



A METHODOLOGY FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH GROUPS

ON VIOLENCE PREVENTION
AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



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In 2010, the MARTA Centre started a prevention program – working with adolescents by organizing and running youth groups. This Youth Group methodology was created between 2015 and 2020. Its uniqueness lies in that it was created by young people and for young people (ages 12-18), through years of piloting and feedback from engaged participants across Latvia. The main objective of the methodology is to challenge the traditional gender stereotypes, with a goal of reducing the risk for young people to experience violence and become victims of human trafficking. Participant evaluation has shown that by participating in the youth groups, young people have raised their self-confidence, among other things. Their ability to critically analyze and reflect on the world increased, and they were able to act in an informed way towards bullying and violence. They also reported being able to make responsible and informed decisions about their emotional, mental, and physical health and interactions, as well as to create and maintain healthy, respectful relationships with their peers, teachers, parents, and themselves. This methodology has proved itself to be a meaningful educational tool in Latvia's context, and its objectives, structure and activities have been shared internationally.

It has been my pleasure and honor to work together with motivated and brave young people, to cooperate with group leaders, educators, youth workers, researchers, and professionals from Latvia and abroad, and to gain feedback and encouragement from my colleagues at the MARTA Centre. This joint work has created a meaningful, practical tool which can provide support, build competences, and create a safe space for any young person who is curious and dares to care.

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INTRODUCTION



Youth group methodology

History of the origins of youth groups

In the early 1990s, youth outreach leaders in Sweden noticed that the activities on offer in youth centers fail to attract girls as much as they attract boys. One of the potential reasons was the fact that most of the activities financed were traditionally boy-dominated. This led to the introduction of separate activities just for girls, with corresponding methods being developed over the following years. To promote self-reliance and independence among girls, most methods included a gender equality approach based on the view that girls claim for themselves less space than boys – in the classroom, in youth centers and in life in general. Due to gender norms and societal expectations, girls have a narrower space for action than boys, which is why they take a less active role in social life than boys. The prevailing view was that a safe environment could be created in activities separated by gender, e.g. a girls' group where girls could discuss issues that mattered to them and carry out various activities, and that would not be dominated by gender-based expectations and behavior.¹

Eventually, practitioners realized that the work to reduce gender norms and promote equality impacts boys, too. To promote gender equality in various aspects of society, this work must also involve men. Furthermore, men are also subject to gender norms and associated societal expectations, which can sometimes be highly restrictive and have an impact just as negative as those applied to girls.

MARTA Centre first decided to introduce this method in Latvia at the end of 2007, after participating in a seminar in Sweden and learning about the success of the girls' group method in Lithuania. In early 2009, a project was drafted in cooperation with the Åland Islands Peace Institute. The project ran until 2012. In 2013, we partnered with CARE Balkans², adopting their boys' group method "Young Men Initiative"³. Through the implementation and evaluation of both of these approaches, we decided that a methodology better suited to the specific cultural conditions of Latvia was required. Thus, 2015 saw the creation of the project "Drosme rūpēties! Vardarbības prevencija jauniešu vidē" ("Youth – Dare to care. Violence prevention among and towards youth")⁴, which continued until 2020 with the support of the OAK Foundation⁵

[G. Bahara, E. Gritane, J. Jonstoj \(2011\) Effects of the girl and boy group method – A gender and social psychology perspective on gender equality youth work on Åland and in Latvia.](#)

[CARE International, Balkans](#)

[CARE Young Men Initiative](#)

[MARTA Centre](#)

[Oak Foundation](#)

Oak Foundation commits its resources to address issues of global, social and environmental concern, particularly those that have a major impact on the lives of the disadvantaged. With offices in Europe, India and North America, we make grants to organisations in approximately 40 countries worldwide.

Fundamental values, “laws” and other aspects of group sessions

What is a girls'/boys' group? ⁶ Work in a girls'/boys' group is a special way to work with young people, implementing specific goals and methods. The girls'/boys' group typically consists of 6-10 participants aged 12 to 18 and one or two specially trained group leaders. Groups may be split by gender or can be mixed based on the context and the need of participants, group leader and local community. Whether the group will be boy/girl or mixed can be decided through discussion with participants.

The gender of group participants also determines a slightly different approach to promoting self-reliance and independence within the framework of the method. For girls, this involves encouraging them to voice and formulate their personal opinion, and to expand their space for action. Promoting independence in boys, however, requires different elements to be considered. Boys must be given the opportunity to listen to others, talk about their emotions and feelings, and to learn non-violent approaches to solving conflict situations. Since the differing gender norms restrict the action space of men and women in different ways, the self-reinforcement and promotion of self-reliance in boys and girls must also be carried out in different ways.

Important aspects:

- The presence principle
- The confidentiality principle
- Mutual respect

Session format ⁷

The meetings of group members are based on a conversation over a cup of tea, i.e. meeting, sipping on a warm beverage, discussing various issues important to group members and engaging in activities. The group can also provide space for many other things, e.g. trying out various practical pastimes or handcrafts, accepting challenges, doing sports, going on study trips or organizing activities. It is important to maintain continuity – sessions should be held at a fixed time and place. One way to open a session is a review of the previous week, where everyone shares a fun or sad experience they have had since the previous meeting.

Sessions should be held once per week, as this allows for continuity, but group participants may decide on a different schedule. The duration of each session depends on the group and the topic at hand. The average session takes an hour and a half up to three hours.

Group members work with group leader based on the methodology. Apart from that, group can decide and agree on specific activities, additional or expanding on certain topics, taking into consideration the needs of group members as well as the group leader's thoughts on what the members should discuss. It is important to facilitate the engagement of group members and to encourage them to take increasing responsibility for the organization of the sessions.

The group leader should think about the arrangement of the meeting location and make sure sessions can proceed undisturbed. Conversation will flow more freely if there is a comfortable seating area or for example a kitchen with a large table for everyone to gather around.

G. Bahara, E. Gritane, J. Jonstoj (2011) Effects of the girl and boy group method – A gender and social psychology perspective on gender equality youth work on Åland and in Latvia.

G. Bahara, E. Gritane, J. Jonstoj (2011) Effects of the girl and boy group method – A gender and social psychology perspective on gender equality youth work on Åland and in Latvia.

What is non-formal education?

Non-formal education (NFE) refers to learning that takes place outside formal education programs.

Features of nonformal education:

- a planned, structured, conscious learning process and procedure with set aims, tasks, and a target group
- voluntary participation
- no formal assessment
- no single correct answer
- active involvement
- learning from experience
- learning process based on participant needs, expectations and interests
- flexible learning process where methods, content, and tasks can be changed and adapted
- no strict hierarchy/demagogy among participants and leaders/trainers
- balance between individual and group learning
- important not only what is being done, but how it is done – the process is often more important than the result.

People engage in non-formal education activities voluntarily; such activities are carefully planned and designed around the immediate needs of specific target groups, promoting the development of participants' skills and attitudes. The NFE process is usually structured, with its own learning goals, methodology, timeframe and support system. The learning process can be organized by trained specialists, trainers or anyone who takes the initiative to do so. There is usually no strict hierarchy among trainers and learners, and the learning environment is of great importance. The learning process is based on individual needs, and interaction with other members of the group plays a significant role. The NFE process and results are typically evaluated by participants themselves, based on their learning needs.⁸

Basic principles of non-formal education⁹:

- **learning to be:** learning to become conscious of oneself and one's place in the world; understanding one's inner world and developing the ability to self-actualize and build a life in line with the self and own beliefs;
- **learning by doing:** acquiring various skills and abilities through practical activity and emotional involvement in the process; seeing the final results come to life;
- **learning to be with others:** acquiring and developing an understanding of differences, working in a team and learning to accept others and cooperate with them;
- **learning to learn:** acquiring skills to analyze one's own experience, acquiring new knowledge, finding information and being able to use all of the above when facing novel life situations.

[Skolotāja ABC neformālajā izglītībā \(The Teacher's ABC for Informal Education\) Non-Formal Education](#)

Additional resources:

[What is Non-Formal Education? 7 principles of NFE \(video\)](#)

[Non-formal education principles](#)

[Examples of Non-Formal Education Methods \(video\)](#)

[Non-Formal Education](#)

#1

← WHO ARE WE AND WHAT ARE WE LIKE? →

The aim: To help participants get to know each other and each other's interests, hobbies, motivations for participation in group sessions etc. more closely through various individual, paired and group activities.

Introduction to the structure, process, and goals of sessions.

Development of a common agreement ("rules").

The group leader introduces himself/herself and describes how his/her path has brought him/her to leading groups. Leader proceeds to introduce the group to the activities (particularly youth outreach activities) of MARTA Centre and the importance of these group sessions: their long-term benefits, prior achievements, and current activities.

Group formation

Group atmosphere

A certain kind of competency is required to cooperate with other group participants. This cannot be learned, but it can be trained. For a group of people to cooperate and develop in a positive way, everyone needs to feel safe, noticed and appreciated, everyone needs to feel trust and receive encouragement, and everyone must have a sufficient level of responsibility and influence on the progress of the group. Different groups (and different members of the same group) have varying levels of group competency. One group might consist of members with a lot of experience in contributing to group cooperation, and another might consist of members with very little experience. This is a challenge for group leaders. The more untrained individuals there are in a group, and the less time they have spent together, the clearer and more definite must the leader's actions be. It falls on the group leader to find balance between entertainment and serious conversation, between the difficulty level of tasks and entrusting responsibility. The group leader must be able to create a pleasant atmosphere in the group and praise individuals and the group when cooperation of some form has taken place. This, however, does not mean that problems and conflicts can be ignored. Group leaders can develop themselves by observing and reflecting on what happens in the groups they participate in and the groups they lead. They can pose questions to themselves and occasionally to group members. Honesty is important in a group, but openness does not arise by itself. If group members feel unsafe, then voicing their true feelings will only create hostility. Although the group leader takes responsibility for the group, all participants are collectively responsible for the way group sessions proceed.

Questions to reflect on:

- Is everyone satisfied with their participation in the group?
- Is everyone satisfied with their place in the group?
- Is there anyone who talks and dominates more than others? What is causing this?
- Which participants support the dominant participant? What does this depend on?
- Is there anyone who hardly ever engages in discussions or activities?
What is causing this?
- Is there anyone who feels awkward?
- Is anyone afraid they will not be able to participate in a conversation? Engagement is

important. This means that participants must be entrusted with as much responsibility as possible. Every participant is special, and every group is unique. The level of responsibility group participants can take depends on their prior experience and knowledge gained. The group atmosphere also benefits if the group leader participates in the various activities under the same rules as other participants, except when the leader leads a task. The group leader must be careful not to become someone who believes themselves to be better than other participants and finds themselves outside the group.

The group development process can be divided into 6 stages:¹⁰

1. **Exploration:** group participants are slightly insecure and passive at first. Everyone is afraid to be different. It is noticeable if any participants have known each other before the establishment of the group.

Engagement and possible redistribution of duties: participants attempt to approach one another; some are more dominant, others are more reserved. Differences of opinion become evident and are noticed. Group participants become more confident, some dare to voice their opinions and are no longer so focused on whether their opinions are deemed correct.

Harmony: the group becomes a whole; dominant participants provide space for the more reserved. The reserved participants take their place.

Conflict: group participants know each other well and start teasing. Conversations no longer flow as freely, many topics seem exhausted, conflict may arise. The group is in a transitional phase, which causes unease but provides opportunities for development. Some groups fall apart at this stage.

Maturity: the group restructures. Some groups are transformed, others see a redistribution of duties and areas of responsibility. Maturity cannot be reached, however, unless conflicts are solved and group cooperation is promoted, for example, through a clearer description of aims or a more specific distribution of duties.

6. **Conclusion:** group participants decide to stop meeting.

Many groups do not go through all development stages and are dissolved, for example, at the harmony stage. All groups that stay together for a longer time are bound to encounter some kind of conflict since this is a part of development.

M. Hanstrema (2011) Metodikas rokasgrāmata meiteņu un zēnu grupu vadītājiem – izvērtējot uz stereotipiem balstītu dzimumu uztveri.

This does not indicate a failure on the group leader's part. The leader's success or lack thereof is characterized by how they solve conflict within the group. A successful group leader would take conflict into account and look for proposed solutions, while an unsuccessful one might try to pretend that there is no conflict.

Belonging/identity

A sense of belonging is most strongly and clearly characterized by:¹¹

- a common aim to strive for or try to achieve
- internal values, rituals, traditions – “culture” (e.g., tea-drinking)
- identifying marks or symbols (T-shirts with symbols, a team slogan, a name)
- publicly taking pride in belonging to the group
- internal codes of conduct that are difficult to identify from the outside (e.g., never judging others for their failures)

Belonging is not a result or a visible event. It is a feeling that people notice at a certain point, or that is most clearly recognizable when it is lacking.

A sense of belonging to a group is best maintained through common adventures, overcoming difficulty, active learning experiences and moments of togetherness rich in emotion and feeling.

The formation of a group identity is a key part of the successful functioning of a girls'/boys' group. This can be helped by giving the group a name or a symbol, or by creating internal rituals. Sessions might require repeated reminders that all participants matter; everyone must get a chance to speak their mind.

[JSPA. Jauniešu grupu un komandas veidošana un vadība jaunatnes darbā \(Forming and leading youth groups and a team in working with young people\):](#)



Adolescence and its characteristics

Sarah-Jayne Blakemore in her book “Inventing ourselves. The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain” (New York, 2018)¹² describes adolescence as a unique period in our lives. “There are three main reasons why we can confidently say that adolescence is an important, distinct biological period of development, in all cultures,” she claims. “First, you can see behaviors that we typically associate with adolescence, such as risk-taking, self-consciousness and peer influence, in many different human cultures, not just those in the West. The second reason why we can consider adolescence a unique period of bio-logical development is that there is also evidence of adolescence typical behavior in non-human animals. And, third, such behavior is also typical across history.”

Based on the book¹³ mentioned above, here are some important aspects youth group leaders need to remember about adolescence:

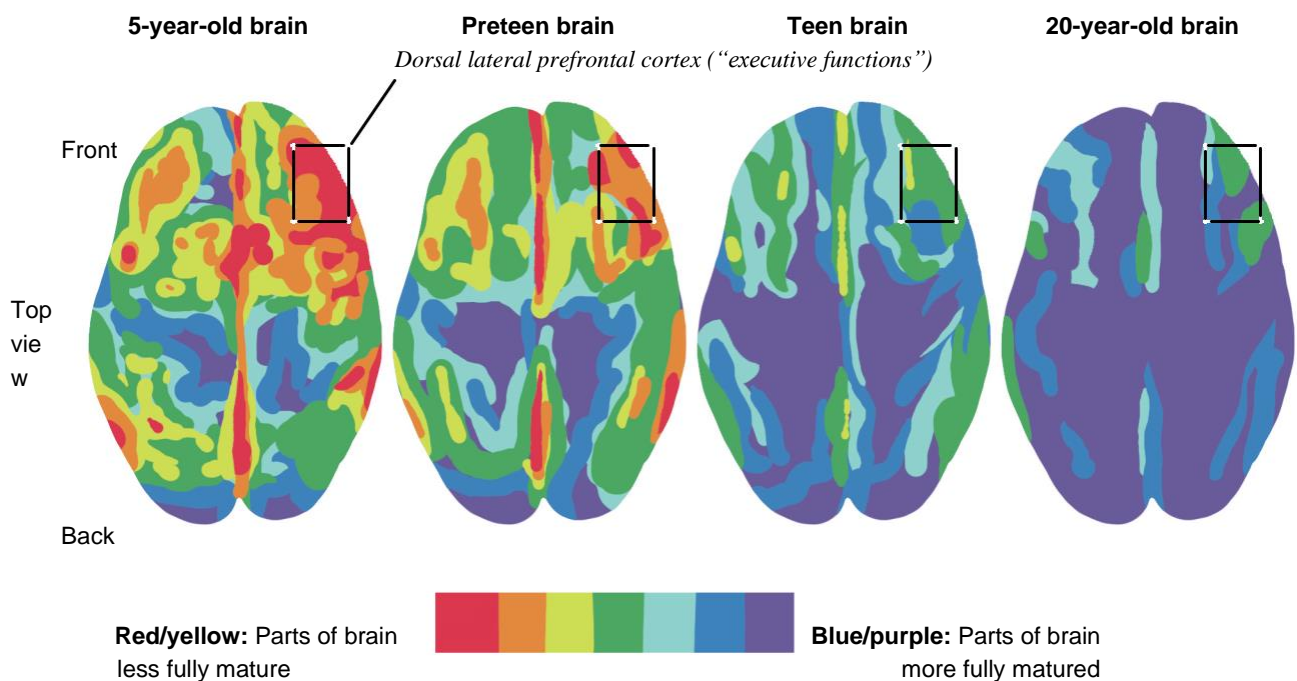
- **PEER INFLUENCE.** Often, adolescence decisions are driven by their friends, rather than by a dispassionate consideration of the consequences. E.g. in the heat of the moment when they’re offered a cigarette or an Ecstasy tablet, many adolescents care far more about what their peer group thinks of them than about the potential risks of their choice.
- **SENSE OF SELF.** Adolescence is a formative period of life, when neural pathways are malleable, and passion and creativity run high. We start to develop a more complex sense of morality and to become aware of the political realities of society around us. Its often the first time when we give much thought to how our identity affects our lives and the ways in which other people see us.
- **COMPARISON.** Adolescence are more likely than younger children to compare themselves with others and to understand that other are making comparisons and judgements about them; they also begin to place higher value on these judgements.
- **SELF – CONSCIOUSNESS.** Beginning of questioning – “who am I?” and “how do I fit in with other people?”. Development of “social brain” – the network of brain regions involved in understanding other people’s intentions and emotions.
- **“IMAGINARY AUDIENCE”.** Phenomena, described by psychologist David Elkind in the 1960s: adolescents imagine that other people are constantly observing and evaluating them, even if this is not actually the case (e.g. Even though no one of their friends is watching or would be likely to find out, 14-year-old stops playing board games with their family, because their friends think its uncool).
- **PEER ACCEPTANCE.** Adolescents are becoming more independent from their parents and more thriving to be integrated into their peer group. Hypersensitivity to social exclusion: decision making is more driven by the need of peer acceptance and the desire to avoid being socially excluded.

Sarah-Jayne Blakemore “Inventing ourselves. The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain”. New York, 2018
Sarah-Jayne Blakemore “Inventing ourselves. The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain”. New York, 2018

– **RISK TAKING** depends on the presence and influence of peers. Studies show ¹⁴ that when in the presence of their friends, adolescents take almost 3 times as many risks as when they are alone.

Adolescent environment – culture, education, home and social life, hobbies, nutrition and exercise – all contribute not only to the emotional and physical well-being, but also shaping their brains, there-for leaving long lasting impact on their neurobiological and physiological development.

It's important to keep in mind that the parts of brain that are responsible for understanding cause-effect relationship and regulating emotional impulses develop till age of 25.



Source: «Dynamic mapping of human cortical development during childhood through early adulthood» Nitin Gogtay, Jay N. Giedd, Leslie Lusk, Kiralee M. Hayashi, Deanna Greenstein, A. Catherine Vaituzis, Tom F. Nugent III, David H. Herman, Liv S. Clasen, Arthur W. Toga, Judith L. Rapoport, and Paul M. Thompson, 2004

During adolescence, children develop the ability to: ¹⁵

- Understand abstract ideas. These include grasping higher math concepts, and developing moral philosophies, including rights and privileges.
- Establish and maintain satisfying relationships. Adolescents will learn to share intimacy without feeling worried or inhibited.
- Move toward a more mature sense of themselves and their purpose.
- Question old values without losing their identity.

Sarah-Jayne Blakemore "Inventing ourselves. The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain". New York, 2018 (Page 32-33)
[Adolescent development](#)

Adolescence is not just the time of puberty, but also a transitional period between childhood and embracing the role of an adult.

This is a time of approaching sexual maturity, driven by endocrine changes in the organism. Teenagers' appearance lacks harmonic proportion, and they may occasionally become clumsy, leading to shyness and awkwardness in communication. The changes are characterized by two main parameters: intensity and uneven development. Teenagers struggle with changes in their physical appearance; evaluating their appearance becomes relevant. This age is characterized by a belief that body proportions should match certain standards set by their group.

Although ages 11-12 are characterized by heightened activity, this is accompanied by a drop in work capacity, while ages 13-14 are characterized by a general drop in activity. This manifests as an inability to perform prolonged, repetitive tasks and as reduced physical endurance. Boys in this age often exhibit more active, even frantic, movements. The behavior of girls, on the other hand, can be significantly influenced by the hormonal changes caused by the onset of menstruation and the so-called premenstrual syndrome. Hormonal changes influence emotional states, with the most common changes including crying for no reason and unprovoked resentment.

Teenagers suffer from fewer acute illnesses than children, but they are more likely to die in accidents or commit suicide than before and can suffer from two types of eating disorders – bulimia and anorexia. Bulimia and anorexia may be a reaction to cultural demands for slenderness and may arise from the incongruity between one's actual and ideal body.

On the basis of abstract thinking, teenagers also develop a desire to understand the meaning of life. At this age, teenagers develop the ability to consciously focus attention, even as the abundance of impressions and feelings may cause attention disruptions; the amount of attention is increased along with teenager's ability to shift attention between objects and activities.

Adolescent years are dominated by a desire to be an adult and to be recognized as such. Claims to adulthood can be manifested in various areas of life, most commonly when it comes to appearance, mannerisms, and clothing. Teenagers can loosely be divided into two groups according to their expression of a "sense of adulthood" – those who have a pronounced tendency to strive for adulthood, and those in whom this tendency is less pronounced.

Teenagers require creative activity and desire to do things their own way – to explore and express themselves. They can attempt to express themselves through music or literature. This can also manifest through destructive actions, however – this is how teenagers test their strength. Other key characteristics of this period include uncritical juxtaposition between the self and others, a heightened desire to express one's personality, beliefs, drive for emancipation – the need to remove oneself from the custody of adults. Interaction with peers of the same age helps teenagers develop.

Teenagers respect their parents' actions over their words. Much is determined by their previous relationships, family traditions and the parents' level of education. A teenager who feels respect, love and a positive attitude from their parents is more likely to integrate these values in their own value system.

There is nothing fixed or stable in a teenager's personality structure; this causes personality swings, contradictory desires, and contradictory actions. A teenager's instability may be expressed as:

- negativity, protest, dismissal of values;
- dependence crisis – i.e., escaping back into childhood, with pronounced dependence on those older or stronger;
- regress towards old interests – even toys, games – and obedience.

Teenagers seek out new sources of authority as adults cease to serve as role models to follow and imitate. Teenagers find sources of authority and expertise in their peers; they rely on their peers in areas of behavior, morality, ethics, taste, interests, and hobbies. The more conflict there is in a teenager's relationships with their parents and teachers, the more authority they are likely to find in their peers.

One of a teenager's most fundamental needs is the need for self-actualization, and the teenager will seek out an environment to realize this in. If the environment of adults is welcoming and pro-vides the teenager with these opportunities, the teenager will operate there; if not, they will seek this environment out on their own among peers. Teenagers often require communication with their parents when they are scared, stressed or confused. Parents have considerable influence on such areas of a teenager's life as their value orientation, understanding of social issues and morality.

Teacher-teenager relationships

Teenagers are characterized simultaneously by activity, aggressiveness, and laziness. Due to this inconsistency, teachers require a great deal of tolerance and empathy when interacting with teenagers.

Teenagers are bound to reject an authoritarian style of leadership; instead, their cooperation can be ensured by:

- involving them in the decisions affecting them;
- showing them respect;
- treating them as equal members of the school or society.

Democracy is the optimal style for working with teenagers – for a teacher, this means setting a general course of action and then letting teenagers decide on how to perform specific tasks without supervising each incremental step.

Teenagers' relationships with their peers

As a teenager searches for their own identity, the way others perceive them is of great significance – this serves as a mirror that the teenager can use to compare and evaluate them-selves in relation to others. The need to be involved in a group is one of the characteristics of this development period, but this manifests very differently in every individual – there may be great differences in both the number of friends and the depth of psychological engagement. On the other hand, lack of involvement in a group and keeping to oneself at this age can potentially signal psychological issues.

Adolescence is characterized by poor ability to verbalize one's feelings, which is one of the reasons why teenagers are so agitated, even tense – this is because they lack the ability to re-cognize and verbalize their feelings, making it difficult to find an outlet for emotional conflict. Teenagers are subject to internal tension and often intuitively seek out action as if justifying their behavior which satisfies neither themselves nor adults; a teenager may not express (or be able to express) this in words, which is why such teenagers are characterized by affective outbursts, unsociability, retreating into oneself and lying (due to both fear of punishment and a desire to look better in one's own eyes).

Music is one of the most important phenomena in a teenager's life, helping to integrate their feelings. A teenager's feelings can often be diametrically opposed and incongruous. Music creates a sense (if temporary) of wholeness of one's own personality, as it is rhythmically organized, i.e., clear and perceptible. Music reduces internal dissonance.

A teenager can simultaneously feel a tendency for self-actualization, independence and lack of belief in themselves; a desire for similar peers and a need for aloneness; harshness, rudeness, and high vulnerability, shyness which often causes certain forms of self-actualization: bravado, laxity, discipline violations, conflicts with adults, spitefulness, and negativity. This can all be based on a subconscious or unrecognized disbelief in one's own ability and the consequent desire to prove oneself and others wrong; a teenager's self-image can be so incongruous that it can be summed up as "genius+nobody".

Most common causes of delinquent (antisocial) behavior during adolescence:

- A broken family. Divorced or deceased parents; a single-parent family. These stressful events can negatively impact both the current moment and the child's entire future social development.
- Being treated inconsiderately by parents. Delinquency is rare in families with warm parent-child relationships. If, however, parents constantly argue or show little emotional warmth or attachment to a child, the child's behavior has a high probability of turning into delinquency. In this way, the psychological unavailability of parents promotes delinquency. The extent of psychological absence determines the extent to which delinquency is increased or reduced.
- Poor treatment. Delinquency is more common when parents discipline children in abusive or hostile ways. Teenage rebelliousness and delinquency are possible where spanking, beating and other types of corporal punishment are used as methods of control. A teenager's hostile behavior can carry over into their adult life.
- Economic deprivation (poverty).

One of the most common errors in dealing with teenagers is that parents, teachers, and others mistakenly believe them to be adults.

Adolescence is believed to involve the greatest changes in self-consciousness and personality structure, along with an early understanding of what the individual should be like and whether they are happy with themselves. This is when a teenager's self-image is internally formed and integrated into their idea of self. Teenagers are highly suggestible during this time.

Regardless of their edginess, spitefulness, reservedness, and protests, they are actively searching for a personification in life (a “life teacher”) – someone to serve as a role model.

Teenagers may behave and act in ways that are difficult to understand; their self-esteem is unsteady and contradictory. Manifestations of identity crisis can resemble signs of mental disorders. Self-esteem contradictions often lead to an inability to engage in any activities or actions. If a teenager finds themselves unable to identify their place in society, they may try to become an “antihero” and choose “roles” like thief, racketeer or alcoholic.

