues and sending clear messages is difficult, especially when it comes to a nuanced, exploratory activity like sex. Research with young people indicates a slight over-confidence in their own abilities to successfully read non-verbal communication, which can contribute to an assumption that a person has given consent to sex. Uncertainty about whether or not to say 'yes' 'no', or 'how about this instead' also contribute to unclear messages. In the absence of clear communication, the uncertainty can lead to negative experiences, even to unwanted sex, sexual assault and unsafe sex.

Activities

1. Non-verbal communication
2. Checking-in relay

Time

30 minutes

Handouts

- H1: Food Cards

Video

- *When's The Right Time?* (4 minutes)

Background material

B1: Video Transcript: When's the right time

ACTIVITY 1: NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Time: 30 minutes

Overview: This activity is designed to help students develop their non-verbal communication skills.

Key Messages

- Many people feel awkward about talking during sex, but you still have to check that the other person is consenting.
- Paying attention to body language and other non-verbal signals is important for expressing what you want, and understanding what the other person wants.

Preparation and Materials

- *H1: Food cards, 1 set per pair of students*
- The 4-minute video *When's The Right Time?*

Method

1. Watch the 4-minute video *When's The Right Time?* Ask students to note any criteria that we have not yet identified as an important factor in a person's decision. The video includes:

- *legal criteria;*
- *a capacity to communicate yes/no/maybe to a sexual partner;*
- *paying attention to non-verbal signals*
- *STIs and safe sex*
- *Pregnancy and contraception, and*
- *'Nudgy-nudgy' or non-verbal communication.*

2. This week we are going to concentrate on improving our skills in non-verbal communication in a non-sexual activity.

3. Tell the students to form pairs. They will take turns at being the WAITER and the SELECTORS.

Brief the WAITERS separately to the SELECTORS.

- *Your job is to offer your friend 10 food items and try to work out their most favoured to least favoured options. Neither of you are allowed to speak. When you think you have the preferences in the right order, you may speak and tell them what you observed. Were you right? How did you work it out?*

Brief the SELECTOR.

- *You will be offered a choice of 10 food items. You will need to show non-verbally what you prefer from your most favoured to least favoured and in your order of preference. As each food is offered you can show your response to the item. Once you and your WAITER have reached agreement they will tell you what they think your preferences are.*

4. Students sit in pairs and begin the activity. Allow no more than 10 minutes for both sides to have a turn.

5. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Who got 10 out of 10 in the right order? Who got 5 in the right order? Who got less than that?
- What made it easier or more difficult to know what was being 'said'? What strategies were used that made it easier to understand? (list - big smile, frown, eye contact)
- Was anyone uncertain about their own choices ie were you undecided about hwat you liked best? Did that make it harder to communicate clearly? (Ambivalence can make it harder to both communicate and interpret)
- Did anyone find it difficult to understand? What made it easy to understand the other person? (Some actions look very similar, especially if a person is uncertain about their preferences).

6. By now most students have realised this activity's similarity to sexual negotiations. Ask: What have we learnt about non-verbal communication? Answers might include:

- *It's hard to communicate, and it's hard to read.*
- *Some signals make it easier to read - e.g. Eye contact, body language*
- *It's even more difficult to communicate when a person is unsure about what they want to do.*

7. What are the cues a person might give if they were ambivalent or didn't want to do it? Answers might include:

- *turning away*
- *going stiff*
- *pushing hands away*

8. Why do you think there are times when people ignore the non-verbal cues, or persist even when they suspect someone is uncertain? Answers might include:

- *Because they are 'horny'*
- *They don't care*
- *They've gone this far*
- *It's a one night stand*
- *They're just after sex*
- *They don't want to miss the chance to have sex*

