

## Topic 5 — Why do people kiss?



### Introduction

We continue the theme of romance to explore the notion of why people kiss (in a passionate kind of way). Not sex, just kissing. We are working towards explaining sexual consent for all kinds of sexual activities involving two or more people, but we start with kissing because 'sex' has lots of cultural baggage and is likely to be a few years in the future for the majority of your students. Kissing is just around the corner or already on the menu and students are more able to identify the heady mix of feelings associated with early passionate embraces. We establish the conditions in which it is 'right' to kiss – namely that it is mutually wanted, reciprocal (or 'give and take') with a reasonable expectation of pleasure, and no-one is forced or pressured to do it. Of course, students will have extra priorities for when kissing someone is 'right' that may reflect family or peer beliefs, such as kissing is 'right' after a certain length of courtship.

Having said that young people are not likely to have intercourse until they are 16 (and feel happy about) (Mitchell et al 2014), vaginal, oral or anal sex that is regretted or unwanted is more likely to happen when a person is about 14 – because of pressure from a partner, being drunk, or being forced into it. So a lesson that identifies that sex should be mutually wanted is an essential ingredient in explaining how sexual consent should look and feel. It is not enough to rely on teaching young people to declare no, or take no for an answer - a sexual proposition is rarely that clearly delivered or easy to respond to. It takes a little more time to figure out the grey areas between a forthright yes or no, when the beliefs we have make it seem normal and ok to keep pushing for sex, or conversely to 'give in'. The underlying learning is the same whether the context is a situation where someone is being touched inappropriately or asked to share a sexual image. Setting these kinds of expectations for 13 and 14 year olds contributes to preventing unwanted sexual activity.

## Activities

1. Why do people kiss?
2. Respecting boundaries

## Time

50 minutes

## Background Material

- For information written for young people about ages of consent in each state or territory, as well as laws about sexual consent and sexual assault, go to: [www.lawstuff.org.au](http://www.lawstuff.org.au)

## Draw the Line

Setting Healthy Relationship Boundaries

# ACTIVITY 1: WHY DO PEOPLE KISS?

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Overview:** Many of your students will not be sexually active although a significant minority will be. This session begins the discussion about sex as mutual and pleasurable by talking about kissing. It is a gentle way to scoop up the range of sexual knowledge and experience in your classroom and to capture the giggly hopes and fears about being with someone else. We use this to introduce the notion that any sexual encounter should be wanted by both people, with an expectation of it feeling good.

## Key Messages

- Any sexual encounter with another person should be wanted by both people.
- People have different boundaries, timelines and levels of interest which should be respected.
- Not everyone is sexually active.

## Preparation and Materials

- Butchers paper
- Textas

## Method

1. Post three large pieces of butchers paper on the walls, and tell the students you have three questions for them to answer:
  - Why do people kiss (as in passionate kissing, a pash)?
  - Why do people choose not to kiss?
  - When is it ok to do it?

2. Give the students time to leave their seats and write whatever comes to mind on the butchers paper. Here’s what they are likely to say:

Why do people kiss?	Why do people choose not to kiss?	When is it ok to do it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It feels good</li> <li>• Because they like each other</li> <li>• They are attracted to each other</li> <li>• They want to see what its like</li> <li>• Need to prove themselves</li> <li>• To show love</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They think its gross</li> <li>• Totally not interested</li> <li>• Got better things to do</li> <li>• They haven’t met anyone they like</li> <li>• They think its wrong</li> <li>• They haven’t had the opportunity</li> <li>• They’d get in trouble if they did</li> <li>• They are scared</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you are old enough</li> <li>• Its private</li> <li>• You like each other</li> <li>• You’ve known them long enough</li> <li>• You trust them</li> </ul>

3. Ask for volunteers to read out the answers. Some of them may be positive kinds of reasons and others not so positive. Focusing on ‘when is it ok to do it?’ if the students haven’t already said, there is one very important point to make: *When you both want it - when it is what you want, and what the other person wants.*

4. Explain to the students that part of puberty is developing stronger sexual feelings. As you grow older you have a growing desire to share sexual feelings with a person you are attracted to. That doesn’t mean having sex, it could be flirting or exchanging looks, to kissing and cuddling. Whatever the sexual activity, it is a basic expectation that BOTH people are happy and ready to do whatever they are doing, and both people are enjoying it.

5. Next, tell the students that you want to talk to them about other sexual activities like sending sexual images or things like sexual touching. If we changed the questions on the sheets to:

- *Why do people send sexual images*
- *Why do people engage in sexual touching*
- *When is it ok to do these things?*

Ask:

- Would the lists in the 3 columns change very much?
- How many of your answers would remain the same? (all of them).
- Would we add anything else to these lists? (reinforce that age appropriateness is important. We'd need to add:
  - is it legal? (a full account of sexting and the law in your state or territory is available at [www.lawstuff.org.au](http://www.lawstuff.org.au) )
  - is it safe? (emotionally and physically);
  - We still have the same expectation that we do for kissing – that BOTH people want to do it, and it is pleasurable for both. If someone is pressuring someone to do it, it is clearly wrong. No-one should ever feel they owe someone sexual images, a kiss or any kind of sexual activity. In the next session we will take more time to talk about oral, anal or vaginal sex. But the same fundamental rules apply.

6. Some of your students may comment on the unexpected experience of a teacher telling them that sex should be good! This is a great opportunity to raise and discuss the following:

- *Why might some people think that talking about sexual activities in a positive way with young people is dangerous? (Answer: some might be fearful that they will be seen to promote sex, however it has the opposite effect by delaying first sex, promoting safer sex among those already having sex, and promoting respectful sexual behaviours.)*
- There are lots of messages about being sexual and this session is attempting to combat negative messages with honest discussion.
- The aim of this session is to give the message that being sexual with someone can be a positive thing as long as it is equal, enjoyed and wanted by both people and developmentally and/or age appropriate etc.