Teenagers are highly emotionally excitable and prone to disorders that may manifest as mental illnesses. Certain emotions are experienced most deeply during teenage years as opposed to early youth or adult life, which is why many teenagers develop emotional disorders. The main psychological characteristics of this age include: maximalism – here and now, now or never (the teenager wants all of their needs to be met immediately); search for ideals (a person or character from a book/film); shutting oneself off from others; creating one’s own subculture. Teenagers are driven by a desire to attract attention, to stand out, to be leaders, even as they find themselves in countless conflicts with surrounding people, family members, schoolmates, and themselves.



Activity #1: Three truths and a lie

The aim: for participants to get to know each other better.

Duration: 20-30 minutes.

Necessary: paper pages and pens, markers.

Procedure: each participant must write down 4 statements about themselves – 3 true and 1 false. The pages are then affixed to participants' backs. Participants walk around in a circle and try to guess which 3 things are true about each person and what the lie is. They should mark the statement they believe is false. Having done this, participants sit down in a circle and voice their opinions.

Activity #2: The flying carpet

The aim: to unite the group.

Duration: 15 minutes.

Necessary: bedsheet, wallpaper or a large sheet of paper (newspapers taped together). **Procedure:** the sheet is laid out on the floor/in the grass. Participants take off their shoes and step onto the sheet. The group must turn the sheet upside down without stepping off it. This task becomes more complicated and interesting with a larger group and a smaller sheet.

Activity #3: Watch out!

The aim: to learn to achieve a common goal, to build trust within the group.

Duration: 30-40 minutes.

Necessary: ropes stretched between two trees or poles up to a height of 1.5 meters, creating a kind of web.

Procedure: You are spies, trying to escape a building unnoticed. The only way out is through a web of laser sensors. Be careful! - If anyone touches the webbing, the alarm will be activated and the mission will be over (everyone will have to restart the activity)! Before the activity begins, the team has 20 minutes to agree on and develop a strategy. Thereafter, the activity must proceed in silence (or else the guards will hear you). You DO NOT have access to the sensor web during preparation time (i.e., you may not try things out).

Important! This activity is not recommended unless the team has at least two stronger participants, or if anyone is overweight. If you see that the team cannot handle the task, you could lower the ropes or allow for the ropes to be touched by loose clothing.

Reflection questions:

- How was the task accomplished?
- Was the task easy or difficult?
- Did all participants have a role to play? What solutions to the task were proposed? Who proposed them?
- Which participants were actively/passively engaged in the completion of the task at various stages? Ask everyone to describe their role in the completion of the task!
- Was this role assigned to them or freely chosen?
- Did all participants get a chance to make their proposals? If not, why?
- What was the cooperation and communication like?
- Knowing the solution, could the task have been completed differently? How?
- Did your role in the completion of task resemble your role in everyday life? Do you act in similar ways in other situations?
- Can you relate your experience during the task to an everyday situation?

Activity #4: Agreement

The aim: to agree on shared group values and procedures that must be observed to make your time together as pleasant and productive as possible. **Duration:** 10-15 minutes

Necessary: markers and a page from a flipchart that is subsequently posted in a visible place.

Procedure: After the first meeting, group participants agree on their further engagement.

The agreement document states the place and time meetings will take place along with conditions that will guarantee safety and security in the group. Safety is created through all participants abiding by the presence principle and the confidentiality principle and listening to and helping one another. The presence principle is a rule clearly stating that all group participants are important and that their experience and beliefs matter. If a participant is unable to attend a meeting, they have to state a reason for their absence – simply not feeling like it is not enough.

The confidentiality principle means that no one may disclose who said what during a group meeting, or what the beliefs of specific group participants are, outside the group. It is, however, okay to share with others the activities and topics discussed in the group and the reflections of participants without naming anyone in particular. The confidentiality principle plays a role in safety. Group leaders may break the confidentiality principle if a participant has committed a crime or if a violation has taken place. The group leaders are obliged to explicitly inform participants about this as the agreement document is drafted.

The issue of mobile phones should be discussed when preparing the agreement. Usually, most participants express a wish to have phones turned off during the sessions. If this is not the case, you should discuss focus, presence here and now, respect towards each other, etc. If group leaders fail to convince participants of the need to turn off their phones during sessions, then leaders are also free to keep their phones on.

Additionally, they may ask to call someone during the session to then discuss the influence such a disruption has on the participants' mood and the working atmosphere in the group. Every group needs all participants to collectively decide on the rules to be observed so that everyone would subsequently take responsibility for observing them.

The group leader can always use these shared rules to play back to participants a problem that has arisen in the group. The formation of a group identity is a key part of the successful functioning of a girls' or boys' group. This can be helped by giving the group a name or a symbol, or by creating internal rituals. Sessions might require repeated reminders that all participants matter; everyone must get a chance to speak their mind. Once the group agreement has been noted down point by point, all group participants (including the leader) sign it, confirming their agreement to abide by it.

Concluding comments

Quoting Sarah-Jayne Blakemore: "During adolescence, your sense of who you are – your moral and political beliefs, your music and fashion tastes, what social group you associate with – undergoes profound change. During adolescence we are inventing ourselves." Knowing and remembering this, youth groups can serve as an important and meaningful support mechanism, safe and encouraging place for this invention to happen.

***Closing evaluation remarks on the lesson**

The aim: to provide a simple evaluation of a particular meeting.

Duration: 10-15 min

Procedure: participants sit in a circle, either on chairs or on the floor. Take turns to talk about a single topic or to respond to a specific question, evaluating the current group session.

Question ideas:

- *In one word, how do you currently feel?*
- *What have you learned today?*
- *What have you discovered today?*
- *Name one thing that you think should be improved in the group!*
- *Today I felt...*
- *Next time, I would like...*
- *What were you most pleased/surprised/excited/etc. by today?*
- *What I appreciate about today's session is...*

Additional resources:

[World Health Organization. Adolescent development](#)

[What is Non-Formal Education? 7 principles of NFE \(video\)](#)

[Tuckman's stages of group development](#)

[Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. Understanding the Stages of Team Formation](#)

[Child development](#)

[Communication and the Teenage Brain \(video\)](#)

[The mysterious workings of adolescent brain \(video\)](#)

[Group works. A Pattern Language for Bringing Life to Meetings and Other Gatherings](#)

[Sarah-Jayne Blakemore "Inventing ourselves. The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain". New York, 2018](#)

← WHO AM I AND WHAT AM I LIKE? →

The aim: To deepen the understanding of oneself and others.
 What are the characteristics I demonstrate to others and why?
 What constitutes my personality?
 What can I be like and what do I want to be like?

One non-formal education tool for explaining the mutual interaction between people and understanding what we are “really” like and how we are seen by others is the **Johari Window**¹⁶. It was designed in 1955, by two American psychologists – Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham. The name of the tool (Johari) is based on their names – Joe and Harry. Their idea is that much in our lives depends on how conscious we are of our actual personality and its facets, and on how much others know about our true selves.

	WHAT DO I KNOW ABOUT MYSELF?	WHAT DO I NOT KNOW ABOUT MYSELF?
WHAT DO OTHERS KNOW ABOUT ME?	<p>Open</p> <p>What I know about myself and others know about me, too</p>	<p>Invisible</p> <p>What I do not know about myself but communicate subconsciously to others. Others know this about me.</p>
WHAT DO OTHERS NOT KNOW ABOUT ME?	<p>Closed</p> <p>What I know about myself but keep from others. Others do not know this.</p>	<p>Unknown</p> <p>What I do not know about myself and others do not know either. This area may include fears and great talents.</p>

The **open area** leads to an open relationship with oneself and others. Within this field, we can truly get to know each other and build open, honest and respectful relationships while respecting personal emotional and physical boundaries.

Closed area (what we know about ourselves but do not express). If this is something positive, we may be doubting ourselves by habit (“who am I to...”). We do not put in the effort to reinforce our self-confidence. We may also disguise our flaws. If, however, we do find the courage to bring them to light and start working on them, this can significantly improve our lives. In this way, we gain strength and the ability to build deeper and more honest relationships with others.

[The Johari Window](#)

Invisible area. There are some things about us that are obvious to others but that we fail to see. We often find that others perceive our actions and their consequences differently than we would have ever imagined.

Unknown area. The most important talents and aspects of life can be hidden in the unknown area. Reducing this area is our challenge. Only we ourselves hold the power to expand the boundaries of our talents and self-discovery. We unlock our hidden potential, step outside our comfort zones and can in this way find out many new and surprising things about ourselves and others.

By treating our flaws with honesty and accepting them without unnecessary stress, we can work with them and relax. By expanding our field of awareness, we expand our possibilities and choices. We can expand it by asking questions and telling others about ourselves, and by listening to others carefully. Who to tell about ourselves and how much to reveal is everyone's conscious choice and own responsibility. So is who to ask about ourselves, and what questions to pose. And so is how much we listen to what we are told. We often do not reveal what we see in others unless they ask. Especially if subconscious expression contradicts what is consciously expressed. Should you be open to everyone? How benevolent, supportive and accurate will another person be in helping you understand yourself? Who and in what situations will be able to see beyond your surface expressions?¹⁷

Getting to know others starts from the first moment we meet. Did you know a first impression of you can be formed as early as 20 seconds in?

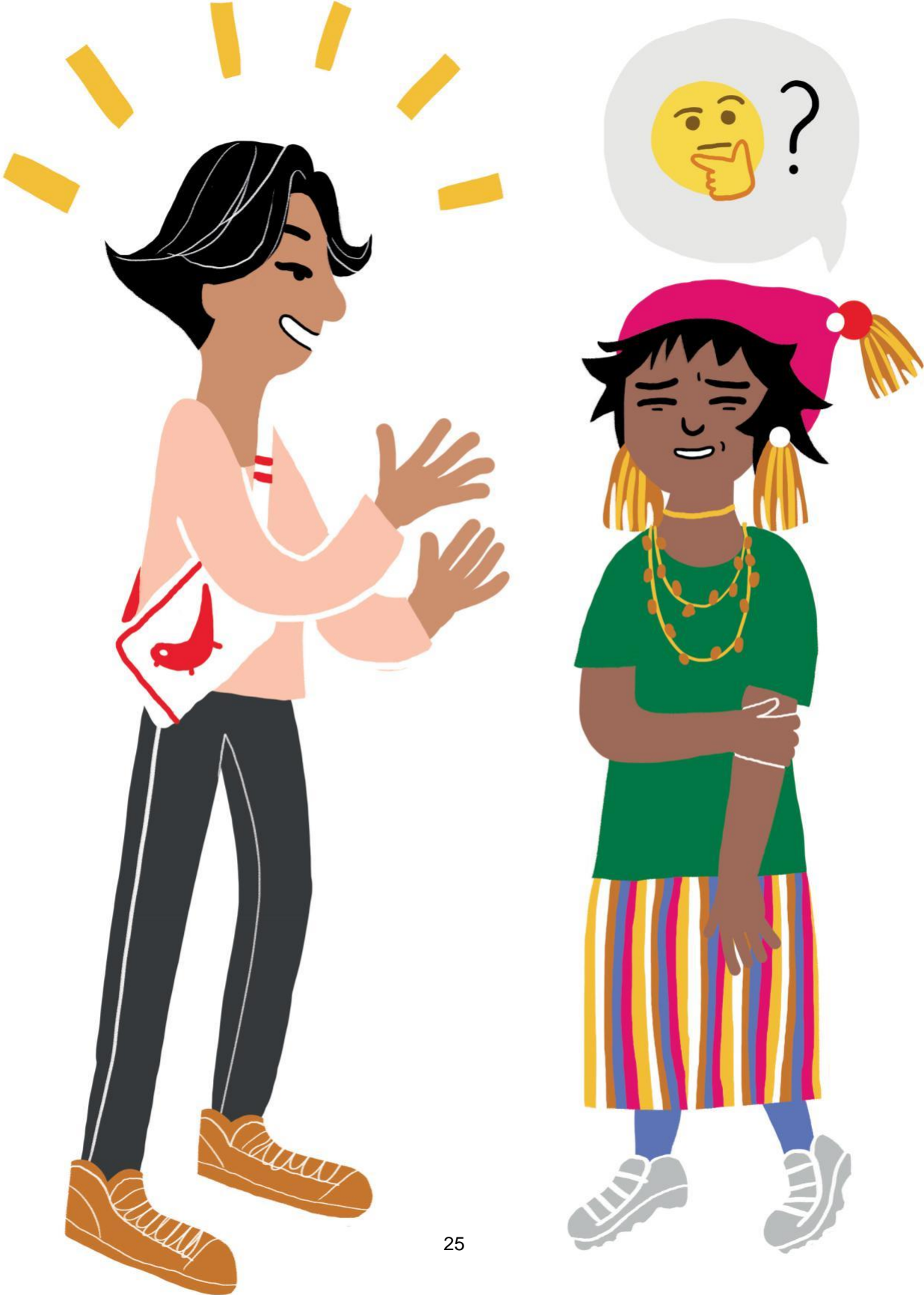
A first impression is a lasting non-verbal communicator. How a person represents themselves upon first meeting sends the observer a non-verbal message. "First impressions last." It is important to remember that first impressions can be both positive and negative. A positive impression can be left by how people introduce themselves. Self-presentation can include clothing and other visible accessories, a handshake, facial expressions, the first words spoken, etc. Negative impressions can be based not just on self-presentation, but also on the personal prejudice of surrounding people.¹⁸

And, though we all know we should not judge a book by its cover, we still tend to form lasting opinions of others based on our first impression.

Even the simplest gestures at the time of meeting another person can cause them to form a specific opinion of you. What is it that attracts us to some people and sparks our interest, and makes us indifferent or ill-disposed towards others? Research shows that people perceive some information subconsciously, and that "decisions" on our attitude are made automatically, based on prior experience, our emotional state, and many other factors. Why is this the case? The human brain has a limited capacity, and people are fundamentally organized in ways that help us use our precious cognitive resources sparingly. As a result, we use simple, semi-conscious methods to classify new stimuli into familiar categories and thus to be able to "maneuver" in the world that surrounds us.¹⁹ It is important to always consider whether our first impressions are true.

[Tool "8KEYCOM"](#)
[Nonverbal communication](#)
[First impression](#)

How can we verify them? Does my first impression of someone facilitate or hinder the process of getting to know them? One answer is TIME. Observe, ask, tell and avoid jumping to conclusions. Give yourself time to get to know others and give them time to get to know you!



Activity #1: First impressions

The aim: to compare how people's first impressions about others differ, to explore how our experience forms our first impressions. To become more conscious of how our impressions influence our behavior towards others.

Duration: 30 minutes.

Necessary: various images of people from magazines, where the people depicted have interesting, unusual or striking faces; large sheets of paper, pencils.

Procedure: participants sit in a circle and each get one sheet. Participants view an image and write down their first impression of this person on the bottom of the sheet. Then, the bottom of the sheet is folded up to cover what they wrote, and the sheet is passed to the next participant. Participants view the next image. Again, participants write down their first impression of the image they viewed at the bottom of the sheet, just above the folded part. Then, they fold the sheet again, obscuring what they just wrote, and pass the sheet forward. This continues until all sheets have gone full circle and everyone has seen all sheets. Finally, sheets are folded open and every-one gets to compare their various "first impressions".

Reflection questions:

- Was anything surprising during the task (e.g., are any impressions shared by all or wildly different)?
- What were your first impressions based on (haircut, facial expression, skin color etc.)?
- Describe and tell others about times when you have had a false first impression about someone. What happened due to this impression?
- If you like, share situations where someone has had a false first impression of you. How did you feel? Did anything change when the other person got to know you better?
- What did this activity reveal about ourselves?
- Did you notice any prejudices or stereotypes during the activity? (*A stereotype is an exaggerated link between belonging to a group and the presence of certain characteristics; a set of beliefs about a group of people*²⁰) What were they?
Why do you think they exist?

[I. Šulmane, S. Kruks \(2001\) Stereotipi Latvijas presē. Publicēts krājumā Latvijas mediju analīze \(Daudzveidība III\) \(Stereotypes in Latvian press\)](#)

Activity #2: Dangerous Amazon

The aim: to unite the team

Duration: 50 minutes (including introduction, completion, and discussion of the task)

Necessary: A4 sheets of paper, wooden boards or other A4-sized items that are safe to step on.

The number of sheets should equal the number of participants minus one.

Story and procedure: You are standing before the dangerous Amazon river. The river is 5-10 meters wide and notorious for its crocodiles that will devour anything falling into the river (yes, that includes people!). You need to cross the river as a team. You cannot swim across due to the aforementioned crocodiles. You can only step on the rocks above the river's surface (A4 sheets of paper). The rocks "come loose" as soon as anyone touches them. This means you have to be extra careful, since, as soon as there is no one standing on a rock, the rock gets carried away by the stream (the sheet is removed). A rock cannot be carried away before it has been touched for the first time. Should anyone step off a rock (A4 sheet) into the river, all team members must restart the task (including those who had already reached safety on the other bank). The task is completed if all team members reach the other bank of the river in one piece within 30 minutes! Level 2: You cannot talk during the task, as this would awaken the spirits dwelling in the Amazonian jungle. You are given 10 minutes to discuss how you will cross the river. You must present your plan to the group leader. As soon as the plan is presented, verbal communication must stop, and the 30-minute task countdown begins. If any participant speaks, they first get one warning. If anyone speaks again, the spirits of the Amazonian jungle remove one of the rocks, making the crossing longer and more hazardous.

Reflection questions:

- Who took part in planning?
- What did you observe about your behavior during the task (how much or how little you participated; did you take the initiative; did you help others etc.)?
- How did you feel (were you having fun, was there anger, joy, resentment, hopelessness, optimism, etc.)?
- What did you observe about the behavior of others?
- Do you think the way others saw you matches the way you felt (see theory on the Johari Window)?
- What was hardest/easiest about this task and why?
- If you could do the task again, would you do anything differently?
- What insights did you arrive at?

Activity #3: Who am I – who are we? How do others see me?²¹

The aim: to get to know each other better. To receive feedback on one's self-image.

To practice putting one's feelings and emotions into words.

Duration: 40 minutes

Necessary: table, prepared statement cards.

Procedure: Sit down around a table. Place cards with various statements at the center of the table.

Version No. 1: "Who am I" (if group participants do not know each other).

Participants take turns drawing cards, silently read the statement on the card and reflect on whether this describes them. If it describes the participant, they keep the card. If the statement does not describe the participant, they place it at the center of the table.

Let the group know that the number of cards everyone has at the end of the task is not a score with any positive or negative judgment attached. In fact, the number of cards anyone has at the end of the game depends merely on what statements participants happen to draw, and on each participant's attitude toward themselves. Encourage participants who have fewer cards to go ahead and keep cards with statements that may not fully describe them, as they will be given an opportunity to explain their decisions.

Participants place any cards they have kept in front of them.

When all cards placed at the center of the table are drawn, each participant draws one more statement from the pile of discarded cards. Maybe this time a card will end up in the right hands?

When all cards have been distributed, one of the participants turns their stack of cards face up and reads the top card out loud. The card is then placed on the table, out in front of the participant, as the first in a series of statements.

If a participant is reluctant to comment on a particular statement, the group leader may ask additional questions while making it clear that everyone has the right to comment as much or as little as they please.

Then, the next participant reads out their cards.

When everyone has read their cards out loud, the group leader asks every participant what they thought about the activity.

Version No. 2: "Who are we" (if group participants know each other).

All participants take turns drawing a card and silently read the statement on the card. Which participant (the drawing participant included) does the card most accurately describe? If the drawing participant is the best match, they keep the card. If not, they give the card to the participant most accurately described by the card. If it does not match anyone, the card is placed in a pile on the table.

The statement does not need to be a complete match. If the statement is unclear, set the card aside to collectively discuss any remaining cards once the activity is done.

M. Hanstrema (2011) Metodikas rokasgrāmata meiteņu un zēnu grupu vadītājiem – izvērtējot uz stereotipiem balstītu dzimumu uztveri.

Should participants wish, they can discuss the best fit for a card together. As in the first version of the activity, cards will be unequally distributed. Let the group know that the number of cards everyone has at the end of the task is not a score with any positive or negative judgment attached. In fact, it depends on which participants others are most familiar with, and what cards they happen to draw. If there are any statements that might match several participants, suggest that the card be given to someone who has fewer cards.

Any cards kept by participants or received from others are placed in front of a participant (without viewing them).

When all cards placed at the center of the table are drawn, use discarded cards (the ones with statements that did not match anyone).

When all cards have been distributed, one of the participants turns their stack of cards face up and reads the top card out loud. Then they pick up the next card, read it out loud and place it on the table, forming a series of statements out in front of them.

The group leader asks whether the participant feels that the card describes them accurately? Do they believe anything to be wrong, would they like to comment on anything? The statements on the cards can be positive or negative. The leader makes it clear that participants are free to choose how much they wish to say.

Other group participants are given an opportunity to comment or justify why they have chosen to give someone a particular card.

Then, the next participant reads out their cards.

When everyone has read out and commented on their cards, invite a round of closing remarks, asking participants to comment on how they liked the task.

Keep in mind: most people want to talk about themselves (even if they are not used to it and are shy) and know what others think about them. If you use Version No. 2 of the task, please only do so once group participants have been meeting in sessions for some time, since some statements can be interpreted negatively.

Reflection questions:

- How did you feel during this activity?
- What was easiest/hardest for you?
- How comfortable/uncomfortable did you feel talking about yourself? How comfortable/ uncomfortable did you feel talking about others?
- Which of your characteristics/abilities are you proud of?
- What characteristics would you like to change?
- In what situations and environments is it useful for us to understand and know others? Why?

***Closing evaluation remarks on the session.**

Additional resources for competency development and self-discovery:

[International training programs, seminars and conferences for those working with youth.](#)

[SALTO YOUTH](#)

[DiSC personality profile](#)

[What do others think of you? How the brain perceives other people \(video\)](#)

[Psychology of your future self \(video\)](#)

Statement cards. SESSION #2

Is little suspicious of others	Counts on others too much	Is afraid to hurt others
Often thinks others know better	Is dependent on what others think	Someone others trust
Sets high standards for themselves	Can cheer others up	Can appreciate others
Trusts others	Is often critical	Is hurt by injustice
Is dependable	Often tidies up at home	Likes tidying up
Likes cooking	Doesn't like cooking	Laughs a lot
Honest	Careless	Friendly
Fun	Has a rich imagination	Optimistic
Pessimistic	Likes making their own decisions	Feels great around others
Feels great alone	Likes being in charge	Easily establishes relationships and gets to know others
Likes challenges	Serious	Sensible
Hardly cares what others think	Easily brought to tears	Cannot pretend
Good at pretending	Finds it easy to strike up conversations with strangers	Has difficulty showing emotions
Artistic	Spiteful	Precise
Sensitive	Helpful	Romantic
Slow	Dominating	Courageous
Stubborn	Forgetful	Impatient
Smart	Calm	Resourceful
Thrifty	Rowdy	Joyful
Suspicious	Curious	Thinks others can do more than oneself
Thinks they often mess up	Is quite self-confident	Isn't very self-confident
Believes they are good exactly the way they are	Likes reading books	Often feels confidence in themselves
Likes nature	Practical	Creative
Likes taking risks	Worries too much	Likes spending time alone

MY EMOTIONS AND THE BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH THEM

The aim: To understand how evaluating people can influence emotions, feelings, attitudes and behaviors. To understand what emotions are. To acquire the necessary skills to recognize one's emotions and how they are expressed in different situations and understand how and why they differ in various contexts. To understand how expressing or withholding emotions affects one's relationship with oneself and others. To learn healthy ways of expressing emotions.

What are emotions?

Emotions are feelings that make our lives colorful and allow us to enjoy all the joys and sorrows of life. Without the pleasure we feel when we eat cold ice cream on a hot day, without the dis-satisfaction, we feel when we are treated unkind, without the joy we feel when meeting an old friend or the sorrow we feel when we lose a loved one our lives would be rather gray and even meaningless.

Dr. Paul Ekman²², who is a known expert in the research of emotions, refers to four main commonly known emotions: fear, anger, sadness, and joy. Most researchers believe that there are many dimensions, variations, and combinations of these basic emotions. For example, sorrow, loneliness, pity, depression, and despair – all these emotional states are associated with sadness, while happiness, joy, delight, contentment, and fun are associated with pleasure²³.

Emotions (French: *émotion*, Latin: *emovere* – 'excite', 'agitate') and feelings, are subjective reactions of humans and animals to internal and external stimuli.²⁴ Emotions are closely related to an individual's current needs. The psychological basis of emotions is the different, inherited mechanisms of the central nervous system and the self-regulating mechanisms of the psyche which reflect an individual's attitude to problem situations in a simplified, stereotypical way. Emotions play an important role in human interaction. It is often said that people's thinking always fluctuates between logic and emotion. Sometimes common sense prevails, sometimes people give in to their emotions.²⁵

[Paul Ekman](#)

[Kas ir emocijas un kur tās rodas](#)

Latviešu literārās valodas vārdnīca II. Rīga: Zinātne. 498. Lpp

[Wiki: Emocijas \(Emotions\)](#)

Where do emotions come from?

Human emotions have been shown to emerge in the sub-cortical structures of the brain as reactions to any stimulation from the external environment – especially in relationships with other people. Some unconscious emotions go to the cerebral cortex, another part is sent to the vegetative nervous system (VNS), which, depending on the circumstances, prepares the body for a specific response – to approach, befriend, relax, fight, defend, flee, etc. A healthy person's unconscious bodily reactions and psychic reactions are in harmony. ²⁶

Emotions – positive and negative?

People often want more positive emotions and less negative ones. When asked to clarify what are “negative” emotions, the most common answer is – fear, anger. This desire is logical and understandable. However,... If we didn't have “negative” emotions like fear, we would sometimes react to situations inadequately. For example, if we had no fear, we would not have the impulse to run out of a house that is on fire. Instead, we would joyfully and curiously watch the flames as they play in the dark and grow larger. Fear in this particular situation is a positive emotion. All emotions, in adequate quantity, have their function. Fear and anger help us recognize threats to our health and life and, if necessary, helps us run away or fight. We can also look at this from the point of view of the theory of evolution and reasonably say that if any emotion were really objectively harmful to us, then it would cease to manifest at some point during the process of evolution. But emotions in themselves are neither positive nor negative – they help us adapt to our environment and help us communicate. The keyword to emphasize here is **adequate** quantity. As it is with everything else in medicine, the dosage is key. For example, if a person experiences too much fear, he or she becomes cowardly; if he or she experiences too little, he or she becomes reckless, daring. This principle was introduced by Aristotle when he stated that value arises when emotion is in equilibrium (the golden middle way). Therefore, when it comes to emotions, as in many other areas, proportionality and equilibrium are key, but there are no unnecessary and/or “negative” emotions. As an alternative, we suggest we replace the words “negative and positive” regarding emotions with “pleasant and unpleasant” in our speech. ²⁷

[Somatizācija. RSU Psihosomatiskās medicīnas un psihoterapijas klīnika.](#)

[A. Ancāns. Emocijas – pozitīvas un negatīvas? RSU Psihosomatiskās medicīnas un psihoterapijas klīnika.](#)



Emotions and adolescents

The adolescent period begins at age 12 and lasts until one starts to live on their own – age 19-23. This is a hard and difficult period, which brings not only drastic changes in the body (puberty) but also a radical restructuring of the psyche. An adolescent may feel lonely, abandoned, desperate during this time. These emotional fluctuations often accompanied by sharp surges of anger are also a difficult time for parents and fellow human beings since we all try to forget our own adolescent mistakes, failures, and shame, so we are often unable to understand our children.