9. What if someone is confused by the cues and ignores them? Is it ethical (or legal) to go ahead and have sex anyway?

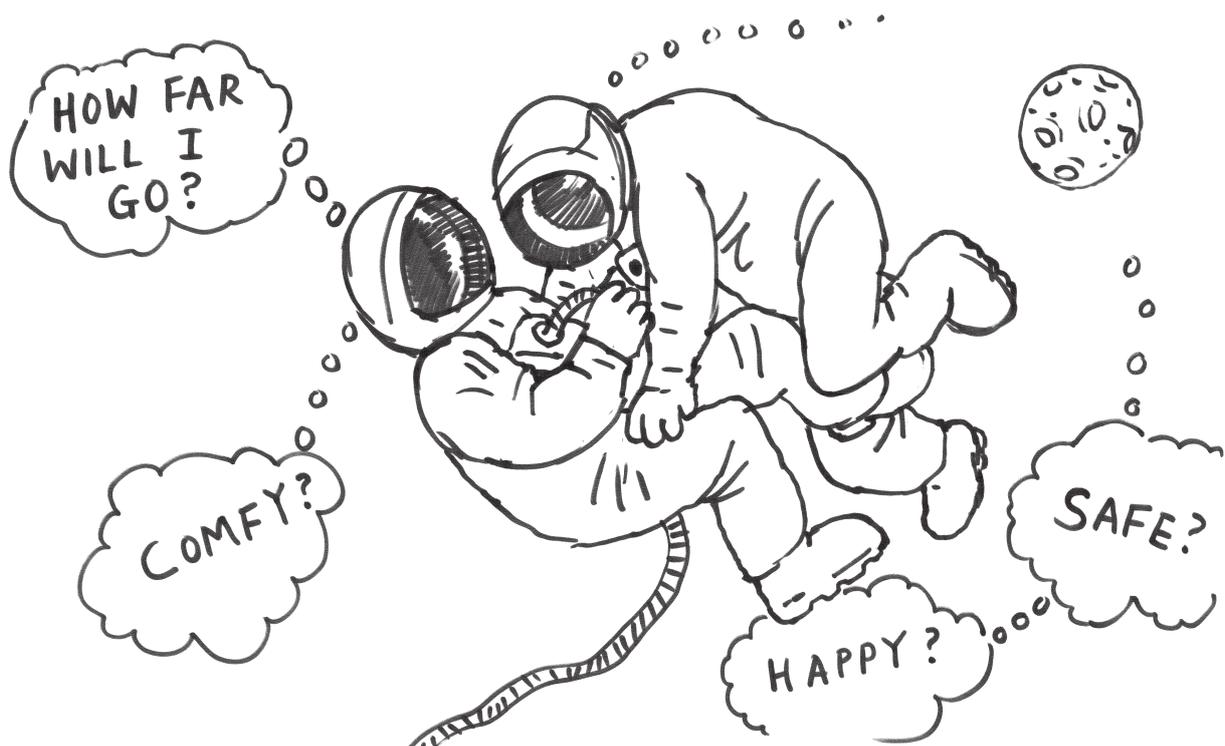
- *It's not ethical, and it may be illegal.*

ACTIVITY 2: CHECKING-IN RELAY

To finish off the session, set up the students in teams of four to conduct a race for the most/best ways to see if someone is happy with what's happening in a sexual situation?

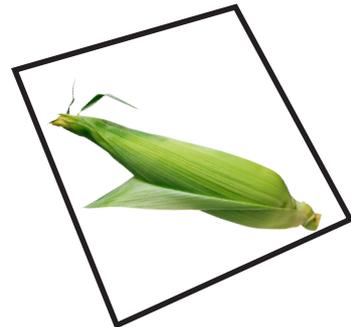
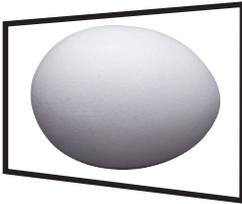
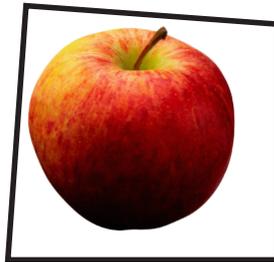
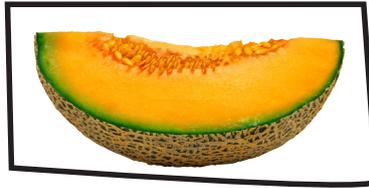
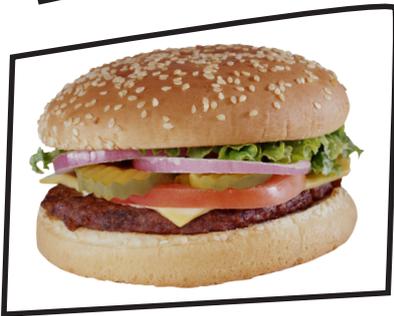
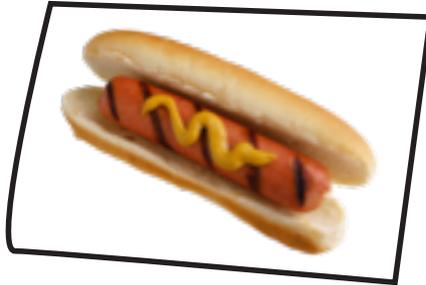
With butchers paper on the wall, set up 4 relay teams, with textas as batons. Set a time limit (2 minutes maximum). It's a race to see which team can write the most checking in type questions. Here are some examples:

