

Values Activity

Recommended Age: 12+

- Statements are adjusted for ages 12-13 and 14+.

Goals

- To discuss what values are and where they come from.
- To demonstrate how values can differ between individuals and can change over time.
- To examine how values influence our decisions and affect our perceptions when it comes to sexuality.
- To show how people and places may have contradictory values.
- To emphasize that no one should impose their values on another person.

Have Ready

- 'Values' statements.

Activity Introduction

- Ask youth, **"What is a value?"** A value is what is right or wrong for you, or what you believe in.
- Explain that everyone is going to pick three spots in the room to stand and move between. Spots can be one step over, or across the room. One spot represents 'Agree', one spot represents 'Disagree' and the third spot represents 'Neutral'. Only they will know which spot is which.
- Explain that you will read a series of statements.
- After each statement, the youth should move to somewhere between 'Agree-Neutral-Disagree' that they feel most accurately reflects their feelings about that statement. Explain that the 'Neutral' area includes not being sure what their feelings are, if they don't understand a statement, if they have never thought about their position on that particular statement, and/or if they do not want the rest of the group to know their position. *Note: This*

activity can be adjusted to the physical needs of the group, such as sitting and using thumbs up, down, and sideways.

- **Remind participants that this is a silent activity. This is important in maintaining a safer space where people feel comfortable participating.** This activity works best when people feel comfortable and respectfully express what they think. Aim for no talking, pointing, or laughing during the activity. Let youth know they will have a chance to share **after** the activity.

Values Statements: Ages 12-13

- In brackets after each statement are how Teen Talk would answer the statements based on our operating principles. (See the Introductory Chapter of the Teen Talk Service Provider Manual for Teen Talk's Operating Principles.)
 - Suggested talking points for each statement are listed following the debrief and can be used in debriefing the exercise.
1. I believe that the media (Netflix, TV, movies, music, games, social media, etc.) accurately shows real life. (disagree)
 2. I believe that masturbation (touching yourself for sexual pleasure) is okay. (agree)
 3. I would feel comfortable starting a relationship or having sex with a person of a different culture or ethnic background. (agree)
 4. I believe that sex should be saved for marriage or for someone you love. (neutral)
 5. I am willing to support someone who is being sexually harassed. (agree)
 6. I believe it is okay to have sex without being in a dating relationship. (neutral)
 7. I am willing to speak up against someone being put down for who they are. (agree)
 8. I believe watching porn is okay. (neutral)
 9. I know best if or when I am ready for sex. (agree)
 10. I am confident I treat other people well, even when I disagree with them. (neutral)

Values Statements: Ages 14+

- In brackets after each statement are how Teen Talk would answer the statements based on our operating principles. (See the Introductory Chapter of the Teen Talk Service Provider Manual for Teen Talk's Operating Principles.)
 - Suggested talking points for each statement are listed following the debrief and can be used in debriefing the exercise.
1. I believe that the media (Netflix, TV, movies, music, games, social media, etc.) accurately shows real life. (disagree)
 2. I believe that masturbation (touching yourself for sexual pleasure) is okay. (agree)
 3. I believe I have a responsibility to get tested for STIs if I am sexually active. (agree)
 4. I would feel comfortable starting a relationship or having sex with a person of a different culture or ethnic background. (agree)
 5. I believe that sex should be saved for marriage or for someone you love. (neutral)
 6. I believe it is okay to have sex without being in a dating relationship. (neutral)
 7. I am willing to speak out against transphobia and homophobia when I know it is happening. (agree)
 8. I believe watching porn is okay. (neutral)
 9. I am willing to support a friend who is having an abortion. (agree)
 10. I am willing to support a pregnant friend who is interested in adoption. (agree)
 11. I believe teens can be good parents. (agree)
 12. I know best if or when I am ready for sex. (agree)
 13. I am confident I treat other people well, even when I disagree with them. (neutral)

Debrief

- Ask youth, **“What did you think of the exercise?” “Have you thought about these issues before?” “Did you learn anything new about the group?”**