During adolescence, 2 major developmental tasks must come to a close that have begun in earlier periods, i.e. **separation and individualization**, which are necessary for one to learn to live autonomously. Adolescents must emotionally and intellectually separate from their parents (or other adults who have taken care of them) in order to begin an independent life as a responsible, brave adult that can fend for him or herself. The process of separation usually starts with emotional turmoil (aggression) – a teenager suddenly requests that everyone meets his new demands or refuses to follow the commands of his parents and other adults. The people around an adolescent often find his or her reproaches, criticisms, comparisons and unrealistic demands painful to bear. But we have to understand that this frustration is the basis for a young person's motivation to look for his or her own solutions and lead his or her own existence.

With "individualization" we mean the formation of an authentic personality. Questions like: "who am I going to be?", "what do I want to be like?" These are all foreign, uncertain, and frightening considerations. The adolescent must learn to hear his or her deep, true desires and adjust them to the constraints of the world. Here we often see disorders in how people view themselves and their self-esteem; sexual identity, mood, and eating disorders, as well as manifestations of vegetative dystonia, panic, and phobias. The use of intoxicating substances and criminal or negligent behavior is also associated with the implications of adolescence. Often, we encounter solutions which entail ascetic and submissive behavior from the adolescent, which solves some problems for parents and teachers but unfortunately weakens the adolescent's future personality.²⁸

Activity #1: Labeling²⁹

The aim: To recognize the ways how labeling³⁰ people can limit an individual's potential and influence his or her relationships. Labeling is the process of assigning a single word or short phrase to a set of properties or expressions, giving the word a direct or carried meaning. For example, "criminal" – someone who has broken the law; "bully" – one who engages in physical conflicts (or it is assumed that he or she does), etc.

Necessary: Paper sheets, scotch tape, and pens/pencils.

[M. Dubava. Pusaudžu procesi. LĀPA](#)
[Task from the handbook: Young Mens Initiative. Program Y.](#)
[Cambridge Dictionary](#)

Planning: It is important that none of the participants in the group behave aggressively or feel offended by the labels/designations they're given.

Procedure:

Think of positive and negative labels or stereotypes that are often used in the environment of young people. These may include labels such as smart, lazy, shy, violent, nerd, etc. Try to think of at least as many words as there are members in the group.

Write the labels on the sheets of paper and stick one sheet on the back of each participant.

Note: For this activity to be effective, it is important that participants are not able to see the labels written on their backs, but only those visible on the backs of others.

Invite two or three participants to play a role-playing game in which they treat the other participants in accordance with what the labels written on their backs.

Ask each of the participants doing the role-playing to guess, based on how he or she was treated, the label that was assigned to them and then answer the following questions:

- *How did you feel when you were treated in accordance with the label you were given?*
- *How did you feel when you had to treat another person in accordance with their label?*

After the volunteers have answered these questions, invite the rest of the group to express their thoughts on the role-playing game.

Invite other volunteers to play other role-playing games, giving participants time to guess their label and allowing them to reflect on how they felt.

Reflection questions:

- How did you react when you were treated according to a label?
- How did you react when you or someone else had to treat another person according to their label?
- Are these labels often used around you in your daily lives?
What other labels do people use?
- Why do people label other people?
- What are the possible consequences of labeling people?
How does this affect mutual relationships?
- What can you use from what you have learned during the exercise in your daily lives?
- How can you avoid labeling other people?
- How can you encourage people not to label other people?

Activity #2: How do I express my emotions?

The aim: To recognize the difficulties that prevent young people from expressing certain emotions and understand the resulting consequences that may affect them and their relationships with other people.

Duration: 40 min

Necessary: Large sheets pages, markers, small slips of paper

Planning: We recommend that the group leader performs the exercise individually on his or her own before the exercise and reflect on the ways in which he or she expresses his or her emotions prior to the session with the group. It is also important to identify local counseling centers and professionals in your area to whom the young people in your group could be referred to if needed.

Procedure:

Draw five columns on a large sheet of paper and label the columns with the following emotions – fear, affection, sadness, joy, and anger.

Explain to the participants that these are the emotions that will be discussed during the activity and that their task is to think about how easy or difficult it is for them to personally express them.

Give each participant a small slip of paper and ask them to write down the five emotions just as they are written on the large sheet of paper. Read them these instructions: “Think which of these emotions are the easiest for you to express. Add the number one (1) to the emotion you find the easiest to express. Now think of an emotion that you can express easily, but not as easily as the first one. Add the number two (2) to that emotion. Add three (3) to an emotion that is not too difficult to express, but not very easy either. Add four (4) to the emotions you are having difficulty expressing. Add five (5) to the emotion you find the most difficult to express.”

After the participants have finished evaluating their emotions, collect the sheets and write the numbers they gave you in the columns on the large sheet of paper.

An example:

	Fear	Affection	Sadness	Joy	Anger
Participant #1	5	4	3	2	1
Participant #2	2	3	4	1	5
Participant #3	4	1	3	2	5
Participant #4	4	3	5	2	1
Participant #5	5	1	3	2	4

Think collectively about the similarities and differences between the answers in the group. Explain to the group that:

- the emotions that were numbered 1 and 2 are those we have learned to often express in exaggeration;

- the emotions numbered 4 and 5 are those we have learned to express less, sometimes we even suppress or hide them;
- the emotion that we numbered 3 is something that we do not exaggerate or suppress but are more likely to express naturally.

To further your ability to recognize different emotions, you can work together (or in smaller groups) to come up with situations where expressing each emotion is healthy/ adequate and unhealthy/inadequate. For example, healthy/adequate affection creates a sense of security and acceptance, but unhealthy/inadequate often ends up limiting the receiving person; a healthy expression of anger could be shouting alone in the forest, whereas an unhealthy expression of anger would be pouring your anger out on someone (screaming, hitting them); self-destructive behavior (e.g., alcohol, cutting yourself, etc.).

Reflection questions:

- Did you learn something new about yourselves during this activity?
- Why do people exaggerate or suppress certain emotions? How do they learn to do this? What can be the consequence of exaggerating or suppressing emotions?
- Are there differences in how men and women express emotions? What are these differences?
- Do women express certain emotions more easily than men? Why do you think that is?
- Why do men and women express emotions in different ways? How do friends, family, one's community, the media influence this?
- How does the way we express our emotions affect our relationships with other people (partners, family, friends)?
- Is it easier, or more difficult, to express emotions to your peers? What about your family? What about an intimate partner?
- Why are emotions important? If necessary, give them examples: anger helps to protect oneself, fear helps in dangerous situations. Ask the participants to name a few examples too.
- How can a healthy and free expression of emotions affect your well-being and relationships with other people (partners, family, friends)?
- What could you do to express your emotions more freely? How can you become more flexible in expressing your emotions? (Note: It could be interesting to collectively come up with different strategies for dealing with emotions, and then encourage the participants to write down their thoughts on the slips of paper and, if they wish, share these thoughts with the others in small groups.)

Activity #3 “Mine and my group’s emotions”

The aim: to identify the emotional mood within the group and to find a way to adapt to one another.

Duration: 40-50min / hour.

Necessary: slips of paper with different names of various feelings, colors, markers, cutouts from magazines.

Procedure: toss crumpled notes with various names of emotions around the room (joyful, sad, exciting, fearless, calm, nervous, cautious, expectant, fun, indifferent, funny, shy, insecure, etc.). Ask the participants to walk around the room, read all the emotions, and then choose the 3 that speak to them the most. Once this is done, the participants are divided into small groups that need to agree on how to unite a group of people who have come together and their perhaps very contradictory emotions into one “presentation”. They have to come up with a story about this small group of people and their emotions. They can use colors, markers, and magazines. Give them 30 minutes to complete the task. Have the groups then present their work. When you later discuss the activity, it is important to emphasize how this activity resembles real life – the people that have come together are different, random people, just like their emotions, but they decide to work together. How effective this is depends on us as individuals and how well we recognize, control and use our emotions.

On anger

A child screams in anger, stomps his feet on the ground, but his mom shouts at him: “Cool off right now!” or shames him, “Look how ugly you look when you get angry!”. Or, imagine two part-ners having an argument and at one point one of them turns their back on the other and leaves, saying: “I won’t talk to you if you’re this angry!” The impression we get from these examples is that being angry is somehow bad and meaningless – anger only causes discomfort for the one experiencing anger and for those around him or her. But is anger really such a harmful and un-necessary emotion?

What is anger and what role does it play?

Anger is one of the hereditary effects that normally occurs in response to us being offended. When someone attacks us, anger gives us the motivation to protect ourselves and our loved ones and fight back; when someone threatens our psycho-emotional well-being, anger gives us the ability to act firmly, with determination and protect our rights and desires.

How does our body react to anger?

Anger mobilizes our body – it activates our autonomous nervous system and releases hormones (such as cortisol, testosterone) that accelerate our heart rate and breathing, increases our blood pressure, and sometimes tighten our skeletal muscles, making us shiver a little. Along with the bodily changes, our facial expressions also change, giving us a characteristic grimace: curled forehead, pursed lips, lowered eyebrows, eyes squinting and glaring at the object responsible for our anger.

Does the repression of anger have any consequences?

“Suppression” is a conscious choice to behave as if nothing had happened or the unconscious suppression of anger into one’s subconsciousness. This can cause serious problems if the subject does not become aware of his or her anger or does not express it or expresses it in a non-constructive way (like violence!). When parents prohibit their children from being angry during their childhood, they can later grow up and find it very difficult to protect themselves and their boundaries or find themselves unable to take initiative and compete. These are the children who are regularly bullied or harassed at home and at school. People who constantly suppress their anger have been shown to be at greater risk of developing psychosomatic disorders. Unexpressed anger can adversely affect our physical well-being and may be associated with a variety of medical conditions (such as gastric ulcer, migraine, etc.).

How should I react if I get angry?

Our society should re-examine its relationship with anger because being aware of one’s emotions (including anger) is a sign of good mental health.

If you feel angry, it is important to: **1.** become aware that you’re angry, understand who you are angry with and what you are angry about, **2.** constructively express your anger. For example, it is normal to say: “Your words/behavior make me angry. Perhaps we could discuss it? I think it would be good for both of us!” or “I’m feeling angry right now and I need time to calm down.” Talking about anger keeps our “communication channels” open. It becomes much easier to understand one another, if a person expresses their anger in a healthy, non-violent way, is able to talk about the causes of his or her anger and allows the other person to respond in the same way.

When should I seek help for my anger?

Help should be sought if:

- You are angry constantly and intensely at others or yourself and/or you misdirect your anger from the real object of your anger.
- If you feel that you experience too little anger and/or have difficulty defending yourself.

Remember! Anger is a healthy and necessary emotion! If there is an adequate amount of anger, it helps us to adapt to different situations in life (defending yourself, competing with others, taking initiative). However, you must be mindful and careful that your anger does not hurt you or those around you.³¹

An iceberg of emotions³²

For the iceberg only 1/3 is visible and 2/3 are hidden under the water. It is similar with the anger – it is the visible expression of emotions that is easier to psychologically endure. However often underneath it there is a different hidden emotion or pain (sadness, fear, jealousy, shame, rejection, remorse). When we are not in contact with our feelings and emotions, we instead of dealing with the real problem/pain express it as anger.

[O. Cvetkova. Par dusmām. RSU Psihosomatiskās medicīnas un psihoterapijas klīnika
The Anger Iceberg](#)

Behaviour patterns when we're not in contact with our emotions: ³³

projection – I put my feeling onto someone else (I'm not annoyed, it's you!). Projecting long enough leads to the other person starting to identify with that feeling. In result, I don't have to deal with my emotion, because I have found someone who's guilty and now, I can be angry at him/her;

passive aggression – Anger or sense of guilt are not said out loudly but expressed in a pas-sive aggressive way. Beneath there is an unfulfilled desire/need that one is ashamed/afraid/has trouble to express. Easier way is to establish a situation when the other person feels guilty;

transference – I express my anger and don't hold it back, just not at the right person at the right time, place and intensity. Transference of anger from the source to someone else. The real reason is left unsaid, it might be forgotten but the annoyance remains and continues the argu-ments about other issues. Source can also be an older event that was left undiscussed.

discharge in action – when you have a very strong anger, emotion, but you don't really know where to put it, what to do with it, how to talk about this. Then you break and hit stuff.

Concluding comments:

You can look at emotions as different forms of energy that allow you to perceive what makes you feel unwell or suppresses you. The different emotions you are capable of experiencing simply reflect your different needs, and it is better to learn how to deal with all emotions. Being able to express your emotions without hurting others makes you a stronger individual and helps you connect with the world around you. The way we express our emotions varies, but it is important to notice trends, especially in the ways how boys are brought up. For example, boys often hide their sadness, fear, even their compassion, but they often express their anger through violence. While you are not responsible for what you feel, you are still responsible for how you deal with your emotions. In order to find expressions that do not hurt you or those around you, it is impor-tant to establish a distinction between feelings and actions.

***Closing evaluation remarks on the session.**

[Artūra Miksona darbnīca "Kāpēc Tu man best? No kurienes rodas dusmas"](#)



Additional resources:

[Child Mind Institute](#)

[Teenage moods: the ups and downs of adolescence](#)

[Handbook, Young Men's Initiative. Program Y.](#)

[Don't neglect your emotions. Express them — constructively! | Artūrs Miksons \(video\)](#)

[You aren't at the mercy of your emotions – your brain creates them \(video\)](#)

[The history of human emotions \(video\)](#)

[Why some anger can be good for you \(video\)](#)

[Robert Plutchik's wheel of emotions](#)

[The 6 Types of Basic Emotions and Their Effect on Human Behavior](#)

[Blob Tree method for evaluation](#)

[Adolescent mental health](#)



FRIENDSHIP AND RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION

The aim: To develop an understanding of how we build relationships with our fellow human beings. To develop an understanding of how friendships are started and formed. What are the core values of healthy friendships and what does it really mean – to be a good friend?

What is friendship?

Most of us have some close friends or one close friend. Many of us value friendship very highly and see it as a major part of our lives. Good friends help us deal with stress, they support and amuse us. Spending time with good friends makes us feel better, happier. Friends cannot save us from unexpected turns in life, loneliness, sadness, crises, but they can help us get through them easier.

Intuitively, we already know this, but research has also confirmed that friendships and social support networks are linked to better physical health. People who experience a lack of social support are at higher risk for depression and anxiety disorders.

With our friends we learn how to build and maintain relationships. We learn to accept and provide help when needed. We learn to understand ourselves, and to realize the importance of having someone who knows and understands us better than others.

Sharing a variety of emotional difficulties with your friends can both help relieve tension and help solve problems. After a conversation with a friend, we can switch to problem-solving mode and tackle our issues with less tension and support. When we are under the influence of strong emotions, we sometimes simply lack the resources to solve a problem.

Good friends improve the quality of our lives. When we spend time with friends, we fill our lives with conversations, support, and care, fun and laughter. Friendship makes our lives fuller. In friendship, we seek trust, understanding, honesty, and support, and learn to provide our friends with the same. We become better. Good relationships help us maintain our psychological health. We each have our own relationships with our family members. These relationships aren't always the best and the most successful. However, as adults, we can and have the right to experience

healthy relationships. For many people, relationships with friends are a way to unlearn unhelpful or unhealthy relationship patterns and exchange them for new, healthier ones! ³⁴

What is respectful/non-violent communication?

In the 1960s, M. Rosenberg ³⁵ developed a model for communication-based on needs and their satisfaction or dissatisfaction and called it the non-violent communication model. Nowadays, the term “respectful communication model” is more common. This concept was introduced by the followers of M. B. Rosenberg because the terms “respectful communication” and “non-violent communication” do not differ significantly in their meaning. The term “respectful communication” makes the model sound clearer, because this doesn’t involve just non-violent conflict resolution and violence prevention but also, above all, mutual recognition, respect, and empathy, thus providing a model for stable social contacts, cooperation, and genuine emotional bonding. Respectful communication offers a way of talking about what we perceive and feel, and what our needs are, instead of condemning others or judging them for what they’ve done wrong.

The purpose of respectful communication is to understand, respect and support other people. Respect, in this case, entails more than just praising other people or focusing on the positive but understanding your own needs and those of other people. Respectful communication is a demanded social skill nowadays and it allows you to effectively engage with various groups, including family, effectively and with self-determination. Respectful communication means more than just the ability to speak: it entails action that is conscious, clear, open, non-violent, respectful and based on empathy. On the one hand, respectful communication involves the ability to actively listen, change perspectives, and the ability to empathize. On the other hand, it requires collaboration, participation, and honesty in the decision-making processes, as well as active support culture. Respectful communication strengthens two social skills in particular: a sensitive, clear and open attitude towards oneself and others. Two ways of expressing your ability to imagine yourself in the shoes of other people follow from this:

- self-empathy (sensitive behavior towards oneself): recognizing one’s feelings, needs and requests, self-confidence;
- empathy for others (compassionate treatment of others): detecting, respecting and sympathizing with others’ feelings, needs, and requests, support in meeting their needs.

The respectful communication model sees communication as a process where communication partners listen, respond and express themselves alternately.³⁶

One of the tasks of this exercise is to help you think critically and analyze whether young people evaluate their friendships as healthy; whether conflicts are resolved respectfully and by listening to everyone involved; whether everyone feels heard, understood, valued and accepted in their friendships.

[Center for psychology and cognitive behavioral therapy INTELLEGO](#)
[Marshall B. Rosenberg Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life](#)
[D. Medne \(2018\) Latvijas Universitātes Raksti. Cienošā komunikācija audzināšanā kā bērncentrētas bērniņas arhitektūra.](#)

The aim: To express your opinion on a specific subject. To practice listening to and accepting opinions that differ from yours.

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Necessary: chairs (number of players +1) placed in a circle. Prepared statements.

Procedure:

All participants must sit in a circle on their respective chairs but leave one chair empty.

The group leader stands nearby and reads various statements.

If a participant agrees with a statement, he/she must switch chairs. If the participant does not agree with the statement, or he/she is not sure about his/her position, he/she remains seated on his/her chair. Begin the exercise with simpler statements, so that all participants muster the courage to leave the initial chair they were sitting on.

Switching chairs may take time at first.

After each statement, the group leader may ask the participants to justify their position. The leader may ask, for example, "Why did you choose to switch your chair?" or "Why did you decide to remain in your chair?" The group leader should prevent a discussion from starting, but the leader or a member of the group may ask additional questions seeking more detailed explanations, such as "I'm not sure I understood this correctly – can you give me an example?" If you want to start a discussion, finish the task and then begin the discussion. To stimulate the thinking process, it's usually productive to perform the exercise with several statements and then start a discussion on a topic.

Don't forget: sometimes a statement can represent a general opinion that contradicts statistics or even facts. Such statements are usually chosen to stimulate discussion on a topic. In this case, it is very important that the group leader does not offer the group a correct answer and refrains from manipulating the group. To give an example, ask intellectually stimulating questions such as, "How do you mean that?", "Can you give us an example?", "Is this always the case?", "Are there exceptions to what you're saying?" Staying true to this exercise and its method, the group leader must arm him or herself with humility and be open-minded because the purpose of this exercise is to allow the participants to examine their views and opinions themselves.

THE STATEMENTS

- I have a lot of friends.
- It takes a long period of time for me to establish a good and trusting friendship with someone.
- You can get angry with a friend without becoming mutual enemies.
- My parents are my friends.
- My brothers/sisters are my friends.
- The friends of my friends are my friends, too, even if I don't particularly like spending time with them.
- A true friend does what I say.
- I can tell absolutely everything to a true friend.

Task from M. Hanstrema (2011) Metodikas rokasgrāmata meiteņu un zēnu grupu vadītājiem – izvērtējot uz stereotipiem balstītu dzimumu uztveri.

- An adult can be a good friend to a young person.
- I do not care which group (sexual, religious, ethnic) my friend belongs to; what I value most is that we can trust each other.
- My friends never talk behind my back.
- I never talk about my friends behind their backs.
- A friend will always tell me the truth, even if it could offend or hurt me.
- I have experienced betrayal from a friend.
- The best place to make friends is on the Internet.
- A friend will always be on my side, no matter what I do.

Reflection questions:

- What characteristics, knowledge and skills should a best friend have?
- What are your expectations towards your friends?
- Can a boy and a girl become best friends (without it being romantic)?
- Have you had real enemies? If you have, tell us why you made enemies and how did your mutual hatred manifest?
- What do you think – are you a good friend? What are some things that suggest that you are?

Activity #2: Four corners “Friendship”³⁸

The aim: To encourage the participants to reflect on their views on a subject, to train their capability to share their views, explain their opinion, and to learn to listen to the opinions and thoughts of others. During the course of the exercise, participants may change their views as well as their physical location. The exercises are not intended to open a debate where the participants attempt to convince each other that they're right. The aim is to stimulate discussion. **Duration:** 30-40 minutes

Necessary: Prepared statements.

Procedure:

The participants are given a choice to act in a made-up scenario.

The group leader reads a statement and describes a moment or scenario.

The participants are given three choices of action; each option is located in one of the corners of the room. The fourth corner remains empty – without a specific option. This corner is meant for the participants that do not want to choose either of the options they were given.

When all participants have chosen one of the corners of the room to stand in, the group leader invites the participants to share their views with each other on why he or she chose the corner they're in. If one of the corners is occupied only by a single participant, the leader must go there and discuss that person's choice with him or her.

The groups discuss their choices. Participants sharing the same corner do not necessarily have to share a common opinion.

Task from M. Hanstrema (2011) Metodikas rokasgrāmata meiteņu un zēnu grupu vadītājiem – izvērtējot uz stereotipiem balstītu dzimumu uztveri.

STATEMENTS AND SCENARIOS

What do you consider the most important in a relationship with a "best friend"? - You can talk about anything with a friend.

- A friend will always support you. -

It's fun being with a friend.

- Another answer.

What is the worst thing that can happen to a friendship?

Lies and defamation.

Criticism.

Betrayal of trust.

Another answer.

Alex, one of the girls in your class (a good friend of yours), has had relationships with several boys in the class. She just broke up with one of the boys, and he is not happy. The boys sit on a couch and discuss what "a whore Alex is" when she approaches the couch. One of the boys ex-claims so Alex can hear it: "There she comes, the slut!" Alex gets angry and tells the boys that they have had relationships with other girls too. Then you approach Alex and admit that you think what she did was brave. She turns to look at you and says: "Oh, you think so? Did you do anything about it? Why didn't you say anything if you're my friend?" What will you do?

- Agree with Alex – you should have reacted earlier.

- Offer to accompany her to go see a teacher and talk about the boys' actions. - Do nothing.

- Another answer.

Reflection questions:

What types of people usually get rumors spread about them? Does it make a difference if this person is a boy or a girl? Does it make a difference if this person is or isn't your friend?

Why do rumors about girls acting "like sluts" spread faster than rumors about boys that act the same?

Why is it sometimes so difficult to say what you think?

Is it important to say what you think?

You're at a party and your best friend/girlfriend gets so drunk he/she passes out. What are you going to do?

- I'll call his/her parents and ask them to come pick him/her up. - I'll

call my parents and ask them for help.

- I'll try to take care of him/her myself. -

Other answer.

Activity #3: Collage “The core values in true friendships”

The aim: To encourage the participants to think creatively about what they think are the values that are at the core of every true friendship and healthy relationship. What do I expect from a friendship with someone and what do I want and what can I give to that friendship?

Duration: 20-30 min

Necessary: A4 sheets of paper, newspapers, and magazines, markers, pencils, scissors, glue

Procedure: The participants are invited to create a free-form visualization – a collage of the core values of friendship, by cutting up newspapers and magazines. Encourage the participants to think about what they think is true, healthy and “real” friendship, how they want to feel in such relationships, what is important to them. Have them mention what they would like to do, experience, and enjoy with a friend. Remind them that they can also write about their relationship and friendship with themselves.

Each participant should then present their collage to the others.

Concluding comments: We make friends, and we become friends to other people. Building and maintaining friendships is an emotional investment that increases the joy of living, sense of security and gives fulfillment to one’s life. It is important for everyone to be understood and accepted as they are, so people naturally crave real friendship and want to experience it. With real friends, one does not feel lonely in this world. The presence of friends in one’s life creates a sense of “us”; friends can do a lot – not only comfort, support, encourage or cheer you up, but also inspire, excite, motivate, and guide you. The ability to make friends isn’t connected to just the ability to support and comfort others, but it also means that you have to be able to share a friend’s joy whenever he or she succeeds. Often it is much more difficult to endure the success of another person than to be able to comfort or support him or her in times of hardship. Envy and jealousy, much like the sense of private ownership, are undesirable in friendship. Similarly, it is difficult to call something a real friendship where mutual benefit is considered the most important. As circumstances change, personal benefit becomes less relevant and the friendship dissolves. Similarly, it is also not enough to merely like someone to become friends, because liking someone can turn out superficial, making the whole experience short-lived. The ability to make friends is not equally developed in all people, some do not have this ability because they find it hard to trust someone, while others are overly egocentric. Friendship requires accountability and readiness to coordinate one’s life with the events in another’s, taking his or her interests and circumstances into account. Egoistic people are selfish self-seekers, who often use others for their own benefit, they are self-motivated, and are not ready to take other people into account. Egocentric people see themselves at the center of their lives and the world, they want friends, but expect the world to revolve around them. Friendship requires respect for another’s desires and needs, therefore true friends do not merely listen – they hear their friends and truly understand what they’re saying, and take what they said into account.³⁹

***Closing evaluation remarks on the session.**

[News site LA.LV](#)

Additional resources:

[10 ways to have a better conversation \(video\)](#)

[Effective communication](#)

[Teens. Communicating & Relationships](#)

[Giving and Receiving Feedback](#)

[Communication theory. Body language](#)

[The Center for Nonviolent Communication](#)

[Non-violent communication: how to get your point across \(video\)](#)

← CONFLICTS AND WAYS OF RESOLVING THEM →

The aim: To educate the group on the topic of conflicts, their types, and why they happen. To develop the teacher's and the group's skills to deal with conflicts in a healthy way.

Conflicts are an integral part of life, and they occur for a variety of reasons. Conflicts can occur as a result of a misunderstanding, conflicting desires, the way power is distributed between informal leaders, or due to disputes between formal leaders. A conflict can arise on the basis of an old, unresolved conflict that may even be inherited (such as what your parents have taught/told you about certain people of a racial, ethnic or religious background).

