

“Why Do Teens Have Sex,” “Why Don’t Teens Have Sex,” & “Fun & Safe Activities” Group Brainstorms

Recommended Age: 14+

Goals

- To brainstorm reasons why youth do and don’t have sex.
- To brainstorm ‘fun and safe’ activities and discuss abstinence as a choice.

Have Ready

- Three pieces of flipchart paper, one for each brainstorm above. Write the name of each flipchart at the top.
- Markers and tape.

Instructions

- This exercise may be done in small groups or as a large group activity. For small groups, hand out flipcharts and markers and give youth ~10 minutes to write out as many responses as they can. Other options are to set the flipcharts around the room and have youth contribute to each list independently, or in teams as a relay race! The former options are better for producing discussion, and the latter are good for creating an independent or team movement activity.
- Invite the groups to present their flipcharts or read them aloud yourself if there are no volunteers.
- If doing as a large group, ask youth, **“Why do teens have sex?”** and write down their responses. Followed by, **“Why don’t teens have sex?”** and then, **“What are fun and safe activities?”** Preface this last flipchart with, **“What do we mean by safe?”** (Activities that are no risk for STIs/HIV and pregnancy.) Note: If not already on the flipcharts, the bolded responses (see below) should be added and addressed when debriefing.

Sample Flipcharts

Why Do Teens Have Sex?

- **Want to**
- **Feels good**
- **Are ready** (this is a good place to explore what it means to be ready for sex, see below)
- **Are horny**
- **Use drugs/alcohol** (mention that people sometimes make different choices when drunk or high)
- **To keep their partner**
- **Peer pressure**
- To rebel against parents/authority
- Want to have a baby
- To attain status
- Are in love
- To prove sexual orientation
- Forced, physically or verbally (important to debrief that this is sexual assault, explain that it's not their fault if they have been assaulted, and provide resources where people can go for help, e.g., Klinik Sexual Assault Crisis Program 1.888.292.7565, adults they trust, etc.)

Debrief

- Acknowledge that there are many reasons why youth choose to have sex. Ideally, we want youth to reflect on their motivation.
- If youth mention being forced to have sex, explain that it's not their fault and provide resources. See consent piece of "Consent & Other Things to Talk about Before Sex" activity.
- Encourage youth to check in with their own values. Ask youth, "**What does it mean to be ready for sex?**" (or making out or dating). Being ready can include checking in with thoughts, feelings, and the physical body.ⁱ
- At Teen Talk, we encourage youth to think about the following as being ready for sex:
 - Figuring out what sexual activity means to them

- Knowing what's important to them
- Figuring out how comfortable they are with the idea of a sexual relationship
- Figuring out how it may affect their relationship
- Talking about consent with their partner
- Being able to talk about limits and boundaries (what they want/don't want) with their partner
- Having information about birth control (if applicable) and protection from STIs/HIV
- Thinking about pregnancy options (if applicable)
- Understanding how pregnancy happens (if applicable) and how STIs/HIV are spread
- Feeling comfortable with condoms/sex dams
- Getting tested for STIs/HIV
- Feeling okay with their body

Why Don't Teens Have Sex?

- **Don't want to**
- **Not ready**
- **Scared of STIs/HIV**
- **Scared of pregnancy, if applicable**
- **Too busy/no time**
- **Not interested**
- **Past experience** (If youth bring up sexual assault, explain that it's never a person's fault if they have been assaulted and provide resources where people can go for help, e.g., Klinik Sexual Assault Crisis Program, 1.888.292.7565)
- **Have poor body image**
- **Beliefs (religion/culture/spirituality)**
- **Partner doesn't want to**
- Future goals
- Don't have a partner
- Afraid of parents finding out
- Rumours
- Values
- Not comfortable with partner/body

Debrief

- Normalize all the reasons people have for not having sex.
- Let youth know that any reason someone has for not having sex is okay. No one should ever feel pressured to have sex or do anything sexually they aren't comfortable with.
- Ask youth, **“What are some signs that someone may not be ready for sex?”**
 - You feel pressured
 - You or your partner needs to get drunk or stoned to do it
 - You're not sure about it
 - You can't talk about it with your partner
 - You don't have a way to protect yourself from STIs and pregnancy (if applicable)
- When it comes to sexual activity, there are many ways to show affection, and sex is only one way. The biggest sexual organ is the skin, followed by the brain. We are only limited by our imaginations, and this would lessen the emphasis on 'doing it' or 'not doing it.'

Fun and Safe Activities

- Kissing
- Holding hands
- Massage
- **Masturbating**
- Talking
- Touching
- Common interests
- Hugging
- Hickies
- Hanging out with friends
- Watching movies
- Going for coffee/tea
- Playing bingo, card games
- Going for a walk
- Playing sports
- Phone sex/sexting
- Instant messaging
- Braiding each other's hair
- Ski-Doo ride/4 wheeling/boat ride
- Oral/anal sex (**requires debriefing, see below**)

Debrief

- Normalize all the ways that people show affection.
- Normalize masturbation as an activity that can give pleasure, with or without a partner, that has no risk of pregnancy or STIs.
- If the youth include oral or anal sex on the flipchart, debrief how STIs (including HIV) can also be spread that way. Let the youth know that oral sex can be made safer with condoms and sex dams (used on the clitoris, vulva, anus, or scrotum) and anal sex can be made safer with condoms, lube, and communication.
- Use the list to show that abstinence or not having any type of sex doesn't have to be limiting or boring!

ⁱCalgary Sexual Health Centre. (2013, April 29). *Sex without regret: Checking in with “head, heart, body.”* Centre for Sexuality. <http://calgarysexualhealth.ca/2013/04/sex-without-regret-checking-in-with-head-heart-body/>