- **“Where do our values come from?”** Make a list of their responses; common ones include family, the Land, spirituality, religion, culture, self, media, friends, peers, school, past experiences, etc. We get different messages from different sources, and this can be confusing. Encourage youth to check in with how they personally feel and let them know they get to decide what fits best for them.
- It is important to think about our values because they influence the decisions we make, what we do, and how we take care of ourselves.
- **Values can change.** A part of maturing means finding your own values. This is often a process of mixing and matching the values of your family, culture, or religion with the values of your friends, the media, or your peer group with your own. Experiences can also impact values. Society’s values change over time. Fifty years ago, it was less common for people of different ethnic backgrounds to date or get married. Ten years ago, the room may have looked different when we talked about dating someone of the same gender. Societies and personal values are shifting.
- Remind the youth that each of us is allowed to have different ideas. **“Your values are entirely your business and you do not have to share them with others, especially if you feel unsafe.”**
- **“No matter what our values are, no one ever has the right to insult, harass, or physically hurt someone else because of what they believe. Making others feel unsafe is called harassment, and we all have the right to feel safe.”**

Suggested Talking Points for Values Statements

- Not all will need debriefing, but based on how the youth respond, you may want to address specific statements (e.g., homophobic or sexist values can be used as ‘teachable moments’).

I believe that the media (Netflix, TV, movies, music, games, social media, etc.) accurately shows real life.

The media often shows unrealistic expectations of how people should look and act. Often the relationships we see presented in the media are unhealthy. Media underrepresents many people and may

only show them as a stereotype. We all need to be critical of what we see in the media, and challenge what it presents to us as 'normal.'

I believe that masturbation (touching yourself for sexual pleasure) is okay.

Masturbation can be a safe and healthy part of someone's sexuality. Exploring our bodies can also be a good way to get to know yourself and what you like and don't like. Some people choose to masturbate, while others do not. We get to choose what is right for our bodies.

I believe I have a responsibility to get tested for STIs if I am sexually active.

Testing is an important part of taking care of our sexual health. If someone is sexually active, it's recommended to test every 6 months or with each new partner. Testing is completely confidential and free. Places like teen clinics are great because they do testing, have free protection supplies like condoms, and will answer any questions you might have.

I would feel comfortable starting a relationship or having sex with a person of a different culture or ethnic background.

People have a right to love, date, marry, or be attracted to whomever they choose. Have opinions/values changed over time/throughout history? Yes. At one point in history, interracial marriage was heavily discouraged, and the Canadian government used different policies to 'regulate' interracial marriage (e.g., Indian Act), and it was even illegal in the United States.¹

I believe that sex should be saved for marriage or someone I love.

For some, sex is an intimate/special activity they would share with someone special to them. For others, sex may be more casual or not tied to marriage. Values differ among everyone, but neither is 'wrong or right,' just personal decisions.

I am willing to support someone who is being sexually harassed.

We have a right to express ourselves, our identity, and our sexuality. If someone is sexually harassed, it is not their fault. Ways to be supportive:

- Listen. Give them your full attention.
- Don't blame them. "You are not at fault here," or "They should have asked for your consent." (Commenting on their clothing, location, or behaviour doesn't help because it's not about them but about the person who did not respect consent.)
- Encourage them to speak out or make a complaint if they want to, but do not push them.
- Helpful things to say are, "I believe you. It's not your fault. What they did was wrong. I'm sorry that happened to you. I can listen if you want to share what's going on with you."

Sometimes our society excuses or justifies violence based on what someone was wearing, where they were, who they were with, etc. This is victim-blaming. In reality, no one ever does anything, says anything, or wears anything to deserve harassment or sexual assault. If you've experienced this, it is not your fault, and you deserve support. It is always the fault of the person who used violence. In fact, blue jeans are the #1 recovered article of clothing found after a sexual assault, which shows sexual assault is not about what someone is wearing. Assault and rape involve power and control.

(Note: If it comes up, address that sex trade workers do not deserve sexual assault. Sex trade workers have the right to decide whom they want to have sex with and when. It is never okay to force someone to have sex when they don't want to.)

Things to say to people negatively commenting on other peoples' attire include, "Well, they have a right to wear that. I'm glad I have the same right." "What you're saying sounds really judgmental."

I believe it is okay to have sex without being in a dating relationship.

For some, sex is an intimate/special activity they would share with someone special to them. For others, sex may be more casual or not tied to marriage. It is okay if casual sex is not for you, as values differ among everyone, but neither is 'wrong or right,' just personal decisions.

I am willing to speak up against someone being put down for who they are.