Most people are afraid of conflict. They want everyone to live in harmony. In fact, one can look at conflicts as being energetic – people gain energy by reflecting upon and resolving conflicts. Whereas, if a conflict remains unresolved and one spends his or her time processing it inside, he or she is thereby spending his or her energy unproductively. This applies both to groups and individuals.

It is also up to the group leader to recognize and help resolve a conflict, instead of ignoring it to be resolved elsewhere. In order to resolve a conflict, all parties do not have to think the same way – they just have to be able to agree on something. It is not good if differences of opinion and conflicts have negative and destructive effects. Here's one solution to a conflict: the parties agree that they have different interests or views, but they also decide that these differences will not have destructive effects. There are some conflicts that may never be fully resolved, but they can be dealt with constructively, by creating appropriate preconditions.

A successful resolution of a conflict requires that everyone is given the opportunity to express their views. This gives people a sense of security and creates a positive atmosphere. An individual or group must be allowed to fight for what they consider right, to express their views and to be heard. This makes it easier to make a majority decision or have a leader make his or her decision, even if it is not the result you want. Through communication, it is possible to smooth out a situation and find a way to coexist regardless of whether the conflict is still there or if a solution was found. When resolving conflicts, you can find ways to ensure that neither side invests too much energy to offend, disapprove of, or express hate towards the other person/persons.

When a conflict arises, there is a risk that those involved will try to find a scapegoat for the problem. When this happens, the problem is projected onto someone, and those involved fail to realize that both parties share the responsibility to resolve this conflict. In addition, those who try to remain neutral and do not take a specific position feel compelled to do so in this scenario. The urge to find a scapegoat makes it seem like everyone has to pick a side to support. Unknowingly, two sides become mobilized. This creates a sort of Us vs Them type of thinking – a way to strengthen our convictions by demonizing the opposite side and glorifying the group we represent. It will probably be difficult to resolve a conflict that has been left unresolved for some time. One way to resolve a conflict is to try to forget about individual persons and instead try to discover the source of the conflict and look at it from different angles. Try analyzing what those involved in the conflict and outside it seem to fear and need. Laughter, smiles and humor are important tools that can help facilitate the process of resolving a conflict. These tools relieve tension in us, help us gain perspective, and help us view the situation from the outside. In order to resolve a conflict, it is necessary to create an atmosphere where everyone can present their side of the story without being offended. No one should criticize others for speaking their minds in this scenario. **The group leader, too, must remain neutral. This means that the leader must refrain from fully participating in the game, avoid taking concrete positions and be understanding of everyone's opinions.** A show of respect and neutrality and engaging in conflict resolution helps those involved to trust the group leader. This means the leader must refrain from moralizing, he or she should participate in the conflict resolution process and try to be understanding of everyone's opinions. Remember: people usually act in accordance with a game plan that they themselves have imagined. He or she shall act rationally but in the light of his or her circumstances. Conflict resolution is based on the fact that everyone benefits in the end, even though the compromises that are reached may be different. If someone wins, there is always a loser who will want to get back at the winner or take revenge. If both sides find a middle ground, they both become winners to some extent. Generally speaking, one should try to reserve negative criticism for one-on-one conversations, while positive criticism can be expressed in front of a group. It is wise to avoid statements that resemble condemnation or accusation. Try starting whatever you are going to say with something like: "I have a problem... What do you think?" **The group leader's position, attitude, and behavior in the group** are very important, just like the rules of the game that are going to be used. The leader can take initiative and encourage everyone to agree on what the atmosphere in the group will be like and how conflicts will be resolved. It is sometimes good to emphasize that conflicts or contradictions will come about sooner or later as an integral part of any relationship and a precondition for one's further development, even if these conflicts seem cumbersome. Sometimes, but not always, conflicts can be successfully resolved by confronting someone. The other party will thus see their behavior. They have the opportunity to change their behavior for the common good. The group leader's initial position may be: I worry about who I am confronting; I am indifferent to those that I never confront. People usually have expectations towards people who they consider capable and who they think they can count on.

A few simple steps in conflict resolution (can also be applied when working with the youth group):

Acknowledge the existence of a conflict. Allow everyone to describe how they see the problem. Remember that you will not know what others think about a situation until you ask them. Everyone has their own opinion on what is important and why. Realizing this will profoundly impact the way in which the group leader and the participants will deal with the conflict in question.

Talk with one another and separate **the conflict from you as persons**. Formulate the problem in a way that makes it a common problem that you have to solve as a group. Do not forget that every action always has some positive purpose at its core.

Let everyone talk about their fears, feelings, and needs.

Cooperate with each other, explore the needs and interests of everyone and find out which ones can be met. Try to understand if there is an alternative solution and a mutually acceptable way of meeting everyone's needs and interests.

Praise everyone involved, show them recognition and respect for their efforts to resolve the conflict,

Praise the way how members of the group offer solutions to resolve the situation.

Deal with the situation collectively by discussing the matter with one another and agree on what to do next. If necessary, re-examine the situation.

As the group leader, you must know and remember the following things about conflict resolution:

Be careful about finding scapegoats and make sure you don't become one as you attempt to resolve a conflict! Be aware of the way the participants in the group organize themselves in the room and be aware of the overall atmosphere in the group.

Remember to avoid influencing the process or taking a stand on a matter!

The group leader must be sensitive. Don't forget about respect, neutrality and getting involved in conflict resolution. Remember that laughter can be used as a remedy in serious and difficult situations, but be careful that no participant feels as if they are being ridiculed or that their problems are not being taken seriously as a result.

Steps in conflict resolution:

First, let everyone involved in the conflict tell their side of the story. Everything they've experienced is equally real, even if their accounts of what happened are different. Ask those involved to share how much responsibility they think they have for the problem/conflict. It would be wise to encourage everyone to say something positive about the other party.

Summarize what everyone has said thus far without committing yourself to resolving the conflict or offering a solution. Ask the parties to confirm that you have understood the situation correctly. Help to clarify the situation (try saying things like: "Am I understanding this right?"). Identify possible misunderstandings and ask the parties involved in the conflict whether they understand what the other party said.

Allow the parties to describe the solution they want and allow them to make various suggestions for resolving the conflict.

Provide feedback. During a conflict, it's much easier to focus on the other party's mistakes, leaving the motives behind their actions unexamined. As a neutral party, the leader can help those involved see themselves and their role in the conflict. The group leader can also help one party see the positive sides in the other.

Ultimately, you must decide together what you're going to do next. Will you meet another time and try to solve the situation later or will you re-examine the situation from the beginning? Maybe decide to resolve the conflict during this meeting?

Activity #1 "What's the worst that can happen..."

The aim: To train the skills required to reach an agreement and be able to solve difficult situations or problems. The method can be used during the first sessions with the group. In situations where everything seems very complicated and it is difficult to understand what to do next, this method can prove a useful way of thinking about a problem.

Duration: 25 min

Procedure:

Think of a topic, for example – the worst and most terrible thing that could happen to your group. Assign one person to oversee the work and take time during the exercise and another person to make notes.

Time to reflect (3-4 minutes): Invite the participants to come up with and list all the problems and terrible things that might happen between the members of the group (you can come up with unrealistic things that have a small chance of happening and you can also come up with real problems that might be considered small, etc.).

Going through the list (3-4 minutes): Choose the three most dangerous, the most serious, worst, situations from the list. Of these, select the ones that seem the most realistic and relevant.

Discuss them (10 minutes): Review and transform the terrible scenarios into solutions, constructive ideas, and actions. Think about what could be done to avoid these situations. Consider the bad scenarios, but try to develop constructive actions and proposals as well.

Explain, specify what you mean (5 minutes): This is the time to explain and formulate concrete scenarios for the future. Write down a proposal for a specific agreement or plan of operation. Write down specific points and agree who will be responsible for carrying out specific tasks.

Activity #2 “Responding to conflicts”

The aim: to encourage the participants to remodel their behavior/reactions in conflict situations and make them understand that everyone can see, feel, experience and react differently to exactly the same situation. Explore the five types of conflict response.

Duration: 30 min

Necessary: Thomas-Kilmann survey “Conflict Response”, handout material “Situational styles”.

Procedure: the participants are offered to fill in the survey “Conflict Response”. The participants can count their own answers to questions/scenarios on their own and discover what their individual reaction to conflict situations is according to the survey. The group leader gives the participants the handout material containing descriptions of tactics (“Situational styles”).

Important! When reflecting on the answers, it is important to remember that this activity is not about “better/worse/right/wrong” but about constructively and critically analyzing one’s actions and attitudes, changing the ones that are not healthy and improving the skills and character traits that are healthy, positive and help us create productive interactions in our daily lives.

Reflection questions:

What are the situations in your daily life where conflicts are most common? Why do you think that is?

Why is it sometimes difficult to agree on a solution to a conflict?

What could make the agreement process easier? What makes it harder?

Can you give examples of situations where you would not be ready to reach a compromise with someone?

Why do you think teenagers often argue with their parents? What could both parties (a teenager and his or her parents) do to make their relationship healthier?

What have you learned from this survey? How could you apply what you just learned to your life and your relationships?



Activity #3 „Many ways to resolve conflict”

The aim: To learn various ways of resolving conflict, recognize the possibility to use them in everyday life.

Duration: 20 min.

Necessary: handout materials “Conflict resolution vocabulary” and “Conflict situations”.

Procedure:

The group leader explains that there are many ways how conflicts might be resolved.

Together read the “Conflict resolution vocabulary” handout, discussing each of the terms. Ask participants if they can think of examples of each kind of conflict resolution.

Hand out the “Conflict situations” handout and have the participants identify what type of conflict resolution is being used in each situation.

Reflection questions:

How realistic are these scenarios? In what other ways these situations might be resolved?

Have you ever used any of these conflict resolution approaches? In what situation?

What are some other ways of resolving conflicts that are not on this handout? (e.g., compromise, competing, draw etc.)

Concluding comments:

We make agreements with one another every day of our lives, but they are not always easy. Learning and practicing the skills necessary to come to such agreements can help you resolve conflicts in different areas of your life and build healthier and more equal relationships.

If you have enough time, offer the young people to perform the activity – “What should I do when I am angry?”. Divide the participants into 2 groups. One group is given a large sheet of paper labeled “Healthy expressions of anger” (going for a jog, constructive conversation, relieving your stress by screaming or yelling, etc.) and the other is given a sheet labeled “Unhealthy expressions of anger” (hitting the other person, hurting yourself, etc.). The group is given 15 minutes to write as many of such expressions they can think of. Discussion and evaluate what the group wrote.

***Closing evaluation remarks on the session.**

Additional resources:

[Types of conflict](#)

[Disrespectful teenage behavior: how to deal with it](#)

[Tips for communicating with your teen](#)

[Conflict management with teens](#)

[Why teenage brains are so hard to understand](#)

[Communicating with teenagers](#)

[An introduction to conflict resolution](#)

[6 tips for dealing with conflict](#)

[Free yourself when conflict resolution fails \(video\)](#)

[Conflict Resolution Activities](#)

[Conflict Resolution Resources](#)

[Negotiation and conflict resolution activities](#)

[The Big Book of Conflict Resolution Games \(pdf\)](#)

[Conflict Resolution Games: 6 Ways to End Conflict in Your Office](#)

Resource sheet: SESSION #5, activity #2

Thomas-Kilmann survey

Circle one of the two answers that you find most appropriate in the situations you've chosen (school, home, etc.). Don't think about your answers too long, your first impression will be the most accurate! When this is done, write your answers down in the table (for example, 1. A, 2. B, 3. B etc.). Go downwards through the columns and count the A's and B's together and write down your result (for example, Cooperation – 2, Compromise – 10, etc.). Whichever style of conflict resolution had the highest number of points, is the most pronounced in your attitude to conflict.

- A) there are times when I let others take responsibility for solving a problem rather than discuss the things we disagree on, I try to highlight the things where we are in agreement.
- A) I try to find a compromise solution
I try to take my own and other's considerations into account when I make decisions
- A) I usually act honestly to achieve my goal
I can try to respect the feelings of others and maintain our relationship
- A) I try to find a compromise solution
sometimes I sacrifice my own desires to put others' desires first
- A) I consistently seek out the help of other people to find a solution
I try to do everything necessary to avoid unnecessary tensions
- A) I try to avoid making trouble for myself
I try to prove my position and win
- A) I try to postpone having to discuss an issue until I have had time to think about it
I am willing to give up some positions in exchange for others
- A) I usually act honestly to achieve my goal
I try to consider all options and get answers to questions right from the start
- A) I think that mutual differences are not always worth worrying about
I put in the effort to achieve what I want/view as right
- A) I usually act honestly to achieve my goal
I try to find a compromise solution.
- A) I try to consider all options and get answers to questions right from the start
I can try to respect the feelings of others and maintain our relationship
- A) I sometimes avoid taking a position which may lead to a sharp reaction
I try to let the other person keep some of his or her positions if he or she lets me do the same
- A) I offer a middle way
I impose my choices
- A) I will tell the other person my ideas and ask them that they share theirs
I will try to explain the logic and benefits of my position
- A) I can try to respect the feelings of others and maintain our relationship
I try to do everything necessary to avoid unnecessary tensions

- A) I try not to hurt others' feelings
I try to make the other person see the virtues of my position
- A) I usually act honestly to achieve my goal
I try to do everything necessary to avoid unnecessary tensions
- A) if it makes the other person happy, I let them keep their views on a matter
I try to let the other person keep some of his or her positions if he or she lets me do the same
- A) I try to consider all options and get answers to questions right from the start
I try to postpone having to discuss an issue until I have had time to think about it
- A) I try to establish our differences right from the start
I try to find a fair combination of benefits and losses for both sides
- A) when I begin negotiations, I try to be attentive to the desires of others
I always try to address an issue directly
- A) I try to find a middle way where both people can meet halfway
I defend my desires
- A) I am often interested in satisfying the desires of all parties involved in a conflict
there are times when I let others take responsibility for solving a problem
- A) if the positions of the other person seem to be of great importance to him or her, I let them fulfill their desires
I try to make both sides agree to a compromise
- A) I will try to explain the logic and benefits of my position
when I begin negotiations, I try to be attentive to the desires of others
- A) I offer a middle way
I am almost always interested in satisfying the wishes of all parties
- A) I sometimes avoid taking a position which may lead to a sharp reaction
if it makes the other person happy, I let them keep their views on a matter
- A) I usually act honestly to achieve my goal
I consistently seek out the help of other people to find a solution
- A) I offer a middle way
I think that mutual differences are not always worth worrying about
- A) I try not to hurt others' feelings
I will always discuss the problem with the other person

SESSION #5, activity #2

No.	Competition Struggle Win/ lose	Cooperation Problem solving	Compromise	Avoidance Withdrawal	Adaptation Smoothing out difficulties
1.				A	B
2.		B	A		
3.	A				B
4.			A		B
5.		A		B	
6.	B			A	
7.			B	A	
8.	A	B			
9.	B			A	
10.	A		B		
11.		A		B	
12.			B	A	
13.	B		A		
14.	B	A			
15.				B	A
16.	B				A
17.	A			B	
18.			B		A
19.		A		B	
20.		A	B		
21.		B			A
22.	B		A		
23.		A		B	
24.			B		A
25.	A				B
26.		B	A		
27.				A	B
28.	A	B			
29.			A	B	
30.		B			A
Total:					

Competition: _____
 Cooperation: _____
 Compromise: _____
 Avoidance: _____
 Adaptation: _____

ATTITUDE TO CONFLICT

Turtle (withdrawal, shutting oneself off)

Withdraws within oneself to avoid conflict. Renounces personal goals and relationships. Avoids goals and people which may lead to conflict. Turtles believe that conflict resolution is hopeless. They feel helpless and are convinced that it is better to withdraw (physically and psychologically) from conflicts that await them.

Shark (competition, struggle, win/lose)

Sharks try to win over their opponents by forcing them to adopt their opinion during conflict. Goals are very important to sharks, but relationships don't matter to them. Sharks are looking for ways to reach their goals at all costs. They do not care about the needs of others or that others accept the views of sharks. They are convinced that conflicts can be resolved by winning over the other person and that for a conflict to be resolved, one of the sides must give in to the other. They always aspire to be winners. For the shark, victory brings pleasure, pride, but loss brings a sense of weakness, inadequacy, and failure. Sharks attempt to win by attacking the other person with force and intimidating others.

Bear (reconciliation, smoothing out difficulties)

Relationships are very important to bears. Their goals exist in the background. They want to be accepted; bears find it important that others like them. They are convinced that conflicts should be deflected, that it is impossible to discuss a conflict without damaging the relationship. They are afraid that a prolonged conflict may hurt someone and have a bad effect on the relationship. Bears will often say something like this: "I will give up my goal and let you get what you want because I want you to like me." The bear tries to reconcile the conflicting parties, trying to avoid harm to the relationship.

Fox (compromise)

Foxes care about their goals and their relationships with others. Foxes look for compromises by partially giving up on their goals and persuading the other person to partially give up on their goals. They look for a solution to a conflict by having both parties meet halfway between two extremes. They would much rather sacrifice a part of their goals and relationship to find a solution for the good of a common cause.

Owl (cooperation)

Owls value goals and relationships very highly. Owls view conflicts as a problem to be solved and seek solutions that achieve both the owl's and the other person's goals. Whenever in conflict, they try to find techniques to improve the relationship by reducing tensions between both persons. During conflict, they try to discuss the problems.

Resource sheet: SESSION #5, activity#3

Conflict resolution vocabulary

COMMUNICATION

Some conflicts start because people misunderstand each other. Talking things out and explaining might take care of it.

NEGOTIATION

When two or more people decide to work out a conflict themselves, they might follow a set of steps. The steps help them work out the conflict or negotiate.

MEDIATION

Sometimes people want to work out a problem but have trouble negotiating. They might ask someone to help them. That person is called a mediator. He or she mediates the conflict by helping the people work it out. The mediator does not tell the people what to do; he or she helps them decide for themselves.

ARBITRATE

Sometimes a mediator does solve people's problems. Then he or she isn't called a mediator. He or she is called an arbitrator. When people ask an arbitrator to help them, they must agree to do whatever the arbitrator suggests.

LITIGATION

When people can't work out their conflict themselves, they may go to a court and have a trial. They hire lawyers and go before a judge. A judge is like an arbitrator. The lawyers try to convince the judge that their client is right. The judge decides who is right according to the law and decides what solution there should be.

LEGISLATION

To legislate is to make something the law or a rule. Some kinds of conflicts cause people to try to change laws or rules so the problem won't happen again.

Resource sheet: SESSION #5, activity #3

Conflict situations

Roger and Kindra were arguing over who would get to use the box of markers. They realized that arguing was getting them nowhere, so they figured out several ways they could both use the markers. Then they chose the way they liked best.

Jerome, Ted, and Alfredo are supposed to put up themed decorations for school party, but they can't agree on what the theme should be. They finally went to their teacher and asked him to choose one the themes.

Laura was upset because her best friend Sara walked by her this morning without saying a word. Laura didn't speak to Sara all day. Finally Sara got Laura to say what was wrong. "I didn't even see you" replied Sara, "I would never walk by without saying something to you." It was all a misunderstanding.

Alberto and Diana in school's sports lesson both were playing the dodge ball. They both wanted to be captain and started to shout at each other. Finally Mary came up and helped them to work out a solution to the problem.

Jake was being teased and jokingly called names by some kids in the class. He hated being called names and felt very unpleasant. Every morning the class had a class meeting to discuss things. Jake suggested that there be a class rule against name-calling and teasing.

Elizabeth accused Rebeca in rumoring about her behind her back and hiding her things with an aim to harass her. Rebeca says that it has been just an innocent joke. In result, a class court has been set up from few classmates and their class teacher where they both will present their proof and court will decide whether Rebeca is guilty.

Resource sheet: SESSION #5, activity #3

Conflict situations. Answers

Negotiation
Arbitrate
Communication
Mediation
Legislation
Litigation

SEX AND GENDER. WHY DOES THIS MATTER TO ME?

The aim: To understand the differences between sex and gender and to reflect on the models of behavior expected from boys/men and girls/women.

Every society has norms, i.e., officially prescribed or socially accepted rules that people live their entire lives by. This is a way to maintain order and facilitate relationships between people. Norms matter because they dictate how we should treat each other, for example, how we should greet others or express gratitude. But norms are also restrictive and, sometimes, discriminatory. A norm is a specific model – what we expect, what we wish to encounter or avoid. In leading a group, it is important to apply a norm-critical perspective – i.e., to critically evaluate any norms that restrict or discriminate people. A norm-critical perspective pays attention to the structures that cause the rights of some people to be automatically respected while others have to fight for the recognition of their rights.⁴⁰

Stereotypes

Stereotyping is often applied in interpersonal relationships. A stereotype is an individual's stable, persistent, exaggerated and unobjective set of beliefs about an object or subject. It is a cognitive mechanism that helps us classify things and phenomena in the real world, in theory facilitating our thinking process – an individual does not expend energy to get acquainted with a new object, but rather assigns to it an existing category based on a few characteristics. It is important to remember that a stereotype is a highly simplified notion of a social group and its members.

Stereotypes are sure to facilitate the perception of matching information and enable us to pay attention to various aspects of communicative interaction, including information on the other person's personality. At the same time, however, stereotypes are simplified judgments of others and often lead to false conclusions. The most common stereotypes concern people's age, sex, ethnic or religious identity, sexual orientation, political views, and economic status.

Mīa Hanstrema (2011) Metodikas rokasgrāmata meiteņu un zēnu grupu vadītājiem – izvērtējot uz stereotipiem balstītu dzimumu uztveri.

Stereotypes can be:

- openly expressed – explicit. These stereotypes are at work when information is perceived in a controlled and conscious fashion;
- merely suspected – implicit. These stereotypes are processed automatically and unconsciously. Since stereotyping is mostly unconscious, implicit stereotypes are more prevalent.

Stereotypes can take the form of generalizations, which are normal and even necessary for us to learn and gain experience (fire is hot and can burn you), generalizing and linking it to similar situations or experiences. However, generalizations about people and/or groups of people can have the opposite effect, even causing us to reject evidence to the contrary.

Gender stereotypes are preconceived ideas whereby females and males are assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their gender. They are often based on prejudices, uncritical assumptions and biased assessment. Gender stereotypes very often are at the basis of discrimination based on gender that forbid one of the genders to choose some profession or certain behaviour, thus reducing his or her options.

Sex and gender

What does it mean to be a woman? What does it mean to be a man? Many researchers have found that boys and girls are treated differently as children. This begins as soon as a baby is born, and others start communicating with it.

Gender (or socially constructed gender) is the way we understand how a man or a woman should live in a specific culture and historical period. From the moment we are born, our social and cultural environment offers roles, opportunities, and restrictions to us as “men” or “women”.

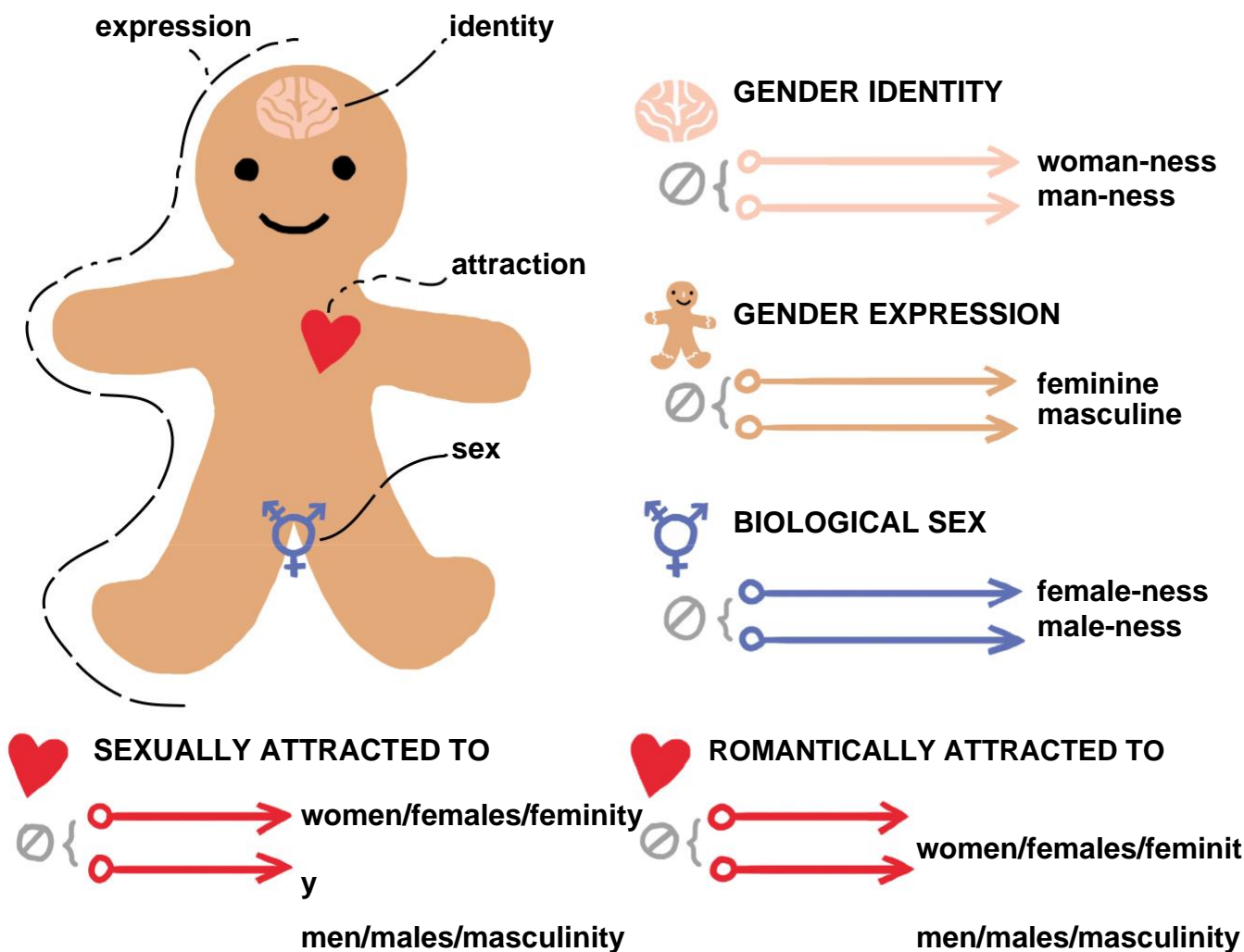
The World Health Organization provides a simple explanation of the terms “**sex**” and “**gender**”: biological sex refers to the biological and physiological properties defining a man or a woman. Gender, on the other hand, refers to socially constructed roles, attitudes, behaviors, actions, and characteristics that are societally acceptable for men or women. To simplify – “man” and “woman” are categories of sex, while “masculinity” and “femininity” are categories of gender.⁴¹ Biological sex is determined by five factors: the number and type of sex chromosomes (XX, XY, XXY, XYY etc.), type of gonads (ovaries or testicles), sex hormones, internal reproductive system (e.g. uterus for women), external reproductive organs. When one of these five factors do not correspond with the male or female sex person is called intersex. Signs that a person is intersex not always can be seen when the person is born. Sometimes people don't ever find out about them being intersex unless genetic testing is done. Intersex infants and children with ambiguous reproductive organs sometimes tend to be surgically or hormonally changed in order to fit in the socially acceptable gender category. However, this type of manipulations increasingly are seen as human rights violation and such manipulations are done only in cases when it is necessary for medical purposes (e.g. some physiological functions are impaired or there are dangers to physical health). Various intersex body constitutions are although rare but completely normal

[Gender matters. A Manual on Addressing Gender-Based Violence Affecting Young People](#)

biological phenomena. Intersex people similarly as others have various gender identities, expressions and sexual orientations. Most identify as female or male, but others do not feel belonging to any specific gender. Some intersex people have been raised as one gender but later in adult life identifies as another gender.

