Communication Activity

Goal:
- *To practice communication skills.*

Have Ready:
- The subsequent cards printed up and cut apart.
- Facilitator’s Copy of the activity. Use the debriefs at the end of each section to discuss options once each group has presented their role play (practice scenario).
- A quiet space for participants to present and listen to the role plays (as some people are quiet when they present).

Directions:
- Gather your youth, and create a safe space by emphasizing a few ground rules, like RESPECT, before beginning this activity.
- Hand out the role play cards to groups of two or three and have the groups work together to create a scene, which models the situation dictated on the card. If someone doesn’t want to act it out, they can always join a group as a ‘director’, helping the others figure out their lines. If the group does not want to act out their scenarios they can write the lines down and read out loud or the facilitator can act out their lines if they choose to do so.
- After about 5 minutes, have the groups reconvene to share their different role plays. Have a short discussion after each role play to discuss other options the actors could have taken, or how the conversation could have looked differently.
- Each debrief should talk about the communication skills presented in the role plays, but can also serve as an opportunity to talk about other issues presented (i.e. sexual health, boundaries, peer pressure etc.)
- The group might need to review principles of assertive communication, empathy and negotiating, depending on the exposure your group has had to these concepts.

Role Plays

1. Practice being Assertive:
*You meet one of your friends in the cafeteria. They are going to skip the afternoon of school to go out and have a few beers. They want you to come along. You recently got caught skipping school and you don’t want to get caught again. You decide to tell them you’re not going to go.*

Debrief

**Communication:** Were the actors using assertive communication? Address what went well and what they could have done differently in the role play.

**Other Issues:** You can also talk about what to do if facing peer pressure to use alcohol or drugs. This could include practicing ways to say no (I have to drive home, I have to babysit later/tomorrow, I want to hook up with my crush and Booze ruins my moves, etc.), Pretending to
drink (fill a beer bottle with water or drink pop and say there is alcohol in it), hanging out with different people and doing other activities you enjoy instead.

2. **Practice being Assertive:**
   While you are home alone, you invite a friend over to your house to help you with your homework. After doing homework they grab you and try to kiss you. You try to push them away because you feel things have gone too far. They say, “Come on you didn’t just invite me over here to do homework.” You want to get out of the situation and make sure it doesn’t happen again.

**Debrief**

**Communication:** Were the actors using assertive communication? Address what went well and what they could have done differently in the role play. Were they successful in making sure the other person know what they did was not cool? Do you think it will happen again?

**Other Issues:** Talk about consent and coercion. Ask the group what they think consent is (asking permission before any kind of sexual activity...including kissing.) Mention that only yes means yes, and everything else means no. When someone tries to change “no” into “yes” it is called coercion, which is sexual assault.

3. **Practice being Assertive:**
   Your partner thinks that it is time to have sex, but you don’t feel like you are ready. Your partner says, “You’re just a prude, and if you loved me you’d have sex with me.” Although you are scared it may end the relationship, you decide to tell your partner you are not ready to have sex now.

**Debrief**

**Communication:** Were the actors using assertive communication? Address what went well and what could have gone differently in the role play.

**Other Issues:** Talk about sexual abuse - if a partner will not respect your decision not to have sex, that may be an example of sexual abuse. Anytime someone tries to coerce or pressure you into having sex, it means that you are not actually saying yes. Forcing or pressuring someone into sexual activity without permission is called sexual assault. *(if not doing role-play 2)* Talk about consent and coercion. Ask the group what they think consent is (asking permission before any kind of sexual activity...including kissing.) Mention that only yes means yes, and everything else means no. When someone tries to change “no” into “yes” it is called coercion, which is sexual assault.

4. **Practice Active Listening:**
   Your friend and their partner decided they were always going to use condoms when they had sex, but last night, they didn’t have one. Your friend’s partner said they shouldn’t kill the mood by going to get a condom, but your friend didn’t want to have unprotected sex. Your friend told their partner they could kiss, touch and make out a little instead, and make sure they have condoms for next time. Now your friend is worried their partner will break up with them because they wouldn’t have unprotected sex. Talk to your friend about what happened and support their decision to not have unprotected sex.
Debrief
Communication: Address what went well and what could have gone differently in the role play. Was the friend listening? Talk about listening skills the group saw the listener use (could include body language, eye contact, paraphrasing, summarizing empathy, open ended statements, etc.).

Other Issues: Have youth list some things people could do instead of sex if they wanted to wait or didn’t have protection. (List could include making out, touching, kissing, cuddling, watching a movie, masturbating alone or together, hanging out with friends, talking, etc.)

5. Practice Empathy:
Your bother/sister calls you for a ride home. On the way home, they tell you their partner is trying to pressure them into having sex. Your brother/sister tried to be assertive, but the situation got worse. Their partner wouldn’t let it go, and it got difficult to reason with them. What could you say to your brother/sister to support their decision not to have sex?

Debrief
Communication: Address what went well and what they could have done differently in the role play. Was the brother/sister using good listening skills? Were they being empathetic?
Other Issues: Can talk about warning signs of abuse and what to do if it is happening to a friend. Ask youth, if someone tells you they are scared of their partner, or tells you something that makes you think their partner is behaving abusively, what can you do? (list could include listen, don’t judge, be supportive, offer to get help with them from a counsellor, teacher, elder, phone line, etc.)