- Is this ok?
- This?
- Happy?
- Is this what you want? What's wrong?
- Do you want me to stop?
- How are you feeling?
- Do you like this?
- Are you enjoying this? Are you comfortable?
- Are you OK?



H1: FOOD CARDS

Food pics 10 of...



B1 WHEN'S THE RIGHT TIME? TRANSCRIPT

When is the right time for sex?

You might be thinking of dipping your toe into sex.

Ewww..

You know what I mean.

No I don't. What?

You might be thinking that its time to have sex.

Hold your horses.. What is sex anyway?

Sex ..doin' it,

Making lurve,

Bumping uglies.

I'm gonna be sick.

Actually .. Having sex is more than just intercourse.

It includes anything you choose to do to be sexual with another person.

[singing] *I feel sexy on my pinky*

I feel sexy on my chin

You don't have to come in

For the fun to begin

Now you know what sex can be..

Because we've explained it so clearly

When is the right time for it?

Now.

When you've had a shower.

Now.

When you are so hot in those jeans.

When your parents have gone out.

When you are a rhinoceros.

When you're a unicorn.

Or some other horny animal.

Um, actually...

When you're thinking about having sex there are a few different things its important to consider..

And that's what we're going to talk about..

Now.

One thing to consider is the law.

There are laws about sex.

About the age you need to be.

And who you can have sex with.

It's basic stuff.

But it is different in each state.

You can find out what it is for your state at lawstuff -

lawstuff.org.au

Stuff to do with law.

Next thing important to consider: Nudgy-nudgy, talky-talky.

What?

Communication.

Why 'nudgy-nudgy'?

Because a lot of communication especially when things are getting somewhat steamy is non-verbal. Non-talking communication

Nudgy-nudgy.

Yeah.

But regardless of whether its spoken or not there are important communications to be had.

Like:

You want to feel able to express,

You don't feel too shy or too embarrassed to say,

How far you are willing to go.

The kind of sex you want.

And if its not going as you like.

You want to be in a position where even if you really really want it, if the other person is unsure - you'll stop.

And where if would be fine to change your mind when you've already started.

And that takes communication.

That takes an awareness of what the other person is feeling.

They're not always going to tell you in words..

So you need to be aware of body language too.

Like..

Maybe they're freezing up, turning away or holding their breath

If I suspect they're gonna feel shit afterwards then I should stop

If I'm not even thinking or caring how they'll feel afterwards that's what I'm doing wrong.

If I'm being pushy, using put downs or fear tactics then that's clearly wrong.

The point is you both feel good.

I am happy to be here.

And I am happy to be here!

Well thank god for that.

Lets do it again!

Last thing to talk about -

Body stuff.

You can transmit infections from doing some sex stuff.

Bizarrely they are called sexually transmitted infections -
STI's.

Condoms are really good for preventing most of them.

If you are mixing penises with bums, vaginas or mouths,

You should really use a condom.

More body stuff.

Some people believe that sex was created in order to make babies.

Interestingly it can have this effect.

Condoms are really good for preventing them.

The Pill, contraceptive implants are too.

To be sure use both.

..You could always not have sex ever..

Don't be stupid.

References for this section

Powell, A. (2007). Sexual pressure and young people's negotiation of consent (Vol. 14, pp. 8-16). Melbourne: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.

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