However, gender is a construct created by a constantly changing society. Femininity and masculinity are believed to be based on socialization or upbringing. Every era and culture has had its own ideals and views on how people should live. Throughout history, notions of what is feminine and masculine have changed across space and time, since models of gender are created by people. We learn to identify ourselves in a specific way depending on the images, cultural codes, and assumptions about gender roles offered to us. The way society understands gender roles significantly influences the rights and opportunities a person is given in life.





Source: <https://www.genderbread.org/resource/genderbread-person-v4-0-poster>

Boys' and girls' groups operate under the belief that the way society assigns and treats gender is not innate or unchangeable. Gender roles are mainly created by societal norms and beliefs. It is precisely society's position on how a boy or girl should behave that makes them act like "typical" men or women. This is gender expression, taught and expected from an individual in advance.

The attitude towards what is typically masculine or feminine varies depending on context, time, place and culture. The modern understanding of the sexes is deeply rooted in the idea that both sexes are opposites. A view of masculinity, as opposed to femininity, is particularly common. A neutral view is lacking, which results in various circumstances restricting the lives of women and men. In addition, there is the aspect of power, where higher value is placed on the tradition-ally masculine and on actions performed by men due to society's belief that men are better at performing them. The traditionally feminine along with the activities and interests of women are considered less valuable. These beliefs manifest in a large number of ways, from remuneration to recreational activities.⁴²

⁴² Mīa Hanstrema (Mia Hanström) (2011) Metodikas rokasgrāmata meiteņu un zēnu grupu vadītājiem – izvērtējot uz stereotipiem balstītu dzimumu uztveri.

Gender equality

Gender equality means equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, thereby recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development. On a global scale, achieving gender equality also requires eliminating harmful practices against women and girls, including sex trafficking, femicide, wartime sexual violence, and other oppression tactics.

Girls and boys see gender inequality in their homes and communities every day – in textbooks, in the media and among the adults who care for them. Parents may assume unequal responsibility for household work, with mothers bearing the brunt of caregiving and chores. The majority of low-skilled and underpaid community health workers who attend to children are also women, with limited opportunity for professional growth.

EU Gender Equality Index indicates that EU score 67,4 out of 100 and is gradually moving towards improvements in its member states. The EU employment rate (of people aged 20-64) is 67 % for women and 79 % for men. The uneven concentration of women and men in different sectors of the labour market is a persistent problem in the EU. More women work in education, health and social work (30 % of women compared to 8 % of men) while significantly more men are employed in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (7 % of women compared to 33 % of men). The income of women is still much lower: the gender gap in monthly earnings is 20 %, with significant differences between countries. In the EU, 17 % of women and 16 % of men are at risk of poverty. People at highest risk of poverty are single mothers and women and men born outside the EU. On average, women earn 84 cents for every euro a man makes per hour, resulting in a gender pay gap of 16 %.

In 2016, 16 EU Member States reported a total of 788 women killed by a partner or family member.

On average, intimate partners or family members intentionally killed more than one woman every day.

In 2016, the number of registered female victims of trafficking in the EU reached 7 007(29). Overall, evidence shows that 68 % of registered victims of trafficking are women and girls. The most widespread form of exploitation experienced by women and girls is sexual exploitation, accounting for 95 % of the total number of registered victims of this form of trafficking in the EU.⁴³

Direct and indirect discrimination

- Direct discrimination can be seen in situations when a woman or man is denied an opportunity because of her or his gender.
- Indirect discrimination manifests itself in situations when a man or woman is denied an opportunity to exercise their rights because of social, economic, cultural, historical or their factors (but not gender), however, it results in uneven opportunities or benefits for one gender.

A brief glossary:

Biological sex – refers to the biological properties and characteristics that identify a person as a man or a woman. The biological properties of a person's biological sex include: XX (for women) or XY (for men) gender chromosomes, different genitalia (penis, vagina), hormones, differences in muscle mass and bone structure.

Gender – refers to socially constructed differences and inequality between men and women, for example, ideas on how they should dress and behave. These ideas and ideals are acquired in families, from friends, in religious and cultural institutions, schools, workplaces, and the media.

Gender identity – the gender an individual identifies with and feels a sense of belonging to.

Gender identity may or may not match an individual's biological sex. This is not related to sexual orientation.

Gender expression – behavior, manners, interests, and appearance attributed to a particular sex in a particular cultural and social context; the gender in which an individual express themselves through e.g. clothing, accessories, body language, movements. Expression of gender identity may or may not match an individual's biological sex. This is not related to sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation – also sexual romantic attraction; who you are attracted to and who you feel drawn to romantically, emotionally, and sexually.

Sexuality – refers to the expression of feelings, thoughts, emotions, and behavior as men or women, including attraction, falling in love and behavior in intimate relationships. **Gender**

equality – all individuals regardless of sex/gender enjoy equal rights, obligations, and opportunities.

Drag king – an umbrella term for women who dress up as men and perform in various places and situations.

Drag queen – an umbrella term for men who dress up as women and perform in various places and situations.

Queer – an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities who are not heterosexual or are not cisgender.

Cisgender – a term for people whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth.

Transperson – describes individuals whose gender identity and/or expression of gender identity diverges from their biological sex. This is not related to sexual orientation.

LGBTQ – an initialism that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer.

Toxic masculinity – standards and norms that determine traditional roles of masculinity, in doing so it stigmatizes and limits boys and men's expression of emotions. Linked to unhealthy expressions of traditional masculinity, including violence.

Differences between sex and gender are outlined in Tables No. 1 and No. 2 below:

Table No. 1

	Gender	Sex
What is it like?	Cultural, socially constructed, acquired through socialization. Spectrum between masculinity and femininity.	Biological, genetic. Characterized by sex chromosomes (XX or XY), reproductive organs, hormones, muscular system, skeleton. Male/Female/Intersex
Can it be changed?	Yes. Based on the ways person identifies and expresses oneself.	Yes. Through complex biophysical medical transformation.
Examples	Both men and women can work. Both men and women can take care of relatives and children.	Only female can give birth. Only male can make female pregnant.

Table No. 2

Traditional cultural and social gender & sex perceptions. May vary in different cultures and societies.

Man: testicles, penis, mustache	SEX	Woman: vagina, breasts
Masculine identity		Feminine identity
Strong, aggressive, competitive.	G	Fragile, calm, attractive, polite, passive/weak, gentle.
For a child: toy guns, sports, construction sets.	E	For a child: dolls, animals, jewelry.
In formal education, directed towards the exact sciences: programming, mathematics, physics, business, politics etc.	N	In formal education, directed towards the humanities: music, art, theatre, languages, teaching, healthcare etc.
Outside (the public sphere): smoking, drinking, greater sexual liberty, higher social mobility, e.g., boys may stay out later at night than girls.	D	Inside (the private sphere): being a mother and a wife, lower social mobility, e.g., have to be home early, have to report where they are going (fear of pregnancy can also be a restrictive factor)
Dominating, controlling identity. Leadership-oriented.	E	Subdued, controlled identity. Oriented towards execution, adaptation
Power: Aggression in conflict resolution, demanding, dominating.	R	Obedient, understanding, willing to adapt, accommodation, intrigue.

Activity #1: What is gender?

The aim: to discuss prevailing sex and gender roles, understanding how they help or hinder us and how they influence our feelings, actions, behavior, and emotions. What does it mean to “be a girl” or to “be a boy”?

Duration: 40-50 min

Necessary: Large sheets of paper and markers.

Procedure: As you start a discussion on the concepts and definitions of a man and a woman, it is important to start with words used by the participants themselves. If the group is shy, you as the leader should offer suggestions, but it is important to watch out for words that might seem insulting or humiliating.

Draw two columns on a sheet of paper – label the first sheet man (or boy) and label the other woman (or girl).

Invite participants to make a list of things related to the idea of being a man. Write the things – both positive and negative – down in the relevant column. Invite participants to mention both biological and social characteristics.

Repeat the same process for the column labeled “woman”.

Have a brief discussion about some of the characteristics listed in each column.

Switch the labels of the columns. Ask participants whether the characteristics attributed to men could be attributed to women and vice versa.

Use the below questions to guide a discussion of the characteristics that cannot be applied to both men and women, and why. Explain that any biological characteristics that cannot be attributed to both men and women are characteristics of sex and that any social characteristics that can be used to describe both men and women are characteristics of gender.

Optional step: In order to better understand the difference between sex and gender, we re-recommend collecting pictures of men and women that depict both their biological sex and social gender roles. This may include pictures of a woman washing dishes (gender role), a woman breast-feeding (sex role) and a man fixing a car or hunting (gender role). Participants are tasked with identifying which images depict sex and/or gender roles and justifying their choice.

Reflection questions:

- What does it mean to be a man?
- What does it mean to be a woman?
- Do you think men and women are brought up in the same way?
- What is a man’s role in a romantic relationship? What is a woman’s role?
- How does a man express his emotions? Is this different from how a woman expresses hers? Why do you think that is?
- Is our perception of the roles of women and men influenced by what our friends and family think? How?

- Are gender norms influenced by media? If so, in what ways? How are women portrayed in the media? How are men portrayed in the media?
- How are our everyday lives influenced by these differences and inequality?
- How do these differences influence our relationships with our families and partners?
- How can you challenge unequal perceptions of how a man should behave in your everyday life? How can you challenge unequal perceptions of how women should act in your everyday life?

Activity #2: Stand in line

The aim: To reflect on how sex and gender roles impact our lives as women and men/girls and boys, and on how this influences our choices, attitudes, and behavior. What is expected of us and why? To see how invisible norms dictate what is masculine and what is feminine.

Duration: 20-30 min

Necessary: A4 sheets (labelled 1 to 6)

Procedure:

The group leader places the sheets of paper with the numbers 1-6 on the floor in a row.

The leader reads one of the statements. No. 1 means strong agreement, and No. 6 means strong disagreement. No. 2, 3, 4 and 5 denote varying levels of agreement/disagreement.

Participants stand next to the number that most accurately represents their attitude.

Allow the participants to explain their choice. They can do this individually or as a group with others standing next to the same number. In the latter case, each group must present the view they agreed upon collectively. If someone finds him or herself standing alone near one of the numbers, allow them to join one of the nearest groups.

THE STATEMENTS

- Do you feel a lot of pressure to look good?
- Do you often compare yourself to other girls/boys to understand whether you are beautiful/handsome?
- How often do you hear someone say “Girls don’t do that!” or “Boys don’t do that!”? (1 – almost every day; 6 – almost never)
- If girls dress provocatively, their reputations suffer.
- If boys dress provocatively, their reputations suffer.
- Women maintain closer relationships with their friends than men do.
- What women and men have in common outweighs their differences.
- Adults treat boys and girls differently.
- Boys are subject to higher expectations than girls.
- Men have to take care of women.
- Women have to take care of men.

- Real girls are well-behaved and get good grades.
- Boys take more risks than girls.
- Boys are more practical and logical than girls.
- Boys who show emotion are weak.
- Girls who show anger are too “boyish”.
- There is injustice in society, and it hurts girls more than it hurts boys.
- There is injustice in society, and it hurts boys more than it hurts girls.

Reflection questions:

- What happens to boys who do not follow gender norms, i.e., step “outside the box”?
- What happens to girls who do not follow gender norms? What do people say about them? How are they treated?
- What is necessary to make life outside these boundaries easier for boys and girls? How can we help?

Activity #3: Healthy/unhealthy masculinity

The aim: To reflect how society’s expectations and stereotypes influence boys lives, attitudes and behaviours. To represent how unhealthy expressions of traditional masculinity are linked to violence, including sexual exploitation.

Duration: 20-30 min

Necessary: 4 large paper sheets, markers, many small sheets of paper

Procedure:

The group leader ask the participants to name those characteristics and traits that boys and men are pressured to display or be in order to be considered “real men”. These words should be written on the small sheets of paper. Words that might be used – e.g. aggressive, athletic, controlling, strong, confident, heterosexual, can beat up the opponent etc.

On each large sheet of paper write down one notion: objectification of women, homophobia, emotional stoicism, encouragement of violence. Encourage participants to discuss each notion and explain the unclear ones.

Objectification⁴⁴ is an act of treating a woman solely as an object, a body whose value is determined by others ability to use it. It is closely related to perceiving women as primarily sexual objects without regard to their personality, dignity or feelings. Although both men and women can be objectified, more often those are women who tend to be objectified. This phenomenon is closely related to gender inequality and sexual violence.

Homophobia – range of negative attitudes and feelings toward homosexuality or people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBTQ). It might be expressed as contempt, prejudice, aversion, hatred or antipathy, and may be based on irrational fear and ignorance, and is sometimes related to religious beliefs.

[Sexual objectification](#)

Have the participants identify which of the terms they came up with could be related to notions on each of the large sheets. Most of the terms might possibly fit to several or all notions. During the activity you can add more characteristics and traits that might be suitable for each notion.

Discuss which of these traits/characteristics could cause harm to women, girls, men and boys, and folks across the gender spectrum?

Reflection questions:

- What impact such society’s expectations and stereotypes as aggression, bottling-up of emotions, always being in control etc. have over boys and men mental health and relationships?
- How these expectations impact women and girls? What is their relation to various expressions of violence?
- How queer/homosexual/transgender youth might be feel and experience for not adhering to those rigid ideas of masculinity?
- What role media have in production of these stereotypes?
- What are alternative traits and characteristics of healthy masculinity (e.g. empathy, respect, giving importance to consent, emotional management, respecting when someone says “no”)? How this can help to form healthier relationships and improve mental health?

*Closing evaluation remarks on the session.



Additional resources:

[Gender stereotyping](#)

[Gender Roles in Society \(video\)](#)

[The Future of Gender Roles \(video\)](#)

[The Genderbread Person](#)

[Gender Equality Index](#)

[UN Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls](#)

[Trans* | Sam Amore \(video\)](#)

[Girl toys vs boy toys: The experiment - BBC Stories \(video\)](#)

[The Gender Tag: Authentic Gender Expression \(video\)](#)

[Boys Don't Cry. White Ribbon \(video\)](#)

[What is Toxic Masculinity?](#)

PUBERTY

The aim: To discuss the physical, psychological and emotional changes that young people experience when they become adolescents in a safe and open environment. To discuss how these changes affect young people's attitudes toward themselves and each other.

We change and become different every day and every passing moment. Such is life and it is a completely normal process. Perhaps you have already noticed some changes in your external appearance or in the way you think? Perhaps you have questions about these changes you've experienced? This lesson is all about explaining everything that has changed in you or is about to change.

During adolescence, the human body undergoes major changes. It is a time when the human body begins to prepare for the creation of offspring. This period is called sexual maturation or puberty. It means that a person has reached sexual maturity both biologically and functionally. During puberty, girls mature into women, while boys mature into men. This period is very different for each person. For girls, puberty usually occurs between the ages of 10 and 13 and for boys between 12 and 14 years. The maturation of boys and girls into men and women is determined by hormones that are different for each sex. Hormones are biologically active substances that affect a person's appearance, levels of activity and well-being. During puberty, girls' bodies begin to increase the amount of the hormone called estrogen, while boys' bodies begin to produce the hormone called testosterone. The proportions of these hormones in a person's body influence a person's future physical development and behavior.

For **girls**, puberty begins a little earlier than for boys. The most visible changes during puberty are in a girl's body:

- Their body changes: girls get taller, their hips get wider, and their body shape becomes more mature.
- Their breasts become larger: breasts begin to grow during puberty, and this process is slow. As the breasts grow and develop, they may become sensitive, but this feeling will eventually disappear. Most girls are worried about breast size during puberty – some worry about the fact they are different, others worry about the shape of their breasts. It is perfectly normal for one breast to be larger than the other during breast growth – the size of both breasts will even out over time. However, they can remain different for longer too. Usually, girls' nipples protrude, but there are cases where nipples can be inverted. That is normal, too, and one shouldn't worry about it. Such differences in the nipples can persist during the course of one's lifetime.

- Body hair: in girls, hair begins to grow in the armpits, and also appears around the genitals, as well as on the legs and arms.
 - Skin and hair changes: skin and hair start to become oily more often. One may begin to see signs of acne on one's face and dandruff in his or her hair. As puberty begins, the sweat glands start to work more intensively, so sweating increases.
 - Genital discharges appear: before the onset of menstruation, girls may observe a clear or whitish discharge from the vagina, which may stain the underwear. Such discharge is a normal physiological phenomenon and happens to all women.
- Important!** If the discharges cause discomfort, one can use panty liners. Remember: if the discharge suddenly increases in volume, changes color (yellow or dark brown) or aroma, it may be an indication of vaginal inflammation. In this case, you need to see a doctor – a gynecologist!
- First menstruation: As puberty starts, an ovum, which passes through the oviduct to the uterus, matures in one of the ovaries every month. If the ovum enters the uterus unfertilized, it dies, the mucous membrane of the uterus breaks down and with blood is discharged from the body through the vagina. This process is called menstruation.

Boys can expect to see changes in their bodies between the ages of 10 and 18, however, these changes usually start at the age of 13 to 14:

- Boys rapidly grow taller, their shoulders and chest become wider, their muscles begin to develop, boys begin to gain weight, and their body gradually begins to look increasingly mature.
- Voice changes: boys' voices break during puberty and become lower in pitch.
- Body hair: in boys, hair grows in different places – on their face, armpits and at the base of their penis. Hair may also become more pronounced on the hands and feet, as well as on other parts of the body.
- Skin and hair changes: skin and hair start to become oily more often. One may begin to see signs of acne on one's face and dandruff in his or her hair. As puberty begins, the sweat glands start to work more intensively, so sweating increases.
- Genital changes: the penis becomes thicker and longer, the testes become bigger and darker. During puberty, the testicles begin to produce sperm. The seed is a milky liquid full of millions of spermatozoa. If they reach the female uterus via the oviduct, they fertilize the female ova, creating a child.
- The sexual maturity of boys is characterized by erections. This is when the penis becomes hard and rises up. Erections can occur without any reason and disappear as suddenly as they appeared. Erections are very common in the morning, and when one is excited and aroused. The testes begin to produce spermatozoa that are discharged with semen. ⁴⁵

Both boys and girls may find themselves wanting to engage in **masturbation or self-satisfaction**. This is the caressing and stroking of one's genitals which producing pleasant feelings. Is masturbation harmful? No, as long as it does not interfere with your or others' physical, emotional and psychological boundaries. Masturbation, or self-satisfaction, is a natural way for one to become aware of one's body and discover what touches he or she likes and what he or she does not. Self-satisfaction does not have a negative effect on a person's future sex life if it is perceived as a natural and acceptable phenomenon and does not become one's sole interest. Self-satisfaction can help relieve the tension that arises when sexual arousal cannot be achieved through sexual intercourse, as it is in adolescence when a young person is not yet ready for sexual intercourse. It is key to understand that masturbation is not reprehensible and unnatural and that whether someone does it, is their own free choice.⁴⁶

Activity #1: Changes in me

The aim: To create a positive atmosphere and discuss the changes in an adolescent's body during puberty. To establish what young people know about the topic.

Duration: 30 min

Required: large sheet of paper and markers

Procedure:

The participants are divided into smaller groups or pairs and given sheets of paper and markers.

A group/pair draws a biological sex (girl or boy), which they will need to think about.

They draw the body on the sheet of paper, depicting all the changes that occur at the age of puberty. They should write them down. Psychological changes should also be written down.

The groups then present and explain what they've drawn and written to the others. The participants are free to add to others' presentations if they have something to add.

Remember! There will probably be plenty of laughs and jokes during the exercise (which is an absolutely normal way to deal with embarrassment). But as the group leader, it is important that you emphasize and remind the group that they must always keep a respectful attitude.

Reflection questions:

- How did you feel while you were performing the exercise? What did you like/dislike, did you find the exercise easy/difficult?
- Does the age of puberty sound easy? What do you find most challenging about puberty? Why?
- Where and how do young people receive information about the changes they experience? How can you be sure that this information is reliable?

[Papardes zieds. Vai masturbācija ir kaitīga? \(Is masturbation harmful?\)](#)

Activity #2 “Underwear”

The aim: The group gets acquainted with the concepts of reproductive health and sexuality (including – orientation) and their definitions.

Duration: 20 min

Necessary: Sheets of paper, scissors and scotch tape. (Prepared, printed, and cut-out “under-pants with the concepts labeled on them”, “T-shirts with the definitions written on them”) from the resource sheet (session #7, activity #2).

Procedure:

The group leader divides the group into two smaller groups – use scotch tape to put the names of the concepts on the backs of the first group and the definitions on the backs of the other group.

The participants are not allowed to talk during the activity.

When they are done gluing their backs, the group leader should ask the participants to read (quietly, without speaking to each other) what is written on the backs of the other participants, trying to find the correct definition for the concept they have on their backs.

When they have found their corresponding pairs, the concepts and their definitions are read aloud and discussed.

The participants express their thoughts and feelings on what they experienced during the activity.

*An easier way to do this activity is this: have the whole group work together. Place the concepts and definitions on the floor. Then task the group with finding the matching pairs.

Reflection questions:

- Which concepts did you find the most difficult to understand? Why?
- Was it easy/difficult to find your pair without looking/not speaking to one another?
- Did a leader emerge among the group who took on the role of pairing?

Sexuality

Sexuality is a constantly changing internal and external process that every person goes through as an individual. Sexuality is understood as including the notions of biological sex, sex as a process, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality may include all of these dimensions, they are not always experienced or expressed. A person’s sexuality is influenced by biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors.⁴⁷ It is important to remember and understand that sexuality is not a constant, unchangeable state, but an internal and external process that can change constantly, depending on the factors mentioned above and their interaction.

[World Health Organization. Sexual and reproductive health.](#)

Activity #3: "10 words on sexuality"

The aim: to clarify the term "sexuality". To develop and broaden one's understanding of sexuality.

Duration: 20-30 min

Necessary: A small sheet of paper for each participant; writing utensils; a large sheet of paper; markers.

Procedure:

The group leader asks the participants to reflect on the associations they have with the word "sexuality" (what does it mean)?

Each participant writes 10 words on his/her page that they associate with the concept of sexuality.

The group leader chooses a participant that will be the first to speak and asks him or her to read the first word he or she has written on his or her sheet. The leader writes that word on the board. If someone had the same word on their sheet, add a + on the large sheet to that word for every time it comes up (e.g. kisses +++++; gay +). This will make it possible to see a trend in the group (which words are the most common and which are never used at all). Have the participants read out the words they've written. You should have a list of words on the board after a while.

The group leader then asks the participants to think about and discuss the list they came up with, how could they group the words, what aspects of sexuality do these words cover? The words usually reflect emotions, body parts, gender roles, pieces of clothing, situations, health, and abuse, etc.

Important! Write the names on the board exactly as the participants call them out (even if they are rude or indecent). The words, which are regarded as rude (e.g. faggot) should definitely be dis-cussed with the group by explaining the meaning of each word and discussing are there any polite and respectable synonyms for these words (e.g. the words that are used to describe female and male genital organs).

Reflection questions:

- What did you observe – what words belonging to a category (body parts, clothing, situations, etc.) came up the most? Share your thoughts: why did they come up the most?
- Did anything surprise you during this task or did you find something particularly interesting?
- Where have you obtained information on and how have you created your understanding of the concept of "sexuality" in the past? (family, school, friends, Internet, films, etc.)
- How does sexuality manifest: in what forms, how does age become a factor, how does one's environment affect one's sexuality?
- Why are these words often used to insult or offend someone?
- What could be other ways to communicate your feelings, thoughts, emotions (without using these words)?

Pornography

Iveta Kelle, head of the Latvian reproductive health organization "Papardes zieds": Nowadays, pornography has become a source of education for young people both in terms of their sexuality and sexual relations in general. Many young people come into contact with pornography before they start sexual relations, perhaps even before their first kiss or their first hug from someone they like. In Latvia, there is no data on the number and age of children affected by pornographic material on the Internet during their sexual education process. An Internet survey carried out in spring this year by the organization "Papardes zieds" showed that our children are no different from young people in other parts of the world. More than 60% of the 500 young people that were surveyed had viewed pornographic material.

Some had encountered such material accidentally, others had seen it less frequently, but quite a few had viewed such material regularly. Data from a 2014 study showed that on average one in three children and adolescents aged 9-16 have seen sexual material and that on average every fifth child under 12 years of age had seen sexual material (EU Kids Online project, 2014, research by Inta Brikše and Guna Spurava "Children on the Internet: safety and risks").

What is worrying is that the majority (61%) of children and young people that had come into contact with pornographic material did not discuss what they saw with anyone. According to international studies, 90% of boys and 60% of girls have seen pornographic material on the Internet. 30% of the content on the Internet is pornographic.

Of all the websites on the Internet, pornographic ones are the most popular – 4,4 billion people visit these pages every month, which is three times the number that people visit the popular U.S. news channel CNN. In addition, a reader spends only about 3-6 minutes on the news site, while users spend 15-20 minutes on average on a pornography website.

88% of pornographic material depicts physical aggression. Pornography is becoming more rude, cruel and violent. Pornography not only depicts violence in relationships but facilitates the view that violent pornography is sexy. If a child owns a smartphone or has access to a computer and the Internet, or has friends that have access to the Internet, he or she will likely come into contact with pornographic material, even if he or she does not specifically seek it out.

The negative aspects of pornography

It is HEALTHY for children and young people to acquire knowledge and be curious about questions regarding their own body, the body of the opposite sex, sexuality, and sex. However, the easy availability of pornographic material has created new risks and challenges for us as parents, teachers, and health professionals.

The bodies of pornographic actors, like models and film actors, are unrepresentative of everyday people – their bodies have been modified. Men's penises are too big, women are very thin with large breasts and small, pretty genitals. Often, it is because of pornography that boys are depressed by the size of their penis, while girls consider plastic surgeries to reshape their body, such as breast surgery or labiaplasty.

- In pornographic images and videos, a woman is just a submissive toy in the hands of the man, ready for anything he wants. Often women's postures resemble those of ballet dancers, if not artistic gymnasts.
- Only 10% of pornographic videos depict the use of a condom and the actors often have sex with multiple partners at the same time.
- Watching pornography can lead to a positive attitude towards sexual experiments, to a view of a woman as a sex object, to an understanding where relationships are reduced to mere physical contact, and the view that violence against women is something to be encouraged.

Activity #4 Pornography

The aim: to discuss pornography without moralizing the participants. To speak openly about pornography and one's attitude towards it. To discuss the consequences of pornography, both at a personal level and at a structural level.