6. Present Empathy:
It is Monday morning in the school hallway. You are talking about what happened on the weekend with your friends. One of your friends is bragging about a party where people did drugs, got drunk and had sex. A couple of people are impressed by your friend and make statements that make what was happening at the party sound cool. You are not impressed with the story because you are worried that people were not being safe.
What could you say to let your friends know about being safe from things like getting STI/HIV, getting too drunk or having a bad experience with drugs?

Debrief
Communication: Address what went well and what they could have done differently in the role play. Was the person understanding of what happened at the party, or did they tell the other people off? Did they use empathy when looking at the situation? Sometimes it can be hard to be a good listener when we want to give advice or if our values are different from the other person.
Other Issues: Can talk about ways to party safer, (drink less, only drink what you brought, eat first, go with a buddy, don’t mix substances, bring condoms if you think you might have sex, etc.)
7. Practice Negotiation:
Your partner is very possessive and jealous of your friends. They want to be with you all the time. You want to spend time together too, but feel like you need more time with your friends. You really like your partner, but decided to tell them you want more time to yourself.

Debrief
Communication: Address what went well and what they could have done differently in the role play. It can be hard to talk to your partner about your boundaries. What makes negotiating easier? (answers could include talking about it in private, not getting angry or upset, being prepared to be assertive and ask for what you need and respecting what the other persons needs are too.)

Other Issues: Setting boundaries is part of a healthy relationship. If one partner cannot respect the other person’s boundaries, it may be time to end the relationship.

8. Practice Negotiation:
You and your partner decide that you want to have sex. You want to use a condom, but your partner gives you a lot of excuses not to. (like “We don’t have one with us. Let’s have sex without a condom this one time.” Or “It doesn’t feel good with one” etc.) You really want to be protected from STI/HIV and pregnancy. Talk to your partner about what you want, and decide together what to do.

Debrief
Communication: Address what went well and what they could have done differently in the role play. Did both partners get a chance to say what they wanted/needed? Was the negotiation successful?

Other Issues: If time, you can choose to make an “excuses” “responses” list with the group- Have youth make a list of Excuses people make for not using condoms [i.e. “ruins the mood”] and then have them brainstorm some realistic and positive responses they could use if their partner used one of these excuses.
Practice Cards

Roleplay #1: Practice Being Assertive

You meet one of your friends in the cafeteria. They are going to skip the afternoon of school to go out and have a few beers. They want you to come along. You recently got caught skipping school and you don’t want to get caught again. You decide to tell them you’re not going to go.

Roleplay #2: Practice Being Assertive

While you are home alone, you invite a friend over to your house to help you with your homework. After doing homework they grab you and try to kiss you. You try to push them away because you feel things have gone too far. They say, “Come on, you didn’t just invite me over here to do homework.” You want to get out of the situation and make sure it doesn’t happen again.
Roleplay #3: 
Practice Being Assertive

Your partner thinks that it is time to have sex, but you don't feel like you are ready. Your partner says, “You're just a prude, and if you loved me you'd have sex with me.” Although you are scared it may end the relationship, you decide to tell your partner you are not ready to have sex now.

Roleplay #4: 
Practice Active Listening

Your friend and their partner decided that they were always going to use condoms when they had sex, but last night, they didn't have one. Your friend's partner said they shouldn't kill the mood by going to get a condom, but your friend didn't want to have unprotected sex. Your friend told their partner they could kiss, touch and make out a little instead, and make sure they have condoms for next time. Now your friend is worried their partner will break up with them because they wouldn't have unprotected sex. Talk to your friend about what happened and support their decision to not have unprotected sex.
Roleplay #5: Practice Empathy
Your brother/sister calls you for a ride home. On the way home, they tell you their partner is trying to pressure them into having sex. Your brother/sister tried to be assertive, but the situation got worse. Their partner wouldn’t let it go, and it got difficult to reason with them. What could you say to your brother/sister to support their decision not to have sex?

Roleplay #6: Practice Empathy
It is Monday morning in the school hallway. You are talking about what happened on the weekend with your friends. One of your friends is bragging about a party where people did drugs, got drunk and had sex. A couple of people are impressed by your friend and make statements that make what was happening at the party sound cool. You are not impressed with the story because you are worried that people were not being safe. What could you say to let your friends know about being safe from things like getting STI/HIV, getting too drunk or having a bad experience with drugs?
Roleplay #7: Practice Negotiation

Your partner is very possessive and jealous of your friends. They want to be with you all the time. You want to spend time together too, but feel like you need more time with your friends. You really like your partner, but decided to tell them you want more time to yourself.

Roleplay #8: Practice Negotiation

You and your partner decide that you want to have sex. You want to use a condom, but your partner gives you a lot of excuses not to. (like “We don’t have one with us. Let’s have sex without a condom this one time.” Or “It doesn’t feel good with one” etc.) You really want to be protected from STI/HIV and pregnancy. Talk to your partner about what you want, and decide together what to do.