Sometimes we hear or see things that go against people's rights. It's important to think of safety first and speak out against discrimination when it won't bring more harm to the person or people experiencing it. If we see or hear discrimination happening, it's important to do something about it. Sometimes it's as simple as saying something like "that's not okay" or naming the discrimination. Other times, it means bringing extra support into the situation. For example, most schools have policies in place to protect students from discrimination like transphobia and homophobia, so telling a teacher or guidance counsellor or going up the school chain to the principal or superintendent might be needed. Most workplaces also have policies in place and their own management or human resources and levels of authority we can file complaints with.

I am willing to speak out against transphobia and homophobia when I know it is happening.

Sometimes we hear or see things that go against people's rights. It's important to think of safety first and speak out against discrimination when it won't bring more harm to the person or people experiencing it. Gender identities and sexual orientations are incredibly diverse, and no one has the right to hurt or put anyone down because of who they know they are or how we express ourselves. If we see or hear this happening, it's important to do something about it. Sometimes it's as simple as saying something like "that's not okay" or naming the discrimination. Other times, it means bringing extra support into the situation. For example, most schools have policies in place to protect students from transphobia and homophobia, so telling a teacher or guidance counsellor or going up the school chain to the principal or superintendent might be needed. Most workplaces also have policies in place and their own management or human resources and levels of authority we can file complaints with.

I believe watching porn is okay.

Porn can help people explore their sexuality. Simply watching porn will not cause an STI or pregnancy, so it is a safer activity. Problems arise when people try to learn from porn and think that what they

see is how sex should be in real life. It's important to remember when watching porn that it is made for entertainment and meant to please an audience, not the people in it. They cast actors with certain types of bodies, then put them into makeup fixed up by stylists. Lighting, scenery, sound, and camera people are directed for the best shot and many positions don't feel good in real life. There is lots of editing that goes into it and even in homemade or amateur porn, it is very staged and often fake. Plus, porn is often exploitive of the people in it, so being thoughtful about where we get it from and who is making money from it is important.

I am willing to support a friend who is having an abortion.

Believing someone who is pregnant has the right to choose what happens with a pregnancy in their body is called being pro-choice. Being pro-choice means that we support people who are pregnant in whatever decision they make, even if it is different from what we would choose. Ways to be supportive are keeping confidentiality, listening to them, going with them to appointments, understanding their experience is different from yours (i.e., this is not the time to share your values, stories, or experiences with pregnancy options), believing that they are making the right choice for themselves, respecting their decision, asking them what they need, and following through if you are able.

I am willing to support a pregnant friend who is interested in adoption.

It can be nerve-racking to ask for information that is important to us. We have a right to health information and info on pregnancy options. In Manitoba, a teen clinic is a good place to start to ask questions and find support about any pregnancy options, including adoption. Child and Family Services (CFS) and Adoption Options are the agencies that deal with adoptions in Manitoba. Because many people have negative experiences with CFS, having supportive people with you and taking notes on what is said when meeting with a CFS worker are good ideas. Finding, asking for, and receiving information from reliable sources are skills we can work on.

I believe teens can be good parents.

Many teen parents are discriminated against or are stigmatized. What do babies/children need? Love, food, shelter, etc. Can teens provide these things? Yes. Teen parents may need extra resources to help them be great parents, whether community resources outside the home, or from friends and extended family. If someone is not prepared to have a child or deal with an unplanned pregnancy, it's important to be using birth control (such as condoms and/or hormonal birth control) or abstinence.

I know best if or when I am ready for sex.

Every person knows themselves best and can choose if/when the time is 'right' for them. What does 'ready' mean? Having the communication skills to talk about birth control and STI prevention, being able to communicate your expectations of how sex will change/not change your relationship with that person, making sure you and your partner get tested for STIs, having birth control and an STI prevention plan in place, feeling comfortable communicating boundaries, etc. are all things that might help you decide if you're ready for sex. Also, some people might not be interested in sex ever. The point is, we each know best for ourselves and there are many things to consider.

I am confident that I treat other people well, even when I disagree with them.

The good thing about our values is we each get to figure out our own. Because we are deserving of respect and the ability to believe in what we want, we also must respect others' rights to their values and what they believe in. There are healthy ways to disagree with each other without hurting or putting each other down. This can make for interesting discussions and can lead to learning from each other. If we are unable to treat people well for what they believe in, we need to leave the situation, so we don't hurt anyone.

ⁱ Thompson, D. (2009). Racial ideas and gendered intimacies: The regulation of interracial relationships in North America. *Social & Legal Studies*, 18(3), 353–371. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663909339087>