Duration: 20 min

Necessary: Several sheets of paper with the number 1 to 6 written on them.

Procedure:

The group leader places the sheets of paper with the numbers 1-6 on the floor in a row.

The leader reads one of the statements. (No 1 can mean agree completely, and No 6 disagree completely. Numbers 2, 3, 4, 5 indicate to what degree a participant finds some thing acceptable/unacceptable.)

The participants must walk over and stand near the number that corresponds to their position the most.

Allow the participants to explain their choice. They can do so individually or as a group, standing near a number collectively. In the latter case, each group must present the view they agreed upon collectively. If someone finds him or herself standing alone near one of the numbers, allow them to join one of the nearest groups.

THE STATEMENTS

- Pornography is a good source of information
- Pornography harms sexuality
- Viewing pornography is risky
- Viewing films of a pornographic nature gives one the wrong impression of sex
- Pornography doesn't affect relationships
- Pornography produces an inaccurate view of how men and women's bodies look and function.
- Pornography is just fantasy
- People participating in pornography making are experiencing real life sexual violence and demeaning behavior
- Pornography doesn't cause violence
- Pornography is not the same as prostitution

Reflection questions:

- Why do people watch pornographic films?
- Is it better to watch alone or in the company of others?
- What does watching these films feel like?
- Sometimes, when we watch such films, we get a feeling of discomfort and agitation at the same time. Why do you think that is?
- How is the sexuality of men and women reflected in pornography?
- Why do people choose to become pornstars? Do you think that sometimes people become pornstars because they did not have a “free choice”?
- How is being a boy or a girl different when it comes to pornography?
- How should I treat a partner who wants to watch pornography if I do not want to do so myself?
- How should I treat a partner who does not want to watch pornography but I do?

Do not forget: it is important to be able to describe both the negative and positive feelings we get when we watch pornographic films. It may sometimes be very difficult to talk about the emotions these films cause. Most people have mixed feelings, so films like these can seem both arousing and disgusting. Someone may be ashamed to admit to watching pornographic films; someone else may have never seen such films at all. You shouldn't assume one way or another about the participants. It is important that the members of the group do not feel in any way pressured. If someone wishes to speak, share his or her experiences and thoughts – let them. The atmosphere in the group can easily lose seriousness, people might start to joke about the topic, so it is important to take this issue seriously again once the laughter has subsided. Make sure no one starts talking before the previous speaker finishes his or her idea. If someone makes a sexist⁴⁸ remark, don't ignore it – discuss it.

Concluding comments:**What can we do?**

- The availability of pornographic material should be restricted to children while they are young.
- Young people should be encouraged to think critically. They should be taught to critically examine what they've seen.
- We should help young people develop skills so that pornography is not a learning resource for relationship building.

What each of us can do is inspire young people by giving them a positive example of how relationships in real life are much better than what is depicted in pornographic material. Children and young people may have learned about diseases and contraception at school or from visits to the doctor, but without teaching them that relationships should have mutual respect, we will only have done a part of the necessary work to help young people experience the beauty in relationships.⁴⁹

***Closing evaluation remarks on the session.**

Prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex.

[Iveta Kelle: Ko neiemāca skola, bet iemāca internets? \(What do children learn on the internet that should be taught in schools?\)](#)

Additional resources:

[10 myths about pornography](#)

[The Connection Between Sex Trafficking and Pornography](#)

[The World Health Organization](#)

[Different is normal. Changing Bodies and Genitals](#)

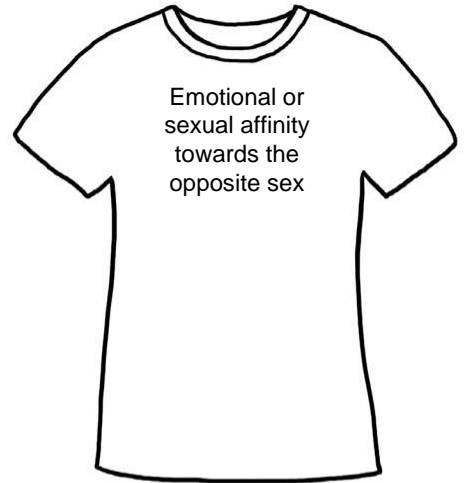
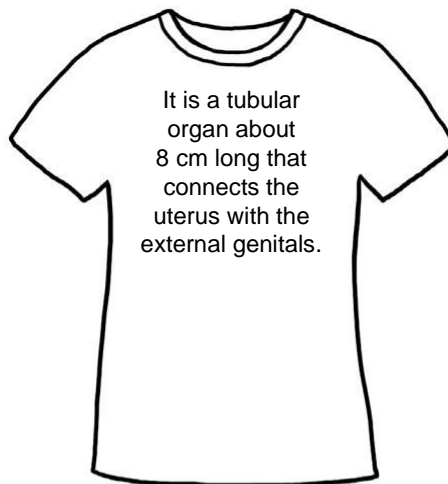
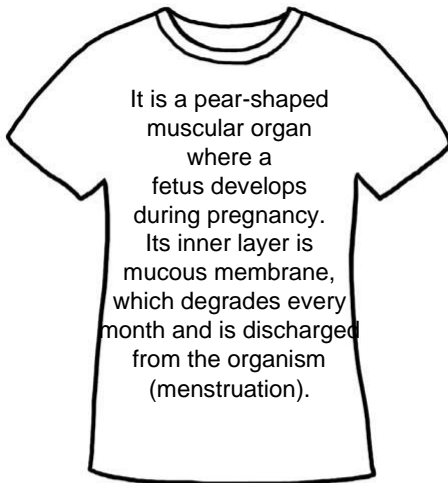
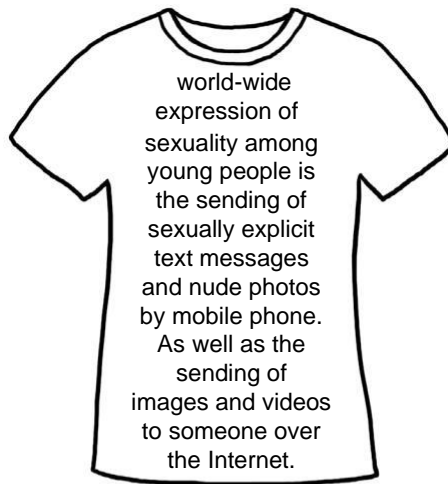
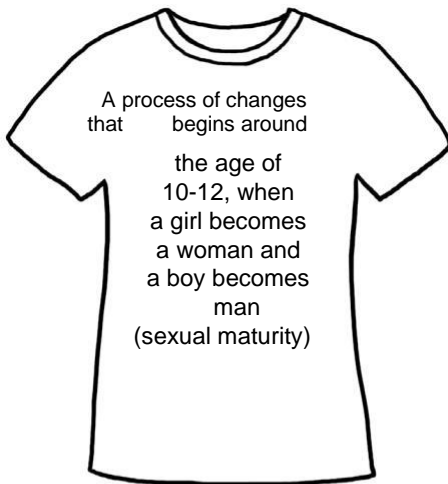
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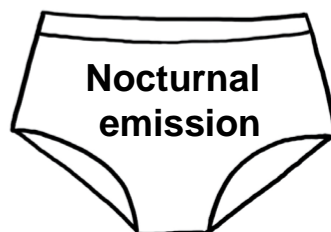
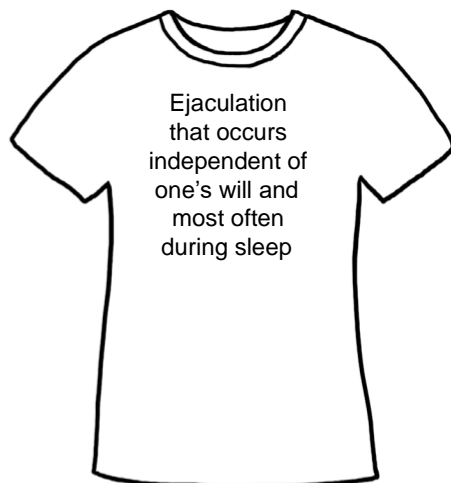
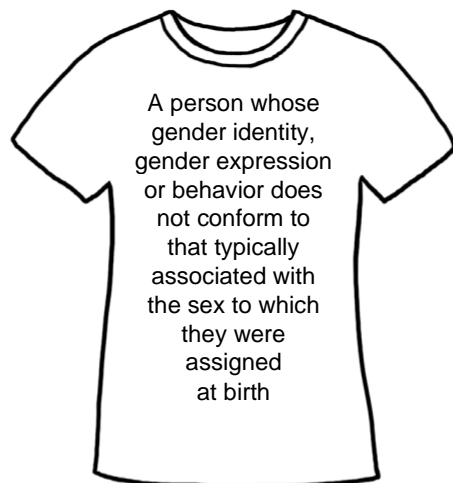
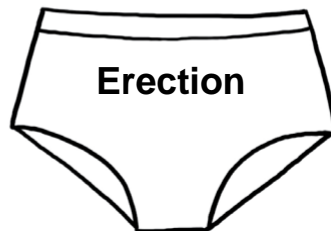
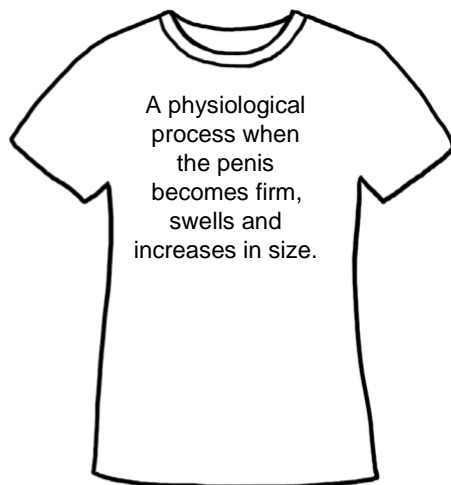
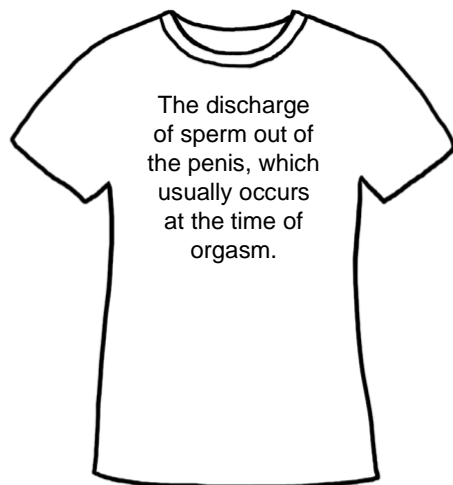
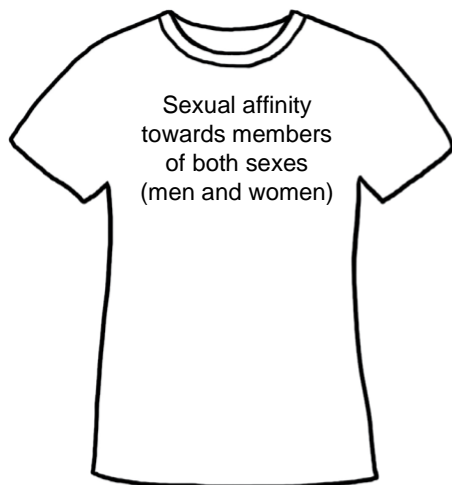
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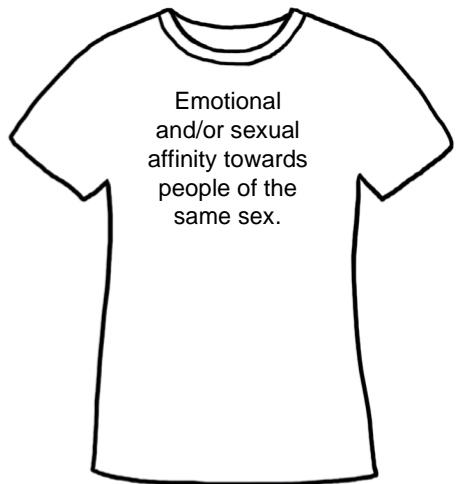
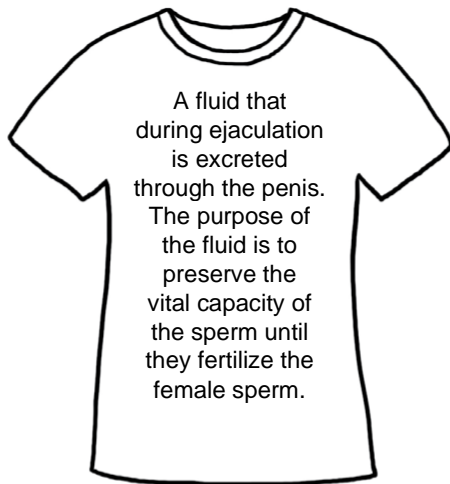
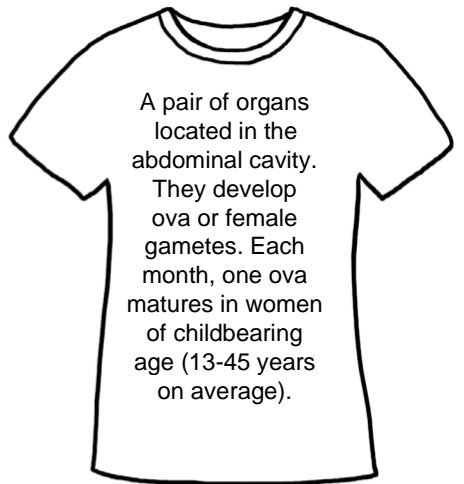
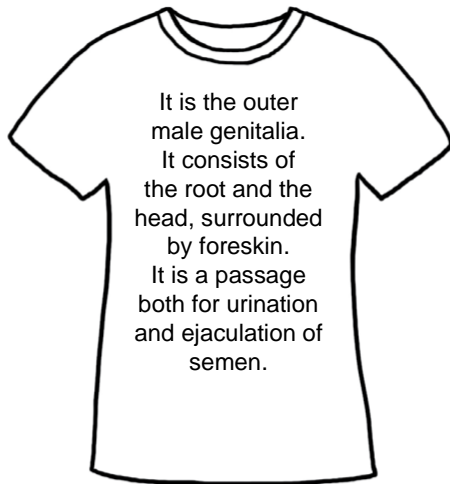
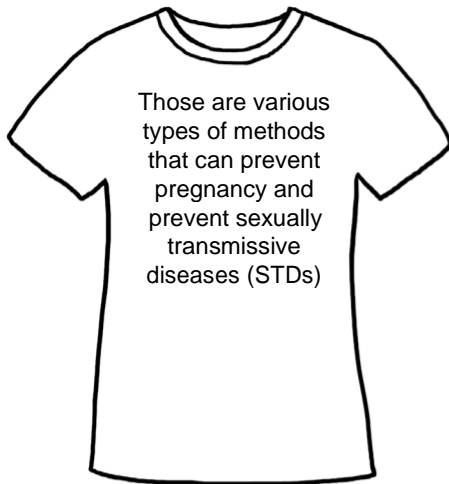
[How do your hormones work? \(video\)](#)

[How to talk to teenagers about porn](#)

SESSION #7 Activity #2







SEXUALITY AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

The aim: To have a discussion in a safe and respectful environment that offers knowledge about intimate, sexual relationships and reproductive health and creates in-depth understanding, respect, develops decision-making skills and risk and consequence awareness among young people.

What is sexuality?

Sexuality is complex and multifaceted, it is one of the central aspects of human life and the term includes biological gender, gender identity, and gender roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. Human sexuality is influenced by biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, historical, religious, legal, and other factors. ⁵⁰

What is sex?

Sex, also often called making love, involves activities that sexually arouse you and your partner. Sex isn't just vaginal penetration with the penis. Mutual sexual arousal can include talking and flirting, kissing, glances, touching, caressing, undressing and putting on a condom.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation means a person's physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction/affinity towards a sex. Sexual orientation is not related to biological sex or gender identity. Sexual behavior / the expression of sexual behavior refers to the way a person behaves

[WHO FAQ on health and sexual diversity: The basics](#)

sexually in relation to others.⁵¹ Sexual behavior/expression is not always determined by the person's sexual orientation, for example, men who have had sex with other men do not always identify themselves as homosexuals.

Sexual orientation can differ – a person can be heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc., and even then every person is different, as is their sexual identity ⁵² and its expression. Sometimes people are unsure of their sexual orientation, or they become confident over time. It is important to remember that you do not choose your sexual orientation, just like you cannot choose your height or skin color. No biological or social factor that has a direct effect on a person's sexual orientation has been identified and it has been proven that it is practically impossible to change it.

When talking to young people, the most important thing is to emphasize the importance of feeling good about who you are. If a young person feels worried about their sexuality, it is important to find someone to talk to about it (such as a psychologist).

Adolescents often have doubts about their sexual orientation. If they discover homosexual impulses, they can get very frightened. Therefore, it is important to explain that sexual identity consists of many layers. Lust does not make one homosexual; sexual acts don't either. One does not become homosexual overnight. Adolescents need to understand that homosexual cravings are normal and even very common at their age and that the teenage years are meant for the exploration and development of their sexuality.

It is sometimes considered that a homosexual is someone who has never had a relationship with the opposite sex. If he had, he wouldn't be homosexual. It is also sometimes believed that homosexuals are frightened by the opposite sex. In fact, many homosexuals, men, and women, have had heterosexual experiences to try out their sexuality or deny their suspicions of being homosexual. Experiments such as these are much more common than we might think and are a part of the process when a homosexual identity is formed.⁵³

Awareness of one's homosexuality is not easy. This stage is particularly difficult for homosexual teenagers because they are aware that their sexuality is radically different from that of their peers. This is complicated further by the difficulties that all adolescents have in understanding and expressing their feelings. Expression isn't usually something young people are very good at, especially if their surrounding culture does not offer them the vocabulary they need to do this and if society censors the expression of certain desires and feelings. This first phase of the process when one's homosexual identity is formed is usually ridden with confusion, doubt, loneliness, and very often – shame. A homosexual going through the first phase is particularly vulnerable to alcohol and drug abuse, considering the emotional intensity, confusion, and fear he is experiencing. There are also significant risks of depression at this phase, and the suicide rate among homosexual teenagers is very high.

[WHO FAQ on health and sexual diversity: The basics](#)

Sexual identity – the acceptance of sexual orientation and identifying with it. Sexual orientation can be present since childhood, but sexual identity develops over time.

Marina Kastanjeda (2017) Saprast homoseksualitāti.

The Little Dictionary of Sexuality, or What's What?⁵⁴

Asexual – a person who does not feel sexual attraction and does not sexually respond to any other person. Asexual people usually want to establish close relationships, however, sexual attraction is not important to them.

Bisexual – a person who is sexually attracted to both men and women (not necessarily simultaneously).

Heterosexual – a person who is sexually attracted to the opposite sex.

Homosexual – a person who is sexually attracted to the same sex.

Gay – usually denotes a man who is attracted to other men.

Lesbian – a woman who is attracted to other women.

Transgender – people that have a gender identity or gender expression that differs from their sex assigned at birth. Some transgender people who desire medical assistance to transition from one sex to another identify as transsexual. Transgender, often shortened as trans, is also an umbrella term: in addition to including people whose gender identity is the opposite of their assigned sex (trans men and trans women), it may include people who are not exclusively masculine or feminine (people who are non-binary or genderqueer, including bigender, pangender, genderfluid, or agender).

Pansexual – a person who experiences romantic feelings or sexual attraction towards any person, regardless of their gender identity and sexual orientation.

[Papardes zieds. Tu esi tu.](#)



Activity #1: Hot chairs: relationships (introduction)

The aim: To express your opinion on a specific subject. To practice listening to and accepting opinions that differ from yours.

Duration: 30 minutes

Necessary: chairs (number of players +1) placed in a circle. Prepared statements.

THE STATEMENTS

“Warm-up” statements

My favorite class at school is sports

My favorite color is blue

I like shopping

I would like to live in a big city/the countryside

I often go to parties

Statements about a specific subject

It's OK if a girl is taller than the boy she is with/if a boy is taller than the girl he is with

If a boy approaches a girl and wants to get to know her, he looks foolish

Girls always consider it their responsibility to oblige everyone.

If girls dress provocatively, their reputations suffer.

All girls are the same

All boys are the same

If a boy asks a girl out on a date, he should pay

I agree that people may fall in love with several people simultaneously.

Girls must always look good and take care of their appearance (personal hygiene)

Boys must always look good and take care of their appearance (personal hygiene)

I agree that even five-year-olds can fall in love.

I agree that people may fall in love with several people simultaneously.

I consider it important that my parents like the boy/girl I'm seeing.

I think people should be allowed to stay overnight at their boyfriend/girlfriend's place.

I think sex should only be allowed amongst married couples.

I think girls sometimes agree to have sex even if they don't want it.

The purpose of having sex is to demonstrate love.

Activity #2: Myths and truths about the “first time”, sex and sexuality

The aim: To dismiss existing myths about sexual relations among young people. To develop young people’s abilities to analyze information and think critically. **Necessary:** prepared statements.

Duration: 20 min

Procedure:

Each participant receives 2 slips of paper.

One of the slips says “myth” and the other says “truth”.

Group leader reads a statement. Then, all participants must simultaneously raise a slip of paper that corresponds to their opinion – whether the statement is a “myth” or “truth”.

This task can also be done in pairs, where each pair is given 2 minutes to discuss and announce a joint decision. This option will also encourage communication between participants as well as their ability to formulate and express their views.

THE STATEMENTS

1) When it’s a girl’s first time, it always hurts and there’s a lot of blood [MYTH]

The first time you have sex can also be pain-free and without bleeding. This depends on several aspects. First, who this first time is with and what the relationship is between the two partners. If the relationship is full of tenderness and love, and both partners know each other well enough and know what they do and don’t find comfortable, then there might be very little pain or blood. It is important that there is no insecurity or fear between the two people. Then the first time will be very pleasant. The place where this first sexual encounter takes place also plays a decisive role. If neither partner feels comfortable and safe, the sex will also be less pleasant. Both girls’ and boys’ feelings are greatly influenced using safe contraception because if they are worried about getting pregnant, these concerns will be greater than the pleasant emotions they might be having. Of course, the physiological structure of the girl’s genitals also plays a role. A virgin girl’s entrance to the vagina is covered by a thin tissue, called a hymen, which has an opening through which menstrual blood flows during the monthly period. This tissue is quite stretchy and can produce unpleasant feelings the first time it is stretched. However, if the partner is considerate and the foreplay has been long enough, and the girl is aroused, then there may not be any unpleasant feelings at all. In addition, many girls today use tampons, so the hymen may already be stretched, so there may be no pain or bleeding at all. Some girls are born without a hymen.

The first time is a worrisome moment in everyone’s life, so it is highly advised to consider who you might have it with, how and where. One should also think about contraception, because one can get pregnant during one’s first time, too.

Girls can become pregnant from the moment they get their first period [MYTH] Girls can become pregnant before their first period, as the first egg may be on its way.

A man's penis increases in size after every new act of sexual intercourse [MYTH]
When one gets an erection, the penis gets bigger because it is engorged with blood. When the erection ends, it regains its initial size (because the blood flows away).

Erections occur due to blood flow to the penis [TRUE]

Women are born with thousands of undeveloped ova in their ovaries [TRUE]

Men born with sperm in their testicles [MYTH]
Sperm begins to develop in the testicles once puberty is reached.

7) Masturbation is very unhealthy both physically and psychologically [MYTH]

Masturbation, or self-gratification, is a natural way for a person to get to know their body and learn to understand what physical things they like and what they do not. Self-satisfaction does not negatively affect one's future sex life if one perceives it as a natural and acceptable thing and does not turn it into one's only passion. Self-satisfaction can help relieve the tension that arises when sexual arousal cannot be achieved through sexual intercourse, as it is in adolescence when a young person is not yet ready for sexual intercourse. It is key to understand that masturbation is not reprehensible and unnatural and that whether someone does it, is their own free choice. However, there are cases where masturbation can become addictive, as with any activity that is done excessively and too often. If you are worried you might be doing it too much (if it interferes with your daily routine, and you are preoccupied with it thinking about it during school, work, or your free time), then seek advice from a psychologist.

If someone is infected with a sexually transmitted disease (an STD), this is immediately visible [MYTH] One must always remember that many STDs do not cause any visible problems after infection. Therefore, anyone who has had a sexual encounter with a partner without using a condom should see a doctor. Symptoms of STDs may include: increased discharge from the genitals or urethra, lower abdominal or back pain (for women), changes in menstruation – prolonged, irregular or more painful (for women), genital swelling (for women), pain and or burning sensation during urination (for men), inflammation of the penis head (for men), discomfort during sexual intercourse, itching in the genital area, rash or warts on or around the genitals or anus, enlarged lymph nodes, etc.

Pregnancy is not possible if a man removes his penis from a woman's vagina before he ejaculates (interrupted sexual intercourse) [MYTH]
When a man is aroused, a small amount of seminal fluid, which may contain sperm, is discharged either before or during sexual intercourse. Therefore, conception is possible. In addition, interrupted sexual intercourse does not protect one against sexually transmitted infections and creates stress, which can greatly reduce the enjoyment of intimacy with a partner. ⁵⁵

<http://papardeszieds.lv/atbildes/vai-var-palikt-stavokli-ja/>

Activity #3: Snowball fight

The aim: To give the participants the opportunity to ask and receive anonymous answers to questions about sexuality, relationships, love, etc.

Duration: 30-40 minutes

Necessary: paper, writing utensils

Procedure:

Every participant receives a sheet of paper and a pen. The participants are asked to write any question of interest to them about relationships, puberty, sexuality, love, friendship, etc. This can be any question that may be uncomfortable to ask in public when everyone can see and hear you, but this is really an issue.

When they're done, they must crumple the page up into a ball. Let the snowball fight begin! The fight is over after the group leader says STOP! Every participant should have paper ball (at this point, no one should know which ball belonged to whom).

The participants must give their balls to their group leader, WITHOUT OPENING THEM.

The leader opens up the balls one-by-one, reads the questions aloud and discusses them with the group.

It is important that young people are given the chance to speak first on any particular issue. The group leader should share his or her thoughts or position only after they've had their say. The leader **IS PERMITTED** to not know the answers to all the questions! In this case, it is the duty and responsibility of the leader (after communicating this with the group) to prepare and answer the unanswered questions in the next session.

***Closing evaluation remarks on the session.**



Additional resources:

[Defining LGBTQ](#)

[World Health Organization, FAQ on health and sexual diversity](#)

[American Psychological Association, Sexual orientation & gender identity](#)

[Genderbread Person & LGBTQ Umbrella Guided Discussion](#)

[What we don't teach kids about sex \(video\)](#)

[What is masturbation](#)

[Teenage relationships: romance and intimacy](#)

[Teenage sexuality](#)

[Teen Voices: Sexting, Relationships and Risks \(video\)](#)

[Masturbation. Planned Parenthood](#)

← DECISIONS →

The aim: to discuss and develop an in-depth understanding about the decisions we make every day in our relationships with one another and ourselves. To raise awareness about personal emotional and physical boundaries and causal links when making various decisions (especially in relation to intimate relationships).