## ACTIVITY 2: RESPECTING BOUNDARIES

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Overview:** Its important to be able to set boundaries. This means we take the time to think about how we feel and what we want, which might be very different to what a friend or partner wants, and we are able to communicate it. For example, is a person ok sharing social networking passwords with another person? What about access to seeing everything on your Facebook page? Or if a person was in a relationship with someone who wanted 20 texts a day, or daily meetings after school and it got too much. This session will help students to identify that its important to think about what they'd like and to set limits, rather than putting up with satisfying another person's expectations all the time.

### Key Messages

- People have a different desire for closeness and will have different boundaries.
- A desire for closeness can change depending on the type of relationship with someone.
- Know yourself and what you're comfortable with because everyone is different — it's an expression of what makes you feel comfortable and what you would like or not like to happen within the relationship. If you are in doubt, its ok to stop things until you know how you feel.
- If you set your own boundaries and have relationships with people who respect your boundaries, you feel more powerful to do what is right for.
- Your friend's wishes and feelings have value. So do yours. Mutual respect is essential in maintaining healthy relationships.
- When it comes to sex, the person who is ready can either stay in the relationship without sex, move on because they aren't on the same page as their partner or decide that there are other ways both partners are comfortable expressing affection without having sex. The person who is ready should respect the other's decision.

### Preparation and Materials

- Butchers paper
- Textas

## Method

1. We are going to talk about how it feels to have your boundaries respected or disrespected as well as why its difficult to set boundaries. Later, we'll talk about having one's personal sexual boundaries respected, but we will start off with a non-sexual example.

2. Line the group up in two lines facing each other about three metres apart.

Tell them:

- 'When I say "go", the people in one of the lines [indicate which] will slowly take small steps forward, asking their partner "can I take another step?" before each step. The facing person should say "stop" once they feel uncomfortable with the proximity of the person opposite them. The person opposite must stop when requested and remain in that position.'

3. Continue until everyone on the opposite line has said 'stop'. It is likely that students will have asked each other to stop at different points.

4. Keep the students in their lines for a discussion of the following questions:

- *Why do you think people asked the other person to stop at different distances away?* (Answers might include 'because everyone has different personal space requirements', 'depends on the relationship between the pairs', 'friends may get closer than people who don't know each other so well').
- *How did it feel to be able to say 'stop' and have that respected?* (Answers might include: I felt safe, I trusted my friend, freer, powerful)
- *How would it have felt if the other person had kept taking a step forward even when you asked them to stop?*

5. The following is a very important question.

Ask:

- *When might a person say 'yes' when they'd really rather say 'no'? Why?* (Answers include: they don't want to hurt the other person's feelings; they are intimidated; they are frightened they'll get angry; they might feel they have to live up to their reputation).
- *What if the person doing the asking has more power than the other person?*

- *Do you think it's harder for a girl to say 'no, stop' to a boy, or a boy to say 'stop' to a girl? In real life is it easier or harder to say stop to someone of the same sex or opposite sex?*
- *Whose responsibility is it to stop?*
- *If the 'walker' cared about the feelings of the person saying 'stop', and the person saying stop was looking unhappy or upset, what would they do?*

6. Explain to the students:

- Young people who've had oral, vaginal or anal sex (about 25% of Year 10 students) say that they felt good about it when they felt comfortable with the person they were with, and that they were in a relationship with them.
- About a quarter of young people who'd had sex said it was unwanted. The reasons they regretted their sexual experience was because they felt pressured by their partner; they were drunk at the time; or they were too frightened to say no.
- The 'right' and the legal thing to do when it comes to sexual activities, like sexual touching, having sex or sending sexual images, is to make sure you know the other person is happy to be doing the sexual things you are doing. If you are unsure they want to do it, you could be breaking the law if you continue.

Ask:

- *If a person wasn't sure whether the other person was agreeing, how could they check? Think of two or three questions a person could ask. (Answers include: 'Are you happy with this?' 'Are you sure?' and to stop immediately if the answer is not 'yes'; the absence of a 'no' is not the same as a 'yes'). They should also know that sometimes people change their minds or feel differently in different circumstances or may consent to one thing but not something else.*

7. There are laws about having sex, who can agree to it, and what age and in what conditions, such as when they are sober. (For a good in-depth explanation of ages of consent and sexual consent go to [www.lawstuff.org.au](http://www.lawstuff.org.au))

## Extension Activity

If time allows it is worthwhile to discuss the role of non-verbal communication in sex.

1. Remind students of the Respecting Boundaries activity. Ask students to share how someone might have communicated non-verbally (with body language/facial expressions) that they wanted the other person to stop walking towards them.

Ask:

- Would we all have understood that non-verbal communication?
2. Ask the students to demonstrate as many examples as they can of 'how people behave when they are happy with what someone is suggesting or doing'.
  3. Next ask the students to demonstrate as many examples as they can of 'how people might behave when they don't like (or no longer like) what someone is doing or suggesting'.
  4. Draw 2 columns on the board (Happy & Don't Like)
    - Whole group feed back to identify examples of non- verbal communication.
    - Explain that non-verbal communication is an excellent skill to develop but that during puberty our capacity to successfully read body language gets worse – because we are operating with a different section of the brain that interprets things more instinctively than logically. So don't rely on it solely

Ask:

- *If you weren't sure whether the other person was giving their consent, how could you check? Think of two or three questions you could ask. (Answers include: 'Are you happy with this?' 'Are you sure?' and to stop immediately if the answer is not 'yes' (the absence of a 'no' is not the same as a 'yes')).*