Teen Brain: Behavior, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

Many adults do not understand why their teenagers occasionally behave in an impulsive, irrational, or dangerous way. At times, it seems like teens don't think things through or fully consider the consequences of their actions. Adolescents differ from adults in the way they behave, solve problems, and make decisions. There is a biological explanation for this difference. Studies have shown that brains continue to mature and develop throughout childhood and adolescence and well into early adulthood.

Scientists have identified a specific region of the brain called the amygdala that is responsible for immediate reactions including fear and aggressive behavior. This region develops early. However, the frontal cortex, the area of the brain that controls reasoning and helps us think before we act, develops later. This part of the brain is still changing and maturing well into adulthood.

Other changes in the brain during adolescence include a rapid increase in the connections between the brain cells and making the brain pathways more effective. Nerve cells develop myelin, an insulating layer that helps cells communicate. All these changes are essential for the development of coordinated thought, action, and behavior.

Changing Brains Mean that Adolescents Act Differently From Adults

Pictures of the brain in action show that adolescents' brains work differently than adults when they make decisions or solve problems. Their actions are guided more by the emotional and re-active amygdala and less by the thoughtful, logical frontal cortex. Research has also shown that exposure to drugs and alcohol during the teen years can change or delay these developments.

Based on the stage of their brain development, adolescents are more likely to:

- act on impulse
- misread or misinterpret social cues and emotions
- get into accidents of all kinds

get involved in fights
engage in dangerous or risky behavior

Adolescents are less likely to:

think before they act
pause to consider the consequences of their actions
change their dangerous or inappropriate behaviors

These brain differences don't mean that young people can't make good decisions or tell the difference between right and wrong. It also doesn't mean that they shouldn't be held responsible for their actions. However, an awareness of these differences can help parents, teachers, advocates, and policy makers understand, anticipate, and manage the behavior of adolescents.⁵⁶

One tool that can help a person evaluate their choices and decide is the Descartes square.⁵⁷

Activity #1 What will happen if ...?

The aim: To train one's ability to think critically and weigh the risks and benefits of various decisions and choices.

Duration: 20-30min

Necessary: paper and writing utensils

Procedure:

Introduce the participants to the Descartes square approach to evaluating decisions. An example: Decide what to do after you graduate 9th grade: what about going to a school in the capital city? List **what will happen if I go to a school in the capital** (possible answers may include: a better education, new friends, more opportunities for extra-curricular activities, also – more competition, etc.)? **What won't happen if I go to a school in the capital** (no need to fit into a new environment, no access to the resources that would be available in the capital)? **What will it be like if I go to a school in the capital?** (my parents will be proud of me; I will become more courageous and take up challenges more). **What will it be like if I don't go to a school in the capital?** (I'll be disappointed with myself; I'll be less likely to fulfill my dreams)

Questions beginning with "WHAT WILL HAPPEN" focus more on the practical, pragmatic aspects of decision-making. Questions beginning with "WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE" focus more on the emotional, well-being aspects of decision-making.

[American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Teen Brain: Behavior, Problem Solving, and Decision Making](#)
[Descartes Square: A Popular Decision Making Technique](#)

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS HAPPENS?	WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN?
WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE IF THIS HAPPENS?	WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE IF THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN?

Ask each participant to choose one realistic situation where they would have to decide. It's wise to start with a simple, everyday situation (e.g. meet friends or stay home and do homework?)

The participants write down the answers to the above questions, assessing their situation.

Ask the participants to share and express their thoughts, ask each other questions, and encourage them to collectively try to make sense of what decision seems healthiest in each situation. **Important!** Avoid giving immediate advice and encourage other members of the group to actively listen and ask questions first instead of rushing in with advice or guidance.

Reflection questions:

- How difficult or easy did each of you find this process?
- What seemed hardest/easiest?
- What did you find you had in common / what was different when you shared with the rest of the group?
- What else could help you individually make everyday decisions? What supportive people could you turn to for advice if needed?

Activity #2 The staircase

The aim: to encourage young people to think about the “steps” they need to take before they enter sexual relations in order to avoid hurting themselves and the other person. Pay attention – if the topic of consent is brought into the conversation!

Necessary: a sheet of paper (or Post-it papers) for each group; markers, one large format sheet of paper.

Duration: 20 min

Procedure:

Participants are split into small groups or in pairs. They are invited to think of and to write one necessary “step” on an individual sheet of paper that young people should take before deciding to have sex.

10 minutes later, you should place the pages on the floor, each page forming a “step” in the staircase leading up to a page that says, “First sexual encounter”.

Downstairs is a page with 2 young people.

Then you should discuss the aspects related to the task: dating, meeting the parents, contraception, use of addictive substances, consent etc.

Reflection questions:

- How do you know someone wants to have sex or do something physical?
- How do other people know you want to have sex or do something physical?
- Is it okay to share your passwords with your partner?
- How would you feel if your partner went through your phone? Is it ever okay to go through theirs?
- How do you establish or choose your boundaries? How do you take care of yourself?

What's the Password? – Consent

So often, we hear people say that no means no when it comes to consent. That's true BUT there's way more to consent than just that simple phrase. Consent is someone giving their permission for all sexual contact that happens. Consent is agreeing and saying yes throughout the entire act. It's freely given, of a person's own will, and absent of pressure. Sometimes a person can say no through body language by pushing away, not responding, moving around, looking down, or even not wanting to be alone with someone. Remember, if it's not a yes, you didn't get their password, and that means access denied.

Access Granted or Denied? – Boundaries

Everyone likes their space, but sometimes it's hard to set boundaries. Boundaries are important to healthy relationships. You may want to share everything with your partner or spend a lot of time with them, but it's okay to set some clear limits or make decisions around how much is too much. Remember to respect other people's boundaries too... It goes both ways!

How can I safeguard my password? Creating boundaries.

STEP 1: Action

- Pay attention to nonverbal cues
- Listen to what they are saying. It's our job to listen and believe them
- Ask questions! Don't assume

STEP 2: Ask yourself

- Do they look uncomfortable? Are they tense? What message is their face giving?
- Did they say they were uncomfortable? Did they give subtle hints?
- How do I know they are okay with this? Did I ask them if they were okay?

STEP 3: Respecting boundaries

- No one is a mind reader. Be clear and honest about your expectations.
- Make a list. Write down the things you like and don't like.
- Take note of your feelings. Sometimes we don't have the words to say how we feel, but listen: what is your body telling you? ⁵⁸

Activity #3 Five Big Myths About Consent⁵⁹

The aim: to encourage the conversation and raise awareness about persons physical and emotional boundaries. To increase understanding – what is and how consent looks and feels like. **Necessary:** Group leader gets familiar with 5 myths about consent.

Duration: 30 min

Procedure:

Option #1: The group leader reads each of the myths, giving the group members time to think and then argue what they think of what they have heard, why it is a myth, what their experiences and situations have been. And how they have handled these situations.

Option #2: The group is divided into pairs. Each pair receives one of five myths. The pair needs to come to terms with why this statement is a myth and share their thoughts with the rest of the group.

Introduction:

Consent is critical to a healthy relationship, yet not everybody understands the rules of the game. So, let's talk about five big myths about consent, and debunk them one by one.

But first, what even is consent? In short, it's clear and explicit permission. For any relationship to be healthy and strong, consent must be at the core of every action and decision. When both parties have consent, it means they have each other's full permission for what is in question. There is a fundamental respect for one another's boundaries. Okay, let's look at these myths.

Myth #1: Boundaries are not essential

"My partner loves me so much that they want to be with me all the time."

Starting a new relationship can feel downright amazing! The urge to want to spend all of your time together can be hard to overcome! But, an essential quality of a healthy relationship is feeling in control of yourself. Of your choices. Of your space. You have boundaries and you can change them when you need to. You should still have ample room to do the things that interest you. To get your work done, to excel in school, to exercise. Your partner shouldn't just tolerate those things but celebrate them. Your goals shouldn't be second best to spending time with them. Your partner should be your cheerleader. They should be proud of you, brag about you, and have your back.

Check in with your gut: *Do you feel accepted and respected as an individual and a whole person? Are your outside interests valued? Or is your only value as their partner?*

Myth #2: Consent is only about sex

"My S.O. (significant other) is so clingy and hangs all over me at school. It's not comfortable for me, but I don't want to hurt their feelings."

A lot of people think consent relates only to sex, but it goes well beyond. Quite simply, it's the line you draw between what you're comfortable with and what you aren't...inside or outside of the bedroom. This can range from public affection to how fast they drive with you in the car to whether they show up unannounced at your front door. If your relationship is consensual,

[One Love Foundation: Five Big Myths About Consent](#)

you don't feel pressure to do anything you aren't comfortable doing. They touch you in ways that you invite. Listen and adjust if you ask them to stop something you dislike. They show up when invited, and give space when needed. And accept when you change your mind.

Check in with your gut: *Are you comfortable with the amount and intensity of the relationship?*

Do you feel pressure to do things you're not comfortable with, whether sexual or otherwise?

Myth #3: Silence means yes

"I didn't explicitly tell him 'no,' but I wasn't comfortable."

Sometimes silence is mistaken for consent. But it is NOT. Consent should be an explicit and verbal indication that someone is comfortable with, and enthusiastic about, what is happening – whether it is making out or sex. Only "yes" means "yes". Good communication and strong positive agreement is a sign that what's happening is comfortable. Your partner checks in with you. They make sure you are comfortable with how you are being touched. They do not take your silence for granted. They proceed at a comfortable pace, giving you an 'out' if you need to stop what you are doing.

Check in with your gut: *Are you a full participant in the decision-making process about what you are doing?*

Can you articulate what you want, and what you do not? Are you being heard?

Myth #4: No take-backs

"I already said I wanted this, so I guess I just have to go through with it."

One of the most empowering things about consent is that it is not permanent. This puts you firmly in the driver's seat of your own experience and in control of your body. A sign of a healthy relationship is that you can change your mind at any moment, and for any reason. And a sign of a healthy, caring partner, is they will listen. Respect your wishes. Not pressure you. What better way to ensure a totally comfortable and mutually enjoyable experience?

By the way, this goes for intimacy that is happening in real time as well as for intimacy over time, whether you gave consent five seconds ago or last week. If it is not right now, it is not right.

Check in with your gut: *How do you feel in the moment when you are being intimate? Do you have the freedom to stop what you are doing without consequences or blame?*

Myth #5: All is fair when you are drunk

"I was drinking a lot, which they took as an open invitation."

If consent needs to be explicit and is not permanent, then it's impossible to give when you're under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In a caring relationship, your partner knows they don't have permission to be sexual. So, they don't take advantage. Instead, they back off and wait until you are sober and have your wits about you.

Check in with your gut: *If you were under the influence, would you still feel 100 percent safe and protected with your partner?*

Reflection questions:

- How easy or difficult was it to answer the questions in the section “Check in with your gut”?
- Was there anything new and unheard of for you in this task? Something you have not thought about before. What was it and why?
- What do you understand by “respectful behavior”? Name the characteristics of dignity that you think are important (e.g. listen carefully, speak calmly, do not interrupt each other, do not physically touch, etc.)
- What are the situations when it is most difficult for you to set boundaries? With what / which people? Why is it?
- What are the situations where it is easiest for you to set boundaries? With what / which people? Why is it?
- How do you know that you are not crossing someone else’s boundaries? What are the verbal (said) or non-verbal (body language, movement) signals that you can follow?

Closing comments:

Consent is a voluntary, enthusiastic, and clear agreement between the participants to engage in specific sexual activity. Period.

There is no room for different views on what consent is. People incapacitated by drugs or alcohol cannot consent.

If clear, voluntary, coherent, and ongoing consent is not given by all participants, it’s sexual assault. There is no room for ambiguity or assumptions when it comes to consent, and there aren’t different rules for people who’ve hooked up before.

Nonconsensual sex is rape.

Consent is:**Clear**

Consent is clear and unambiguous. Is your partner enthusiastically engaging in sexual activity? Have they given verbal permission for each sexual activity? Then you have clear consent. Silence is not consent. Never assume you have consent — you should clarify by asking.

Ongoing

You should have permission for every activity at every stage of a sexual encounter. It’s also important to note that consent can be removed at any time — after all, people do change their minds!

Coherent

Every participant in sexual activity must be capable of granting their consent. If someone is too intoxicated or incapacitated by alcohol or drugs, or is either not awake or fully awake, they are incapable of giving consent. Failure to recognize that the other person was too impaired to consent is not “drunk sex.” It is sexual assault.

Voluntary

Consent should be given freely and willingly. Repeatedly asking someone to engage in a sexual act until they eventually say yes is not consent, it is coercion.

Consent is required for everyone, including people who are in a committed relationship or married. No one is obliged to do anything they do not want to do and being in a relationship doesn't obligate a person to engage in any type of sexual activity.

It is important to understand that any type of sexual activity without consent, including touching, fondling, kissing, and intercourse, is a form of sexual assault and may be considered a crime.⁶⁰

Activity #4: "The fairytale"

The aim: To make young people understand that they are responsible for their body and what happens to it themselves. To help them define their emotional and physical boundaries and to respect other's emotional and physical boundaries.

To make them understand that a "No!" means "NO!"

Duration: 20 min

Necessary: the participants must sit in a circle

Procedure:

Group leader tells the group a story about 2 young people that go out on a date, how they spend their evening and eventually find themselves naked in bed...

After each new twist in the story, the teacher asks: "Did the girl/boy agree to have sex tonight?"

3. Members of the group express their thoughts and arguments.

"The fairytale"

Once upon a time, two young people lived in a city. Charlie, who was 17, and Alex, who was 16. They had met a couple of times and started to develop a relationship. One day Charlie, invited Alex on a date to the Pearl Café.

Alex was happy and began to prepare for their upcoming date.

They went through their closet to look for the most beautiful and appropriate clothes. Meanwhile, Charlie was also preparing for the date. They wore on their favorite pair of jeans, a T-shirt and clean socks. They used some of their dad's perfume. And adjusted their hair before leaving home.

Are they wondering whether they might have sex tonight?

They met at the café and ordered some food. Alex ordered a crab salad and some strawberries with whipped cream for dessert. Charlie, on the other hand, ordered fries with pork and a chocolate cake. They ate, talked and finally decided to leave.

Charlie insisted on paying the bill.

Are they wondering whether they might have sex tonight?

[Healthline. Your Guide to Sexual Consent](#)

After leaving the café, they walked through the city park and Charlie offered that they sit down on a remote bench near a lilac tree. They sat very close to one another and began kissing a little while later. Then, Alex noticed some people passing and said that they should stop kissing.

Are they wondering whether they might have sex tonight?

Then, Charlie invited Alex over for a cup of tea, explaining that no one's at home tonight.

Initially, Alex refused, saying that there is a rule to be home by 11 pm.

A moment later, however, they go to Charlies place.

Have they agreed on having sex tonight?

As they entered the stairwell of the house, they began kissing again and then walked up to the third floor. They kept kissing as they approached Charlies apartment door, unlocked it and entered the apartment. Charlie lock the door and invites Alex to the living room.

Have they agreed on having sex tonight?

Charlie quickly made some tea and found a box of cookies. They turned on the TV and found a music channel. They laughed and spoke until Charlie suggests having some home-brew wine. "There is a half of the bottle left since last Saturday. Its good!" Charlie says. Initially, Alex refused but eventually Charlie manages to convince of having a sip. So -sip by sip and the bottle is empty.

Have they agreed on having sex tonight?

Soon, both youngsters are kissing passionately on the couch. Charlie slid their hand under Alexe's clothes. Moments later, T-shirts are gone. When they lied down, Charlie suggests that they go to the parents' bed because the couch is old and creaky. A bit confused, Alex initially refuses, saying it's late and they should leave, but.. moments later Alex cannot resist and stays.

Have they agreed on having sex tonight?

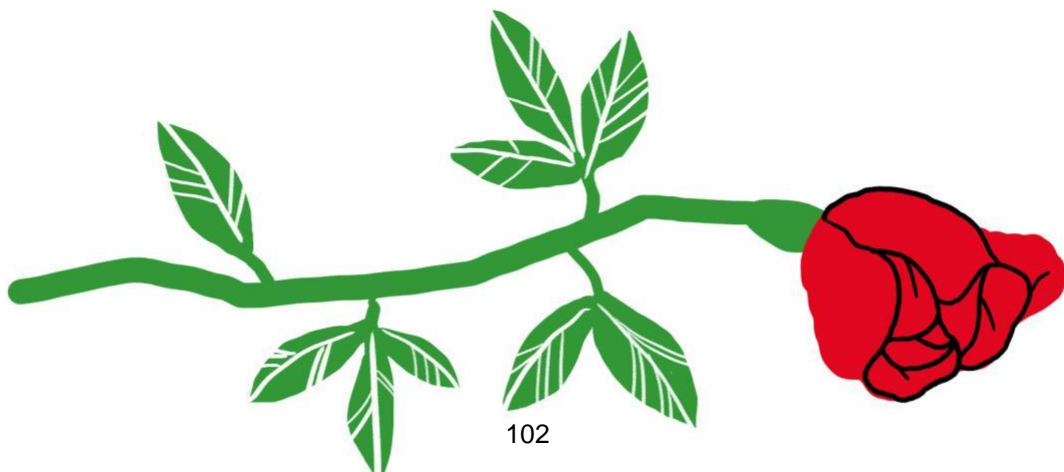
When they reached the parents' bedroom, they were already in their underwear.

The two young people began kissing passionately again.

Have they agreed on having sex tonight?

They were naked by now, just Charlie was still having the socks on...

Have they agreed on having sex tonight?



Reflection questions:

- Who should take the initiative when asking someone out on a date – girls? boys? Both?
- Does clothing indicate that a person wants to have sex? If a one pays the bill, does that make the other person in debt? How do addictive substances affect a young person’s ability to make choices?
- At what point should one tell their partner “No!” if they do not want further sexual intercourse?
- Why do situations occur where a “No!” is perceived as an insult (which may then be followed by violent, manipulative, threatening behavior, harassment, etc.)
- What is the “right” age (is there any?) to start having sex?
- Who is responsible for contraception?
- How can you tell that one is ready to have emotionally and physically safe sex?
- What is emotionally and physically safe sex?
- Is sex a proof of love? Can there be sex without love? And can there be love without sex?
- Who can I talk to if something goes wrong or I experience sexual abuse in my relationship?

Additional resource for young people: 10 questions to help me decide if I am ready to have sex for the first time:

- What emotions I am feeling when thinking of having a sexual experience with a certain person? (fear, insecurity, pleasure, excitement, joy, etc.)**
- Do I feel pressure from others (partner, friends)?**
- Am I doing this only to please someone?**
- Will I have sex only to keep my partner (so that my partner does not leave me)?**
- If and how will the relationship with my partner’s friends and parents change afterwards?**
- Am I certain of my partner’s feelings for me?**
- Is our relationship close enough to talk about sexually transmitted diseases and HIV / AIDS?**
- Have we had a conversation about what safe sex means to us physically, emotionally, and psychologically?**
- Have we decided about the most appropriate method of contraception for us?**
 - Am I sure that I will be able to take responsibility for the consequences if contraception does not work (pregnancy or STI / HIV / AIDS)?**

Concluding comments:

Consent means respecting boundaries and never making assumptions ⁶¹

Red flags that indicate you or your partner is not respecting consent include:

Pressuring or guiltting the other person into doing things they may not want to.

Suggesting the other person “owes” something (material items, sexual acts, etc.) either because you are dating or because they claim to have done something for you / you claim you have done something for them.

Reacting negatively with sadness, anger, or resentment if the other person doesn’t consent to something or don’t do so immediately.

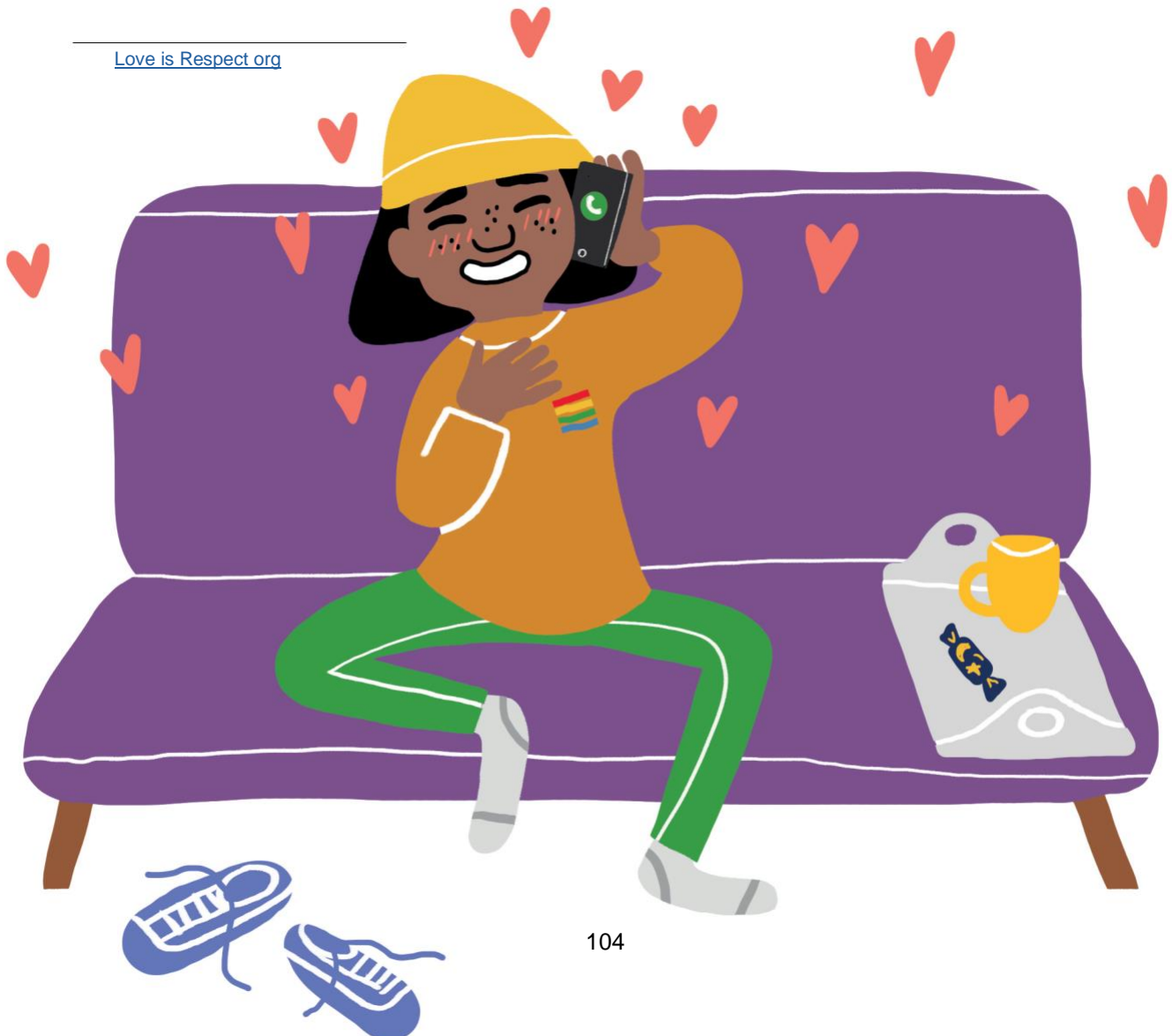
Ignoring the other persons indications (verbal and non-verbal) that show they do not consent.

Remember that it is important to get consent every time, even if you’ve done something before or you’re in a committed relationship. A person can decide to stop an activity at any time, even if they previously agreed to it.

Most importantly, everyone has a right to their own body and to feel comfortable in their intimate relationships.

***Closing evaluation remarks on the session.**

[Love is Respect.org](http://LoveisRespect.org)



Additional resources:

[Decision-making using Descartes circle](#)

[Youtube video comparing consent to having tea \(Consent\)](#)

[Resources by the organization "Break the cycle"](#)

[Resources by Teen talk](#)

[Resources by Love is Respect org](#)

[Healthline. Your Guide to Sexual Consent](#)

[Reachout.com How to teach your teenager about consent](#)

← CONTRACEPTION AND AVOIDING RISKS (STDs/HIV) →

The aim: To provide knowledge about the types and methods of contraception. To develop decision-making regarding whether or not to have sex; to train young people's ability to identify the possible consequences and to provide them with skills and knowledge on how to avoid different types of risks.

Sexual maturation is a natural developmental process that influences the formation of an essential part of every person's identity - sexuality and sexual orientation. Equally important in this development process is the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to sexual and reproductive health: the potential risks of STIs (sexually transmitted infections) / HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and contraception - a way to protect yourself and your partner. It is important to emphasize and remind that the use of condoms protects against both STIs (including HIV infection) and unwanted pregnancies.

Comprehensive sexuality education is one of the most important tools to ensure that young people have the information they need to make healthy and informed choices. The aim of this article is, firstly, to outline general issues about sexuality education pertaining to curriculum content, the didactic methods used, agencies involved, political support, coverage and adequacy of provision and barriers to effective sexuality education.⁶²

Adolescent sexuality is considered a sensitive issue in some countries of the European Region, despite a quarter of 15-year-old adolescents reporting having had sexual intercourse and reports from some countries that more than 30% do not use any form of contraception.⁶³ Assessing children's and adolescents' knowledge about sexuality is essential to implementing effective programmes targeting unintended pregnancy, risk-taking sexual behaviours, sexually transmitted infections and unsafe abortions.⁶⁴

[Sexuality education in Europe: an overview of current policies](#)

Inchley J, Currie D, Young T, Samdal O, Torsheim T, Augustson L et al., editors. Growing up unequal: gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being. Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study: international report from the 2013/2014 survey. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2016 (Health Policy for Children and Adolescents No. 7)

[Standards for sexuality education in Europe: a framework for policy makers, educational and health authorities and specialists. Cologne: Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung; 2010](#)

Contraception

Contraception consists of a variety of methods to prevent unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Its purpose is to prevent the sperm from fertilizing the egg.

→ *For a list of contraceptive methods, see the table on the resource sheet.*

When talking to young people, it is worth paying attention to and discussing: Emergency contraception: an emergency option if the condom is broken or falls off during sexual intercourse or if it is not used at all. You can buy emergency contraception at any pharmacy (without a prescription). Use no more than 72 hours after unprotected sex, but the sooner the better. Emergency contraception takes a physical toll on a girl's body, so it should only be used in emergencies and no more than 2-3 times a year. This method of contraception is not intended for regular use and it does not protect from STIs!

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)⁶⁵

Sexually transmitted infections are infections that are transmitted as a result of having vaginal, oral and anal sex. There are two types of STIs – one brought about by bacterial and viral infections. The most common STIs are syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia, hepatitis B and C, HIV, but there are many others. STIs mainly affect the genital, oral and anal mucous membranes. Some of these infections have manifestations that are very difficult to spot and can only be detected via a laboratory examination. This means that an infected person can infect others over a long period of time without knowing it. Many of these diseases can be very dangerous if left untreated. They often cause infertility. The longer they are neglected and untreated, the more difficult they are to treat, and this usually leads to serious complications. Women have a higher risk of experiencing STI-related complications.

HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that attacks cells that help the body fight infection, making a person more vulnerable to other infections and diseases. H – Human

I – Immunodeficiency

V – Virus

The virus multiplies by destroying the blood cells that maintain the organism's immunity, thereby causing the immune system to become weakened. Infection occurs when a bodily fluid containing HIV in high concentrations – in the genital secretions (sperm, secretion that precedes ejaculation, vaginal secretion), blood and breast milk (infants) – reaches the other person's organism.

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

If left untreated, HIV can lead to the disease AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). AIDS is the late stage of HIV infection that occurs when the body's immune system is badly damaged because of the virus.

A – Acquired

I – Immuno –

D – Deficiency

S – Syndrome⁶⁶

HIV transmission remains a major public health concern and affects more than 2 million people in the WHO European Region, particularly in the eastern part of the Region.

One can get infected with HIV:

- during sexual intercourse without using a condom (HIV can be transmitted from person to person during vaginal, anal and oral sex in both heterosexual and homosexual sex)
- if infected blood enters the bloodstream of someone uninfected (using the same injection equipment (syringes, needles), and when piercing, tattooing or performing acupuncture on someone with unsterilized needles)
- during pregnancy – the disease can pass from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding

One **cannot** become infected with HIV: through a handshake, hugging, kissing, sneezing, coughing, using common household items (computer, towel, etc.), by visiting the same medical facilities as the infected, from sharing meals and dishes, using the same toilets and showers, in public pools, on public transportation, coming into contact with the sweat, tears, saliva, nasal discharge, urine, stool or vomit of the infected or from insect and animal bites or scratches. If one has an STI, there is an increased risk of contracting HIV.

A person infected with HIV may not show any signs of illness for an extended period of time (6-7 years on average) and feel good. But the HIV virus, once inside the body, multiplies and destroys the immune system. Over time, a person becomes more and more susceptible to any disease. Once the immune system is destroyed, the AIDS-HIV infection reaches its final stage

– the body's defenses are weakened and can no longer resist the causes of other diseases. The infected person begins to suffer from various diseases that develop rapidly due to the organism's weakened immunity and resist treatment.

Stages of HIV and some of the symptoms people may experience⁶⁷

Stage 1: Acute HIV Infection

Duration: 2 to 6 months. There is a lot of virus in the blood, but no antibodies yet.

Within 2 to 4 weeks after infection with HIV, about two-thirds of people will have a flu-like illness.

[What are HIV and AIDS?](#)
[Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

This is the body's natural response to HIV infection. Flu-like symptoms can include: fever, chills, rash, night sweats, muscle aches, sore throat, fatigue, swollen lymph nodes, mouth ulcers. These symptoms can last anywhere from a few days to several weeks. But some people do not have any symptoms at all during this early stage of HIV. The body starts to make antibodies against HIV, and the amount of virus in the blood is greatly reduced. However, HIV continues to multiply in cells, "producing" billions of new viruses every day. The battle between the human body and the virus begins. A person who has this "battle" in his body does not even realize it, because he does not feel any manifestations of the disease.

Get tested as soon as possible!

Don't assume you have HIV just because you have any of these symptoms—they can be similar to those caused by other illnesses. But if you think you may have been exposed to HIV, get an HIV test. HIV test includes a blood test and consultations before and after the test, during which the medical professional explains all the issues related to HIV / AIDS. The test is confidential – the contents of the consultation and the test result itself are known only to the medical professional and the patient. After you get tested, be sure to learn your test results. If you are HIV-positive, see a doctor as soon as possible so you can start treatment with HIV medicine. **And be aware: when you are in the early stage of infection, you are at very high risk of transmitting HIV to others.** It is important to take steps to reduce your risk of transmission. If you are HIV-negative, there are prevention tools like pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) that can help you stay negative.

NB! At the end of this stage, when the body has developed antibodies to HIV, a blood test can tell if a person is infected.

Stage 2: Clinical Latency

In this stage, the virus still multiplies, but at very low levels. People in this stage may not feel sick or have any symptoms. This stage is also called chronic HIV infection.

Without HIV treatment, people can stay in this stage for 10 or 15 years, but some move through this stage faster.

If you take HIV medicine every day, exactly as prescribed and get and keep an undetectable viral load, you can protect your health and have effectively no risk of transmitting HIV to your sexual partner(s). But if your viral load is detectable, you can transmit HIV during this stage, even when you have no symptoms. It is important to see your health care provider regularly to get your viral load checked.

Stage 3: AIDS

If you have HIV and you are not on HIV treatment, eventually the virus will weaken your body's immune system and you will progress to AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). This is the late stage of HIV infection.

Symptoms of AIDS can include:

- Rapid weight loss
- Recurring fever or profuse night sweats
- Extreme and unexplained tiredness
- Prolonged swelling of the lymph glands in the armpits, groin, or neck
- Diarrhea that lasts for more than a week
- Sores of the mouth, anus, or genitals
- Pneumonia
- Red, brown, pink, or purplish blotches on or under the skin or inside the mouth, nose, or eyelids
- Memory loss, depression, and other neurologic disorders

Each of these symptoms can also be related to other illnesses. The only way to know for sure if you have HIV is to get tested. If you are HIV-positive, a health care provider will diagnose if your HIV has progressed to stage 3 (AIDS) based on certain medical criteria.

Life with HIV/AIDS: An HIV positive person isn't hopelessly doomed to die! If the test is positive, that means the person is an HIV carrier, but that does not mean that he or she has AIDS, too! HIV / AIDS cannot be completely cured (one cannot get rid of the viruses from the body), but specific treatment (antiretroviral therapy) can limit the reproduction of the virus and significantly improve one's quality of life.

In Latvia, antiretroviral therapy drugs for HIV-infected persons and AIDS patients are in the state list of reimbursable medicines and are paid for 100% from the state budget. The quality of life and life expectancy of patients receiving treatment may be equivalent to that of healthy people.

→ A person with HIV should definitely wear a condom during sexual intercourse!

Other sexually transmissible infections

Statistics show that young people in Latvia have a high risk of contracting STIs. For example, in 2016, there was a record number of syphilis cases among young people aged 18-29. It accounted for 31% (52 cases) of all registered cases of syphilis in Latvia.⁶⁸

Hepatitis B and C – inflammation of the liver caused by hepatitis viruses. Infection occurs through blood contamination and sexual contact. It's possible to get a Hepatitis B vaccine. **Gonorrhea** – a genital and urinary tract disease caused by bacteria. Infection occurs through sexual contact. When infected during oral or anal sex, inflammation can develop in the throat or rectum. It's possible to get infected by using shared hygiene items. This disease is curable.

[Latvijai ir svarīga kvalitatīva veselības izglītība \(01.10.2018.\)](#)

Syphilis – an infection caused by bacteria. Infection occurs mainly through sexual contact (vaginal, oral, anal) through the mucous membrane if a condom is not used or it is damaged during intercourse. One can also get infected through blood contamination. It's a serious but curable disease.

Chlamydia – a bacterial genital tract infection that is transmitted through sexual contact. Sexually active youth are most at risk of infection. Can be cured if diagnosed early. **Trichomoniasis** – a disease of the genitals and urinary tract caused by a single-cell parasite, which is transmitted during sexual intercourse. It's possible to get infected by using shared hygiene items. It's curable.

Candidiasis – a widespread form of vaginal inflammation caused by a yeast. It is usually acquired through sexual contact. Another common cause is dysbacteriosis – when a large amount of yeast multiplies on a person's skin or mucous membrane. The disease is treatable but tends to reoccur.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) – causes genital warts, can cause cancer on the skin of external genitals and cervical cancer. Usually contracted through sexual contact. The disease is treatable, but the cells of the virus remain in the body for the rest of one's life.

Anogenital herpes – an infection on the genital skin and mucous membranes caused by the Herpes simplex virus type 1 and / or type 2. In the vernacular, the external symptoms of herpes – fluid-filled vesicles – are often referred to as cold sores. Infection occurs through sexual contact (vaginal, oral, anal). Treatment can help eliminate symptoms and prevent outbreaks, but the virus cannot be eliminated.

Scabies – a contagious skin disease caused by scabies mites. Infection occurs through sexual contact, physical contact (handshakes, touching) and through infected objects (bed linen, shared towels). It's treatable.

Pubic lice/pediculosis pubis – a disease caused by pubic lice. It manifests in the hair of the pubic area, chest, underarms, eyelashes, eyebrows, and beard (in men). Infection can occur through sexual contact or through infected objects (bed linen, towels, clothes). It's treatable.

Seek immediate medical attention if you experience any of these STI related signs:

- increased, unpleasant genital secretions (from the urethra in men and from the vagina in women)
- pain and burning sensation during urination
- redness, blisters, and itching in the genital area
- for women – bleeding unrelated to menstruation and vaginal pain during sexual intercourse

A lot of STIs can develop hidden and can be detected only by specific medical investigations. If you suspect you're infected, see a doctor – a dermatovenereologist (a doctor treating skin diseases and STIs in both boys and girls), a gynecologist (female doctor), a urologist (treats urinary tract diseases, provides consultations about penile or testicle related issues) or a family doctor. Self-medication with STIs is extremely ill-advised.

→ In most STD cases, both partners must seek treatment!

Activity #1: Methods of contraception

The aim: To provide young people with information on methods of contraception and to discuss the involvement of men and women in the use of contraception.

Duration: 40 minutes

Necessary: Handout material Session #10, activity #1

Procedure:

The participants are given two sheets of paper. One with names of various methods of contraception and the other with descriptions. By discussing these methods together, the participants must connect the title with the appropriate description (Resource Sheet Session #10, activity #1). Depending on the number of participants, this task can be done in pairs, in smaller groups or one, large group.

Group leader must not intervene in the discussion process, while the participants are encouraged to use additional resources, if necessary (search the Internet, look up information in books, etc.)

Ask each group to try to answer the questions below about the contraceptive methods they were given / they are working on:

- Does this method prevent pregnancy and HIV/STIs?
- How is this method used?
- What are the myths and facts about this method?
- What are the advantages of the method?
- What are the disadvantages of the method?
- What do young people in your communities think about this method? Why?

When this is done, each statement is examined and discussed with the supervisor.

Reflection questions:

- Who should be the one responsible for the use of contraception? The man or the woman? Why?
- Who should bring this topic up first? The man or the woman? Why?
- Is contraception a topic that is difficult to address?
- What is the real situation when it comes to contraception? Do couples discuss contraception often? Why do you think they do / they don't?
- What methods of contraception are most often suggested to adolescents and young people?
- Where do young people usually acquire information about sex and contraception? Is this information precise? Are other sources of information available?
- Do young people have access to these methods? What methods are used the most in your communities?
- How should couples decide on which method of contraception to use?
- What are the safest methods to prevent pregnancy and to protect oneself from STIs/HIV?
- If you forget to use a condom or it breaks, what can you do?

- What did this workshop teach you that you didn't know before?
What are you going to do with this information?

Activity #2: Georgio and Hana's story

The aim: To promote a better understanding of the potential consequences, influences, and feelings that are connected to becoming a father at an adolescent age. **Necessary:** A prepared story to read the participants

Duration: 45-50 min

Planning: Experience shows that, when discussing unplanned pregnancy, people usually bring up the issue of abortion. This can be a hot and divisive topic, so it is important that the group leader does not impose his or her views and take a side, but rather focus on the topics of health and human rights within this context. The leader should also be ready to answer any questions regarding abortion and provide the participants with information on local statistics, laws, services and support systems, institutions or individuals.

Procedure:

Tell the group you will read a story in three parts. Explain that you will ask questions after each part that will concern concrete part of the story.

When you've read the story, conclude the workshop by discussing the questions below.

Georgios' story

Part 1: Georgio is seventeen years old and lives with his family in small city. He studies hard, loves to spend time with his friends and plays football whenever he can. One Saturday, when he was out having fun with his friends in the city, he met Hana, who was sixteen. It was love at first sight. They talked for hours that day, and before saying goodbye, they hugged and kissed each other. They also agreed to meet again three days later in the same place. Georgio was in love! He had never felt like this before. When he went home that night, he couldn't stop thinking about Hana – he thought about Hana for three days straight. He had a feeling that Hana was "the one".

- How do you think this story might end?

Part 2: When Georgio and Hana met again, they were very happy. They started seeing each other almost every day, and when they were apart, they spoke on the phone. One day, Georgios' parents went to visit their relatives who lived in the capital city. Georgio thought this was a good opportunity to invite Hana over for a visit. "Who knows what might happen," he thought to himself.

Hana arrived at the agreed time, looking even more beautiful than usual. They soon stopped talking and began kissing very passionately.

- Who is responsible for contraception in this story – Hana or Georgio?
- Do you think either of them thought about contraception?
Why do you think they did / they didn't?
- How do you think this story might end?

Part 3: Georgio and Hana had sexual intercourse, but they didn't use a condom. On her way back home, Hana began to worry about what they had done. Maybe she shouldn't have let it happen? What would her family and friends think if they knew she was no longer a virgin? Georgio was worried too. He thought about what his parents would think if they knew he brought Hana home. Georgio started to avoid Hana for the next two weeks. She phoned him every day, but he always found an excuse not to talk to her. About a month later, he received a call from Hana; she was crying and was very sad. She told Georgio she was pregnant and did not know what to do.

- Why did they have sex without using a condom or some other method of contraception?
- How do you think Georgio felt when he found out Hana was pregnant?
- What thoughts go through a young man's mind when he learns his girlfriend is pregnant?
- What thoughts go through a young woman's mind when she learns she is pregnant?
- What are Hana's and Georgios' choices?
- How will the birth of a child change Georgios' life? How will it change Hana's life?
- How will Georgios' parents react? How will Hana's parents react?
- Do families, peers, communities react differently to a boy who will become a father as opposed to a girl who will become a mother at a young age?
Why do you think they would / they wouldn't become parents?
- How do you think this story might end?

Reflection questions

- Do young people in your community experience situations similar to those Georgio and Hana had?
- What can you do to reduce unplanned pregnancies in your communities?

Conclusion of the activity

There are some things to remember that will help you a lot when you decide to talk to someone about contraception or, in fact, any important issue or question in your life.

1. Be brave and be proud

Do not be shy, sex is an integral part of life and talking about contraception shows that you are ready to take responsible steps to protect yourself and your partner. It's not just about contraception, it's about taking responsibility for your life in a mature way, so - be proud of yourself and the decision to start this conversation!

2. Be informed

Find time to research information. Although you will never have all the answers, if you know the topic you are talking about, you will feel confident and respected from the person you are talking to.

3. Be honest

No one can give you the best advice without knowing the truth. This applies especially to your doctor. So tell the truth about your past, your needs and your worries to get the best solutions for yourself. Also, openness to a partner in your relationship will only benefit you and will protect both of you from both misunderstandings and painful moments.

Either out of ignorance, indifference or any other reason, in many cases, young men do not participate in making decisions about pregnancy and are not having themselves accountable. Women, too, either because of misinformation or other difficulties, may find themselves talking about the topic with their partner only after they've gotten pregnant without planning it. It is important to consider how traditional gender roles and power relationships lead to situations where couples fail to discuss contraception and the woman gets pregnant. If the conversation occurs at all, it often happens in a hurry and when contraception isn't readily available. These situations can lead to unwanted/ unplanned pregnancies and unhealthy relationships.

In addition, some young men may question whether they are the fathers when their partner becomes pregnant. This attitude may be associated with fear or an unwillingness to take responsibility and/ or to change one's lifestyle. This change is associated with a transition to adulthood and is therefore also associated with a loss of personal freedom. This attitude also expresses a lack of confidence in women, especially young women who may have more than one sexual partner. It is important to remember that although pregnancy may not be the best out-come for a young man or woman, life goes on and it is best to seek support from family, peers or other people in one's community, without feeling guilt or shame. Remember – seeking for support and help is a sign of strength and maturity!



Activity #3: "Level of risk"

The aim: to test and improve the participants' knowledge about how people may get infected with HIV.

Duration: 45 min

Necessary: premade slips of paper describing different behaviors and pages describing the level of risk involved: "Very High Risk", "High Risk", "Low Risk", "No Risk".

Procedure: The slips of paper are distributed to the members of the group, and the four pages describing the risks on the floor should be placed on the floor. The participants are given 2 min to reflect on whether the slips they received pose a high or low risk of infection, or whether there is no risk at all. The teacher then asks the participants to place their slips on the appropriate risk page on the floor. The group then decides whether this was the right decision, or the level of risk is different.

Checking the answers:

- MAKING A PIERCING: **No Risk**, IF the piercing is done in a suitable place-professional salon, where all instruments are regularly disinfected, and specialists work with gloves. The lower the quality of the salon, the greater the risk that the procedure will be complicated and unsafe.
- KISSING: **No Risk**
- USING ONE SYRINGE with an HIV + person: **Very High Risk**
- HUGGING: **No Risk**
- MAKING A TATTOO: **No Risk**, IF the tattoo is made in a suitable place-professional salon, where all instruments are regularly disinfected, and specialists work with gloves. The lower the quality of the salon, the greater the risk that the procedure will be complicated and unsafe.
- GOING TO SAUNA: **No Risk**
- FROM THE INSECT BITE: There is **No Risk** because the HIV is only transmitted by humans.
- SNEEZING: **No Risk**, even if you are sneezed or coughed by an HIV + person. Because the presence of the HIV virus in these body fluids is so small that the virus cannot be transmitted.
- USING ONE TOILET: **No Risk** if all sanitary requirements are met.
- BLOOD DONATION: **No Risk** because the blood is tested for the presence of the HIV virus with the donor's permission. If the donor does not want this test, blood donation is not possible / not allowed.
- SWIMMING POOL: **No Risk**
- FIGHTING: **High Risk**, IF those involved in the fight have open wounds, thus enabling HIV + blood to enter the body of a non-HIV infected person.
- BLOOD TRANSFUSION: **No Risk**

- SADOMAZOHISM: **Very High Risk** because wounds can be caused during sex and no condom is used.
- DURING ANAL SEX: **Very High Risk** if no condom is used.
- DURING ORAL SEX: **Low Risk**
- SEX WITHOUT CONDOM: **Very High Risk**
- MASTURBATING: **No Risk**
- USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT: **No Risk**
- CHILDBIRTH (if the mother is HIV+): **No Risk**, if the mother has regularly taken appropriate medication to prevent the transmission of HIV. **Very High Risk**, if the mother has NOT regularly taken appropriate medication to prevent the transmission of HIV
- BREAST-FEEDING (if the mother is HIV+): **Low Risk**, if the mother has regularly taken appropriate medication to prevent the transmission of HIV. **Very High Risk**, if the mother has NOT regularly taken appropriate medication to prevent the transmission of HIV. It is important to mention that HIV + mothers are advised not to breast-feed, but to feed milk mixtures.
- DURING PREGNANCY (if the mother is HIV+): **Low Risk**, if the mother has regularly taken appropriate medication to prevent the transmission of HIV. **Very High Risk**, if the mother has NOT regularly taken appropriate medication to prevent the transmission of HIV.
- USING ONE TOWEL: **No Risk**
- USING ONE TOOTHBRUSH: **No Risk**
- USING COMMON SHOWER: **No Risk**
- PULLING OUT METHOD (pulling the penis out of the vagina before ejaculation): **High Risk**.
- IN THE ELEVATOR: **No Risk**
- DRINKING FROM ONE CUP: **No Risk**
- ABSTINENCE: **No Risk**
- DURING GROUP SEX: **Very High Risk**.
- SEXTING: **No Risk**
- USING SEX TOYS: **No Risk** if used solely for self-satisfaction.

Reflection questions

- How do you evaluate your knowledge before and after this activity? What has changed?
- What do you think are the most popular myths among young people about the HIV infection?
- Is there anything you will do differently after this lesson? If so, what is it?

***Closing evaluation remarks on the session.**

Additional resources:

[Your contraception guide](#)

[How do contraceptives work?](#)

[HIV.GOV](#)

[World Health Organization, HIV/AIDS](#)

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[HIV & AIDS - signs, symptoms, transmission, causes & pathology](#)

[How close are we to eradicating HIV? - Philip A. Chan](#)

[Center for Reproductive Rights. The Facts on Some Popular Myths About Abortion](#)

[Myths and facts about abortion \(Government of South Australia\)](#)

*This workshop has been developed in the collaboration with the NGO “DIA+LOGS”:
support center in Latvia for those affected by HIV: <http://www.diacentrs.lv/en/>*

Understanding fertility. When are men and women fertile?

Women become fertile when they get their first period, their reproductive organs have begun to work, which means she can become pregnant if she engages in sexual intercourse. Ovulation is the periodic release of a mature egg from the ovary, which usually occurs in the middle of a woman's menstrual cycle – about 14 days before her next menstrual period. Different factors such as stress, illness, and nutrition can affect the length of a menstrual cycle.

Men become fertile when they first ejaculate and can have children until the end of their lives.

Discontinued sexual intercourse.⁶⁹ Is this a reliable method of contraception?

Discontinued sexual intercourse is when a man pulls his penis out of a woman's vagina before he ejaculates. It is not a reliable method to avoid pregnancy and it will not protect you from STIs/ HIV. One of the main reasons why the discontinued sexual intercourse method is ineffective is because most men don't really know when they are about to ejaculate, and they may not be able to do it on time. The second reason is that, before ejaculation, the penis releases a small amount of fluid that can contain sperm and cause pregnancy or infection with STIs/HIV.

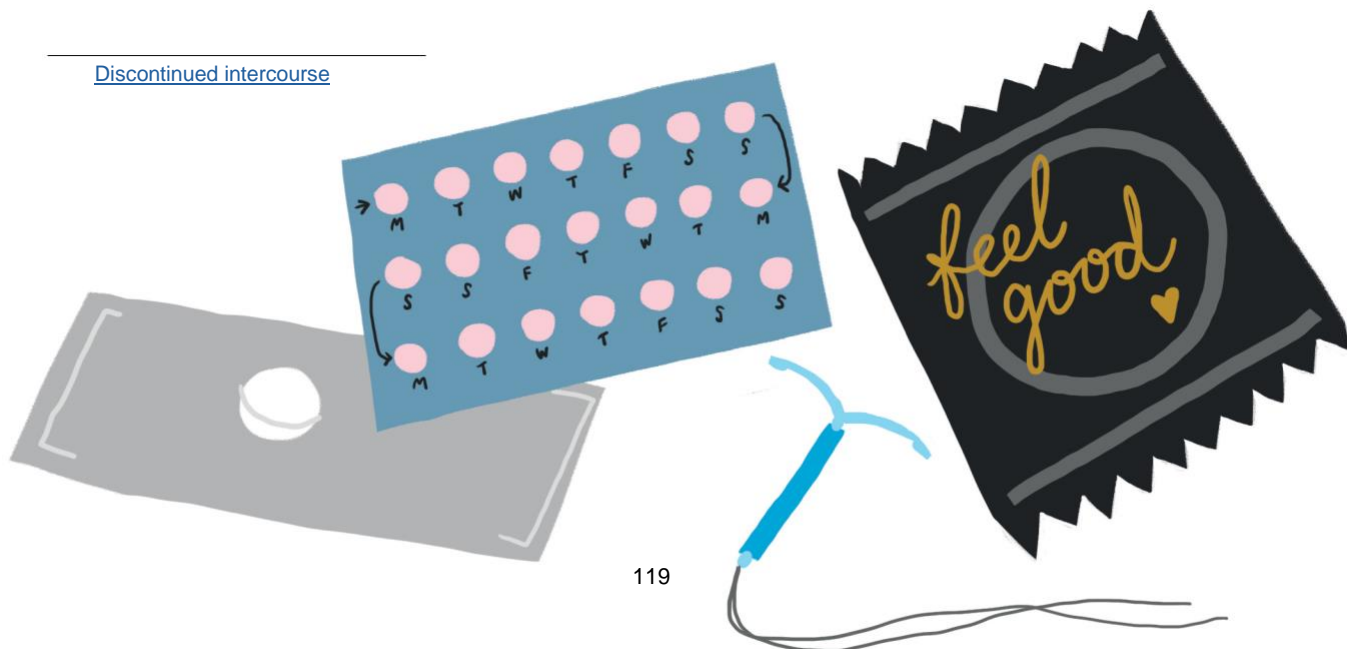
Dual protection. Is it possible to prevent pregnancy and STIs/HIV at the same time?

A couple can use a female or male condom to protect themselves against both pregnancy and STIs/HIV. The couple can also use two simultaneous methods of contraception, such as a condom and an intrauterine device (also called a coil), to prevent both pregnancy and STI/HIV infection. The safest way to protect oneself against pregnancy and STIs/HIV is not having sex at all.

Emergency contraception. When should one use it?

Often referred to as the morning-after pill, emergency contraception can reduce the risk of pregnancy after unprotected sex or in the event the condom broke. The sooner an emergency contraceptive is taken after unprotected sex, the greater its effectiveness. It should not be used as the primary method of contraception, but only in an emergency.

[Discontinued intercourse](#)



Natural contraception	Methods that do not interfere with the body's natural processes and are based on observing the body. (effectiveness 20-100%)
Barrier methods	Methods that form a barrier between the sperm and the ova thus preventing conception (65-98%)
Hormonal contraception	Methods that regulate the female hormonal system to prevent ovulation and prevent conception (85-98%)
Sterilization	A surgical procedure that interrupts the germ cell's path, thereby preventing conception. (99,9%)

method	description	effectiveness %
Condoms (female or internal condom and the male or external condom)	A barrier method that ensures the collection of semen so that it doesn't enter the female organism, thereby preventing unwanted pregnancy and STIs. The most suitable method of contraception for young people.	82 -98%
Hormonal contraception (Pills, NuvaRing, patch, implants, injections)	Methods that prevent ovulation with the use of special substances (hormones) thereby preventing pregnancy. Does not protect one from STIs.	91-99%
Discontinued sexual intercourse	The removal of the penis from the vagina before ejaculation. May partially prevent pregnancy, does not protect one from STIs.	78-96%
Abstinence	The only method of prevention that fully prevents pregnancy and protects one from STIs.	100%
Sterilization	A practically irreversible surgical method of contraception that blocks the movement of germ cells, thus preventing conception. Does not protect one from STIs	99%

Emergency contraception	This method should only be used in exceptional cases to reduce the risk of unwanted pregnancy if the condom is broken, a rape has occurred, or no other method of contraception has been used. Does not protect one from STIs.	58-95%
Intrauterine device (IUD)⁷⁰	Devices inserted by a gynecologist into a woman's womb thereby preventing conception. Contains copper and/or hormones. Does not protect one from STIs.	99%
Spermicides	A chemical contraceptive that is inserted into the vagina before sexual intercourse that contains substances that neutralize sperm, thereby preventing conception. Does not protect one from STIs.	72-82%
The calendar method	This method is based on counting days, blindly assuming that a woman always ovulates at the same time. This method is very unsuitable for young women, whose cycle is still adjusting and may be unpredictable. Does not protect one from STIs.	78-95%
Methods for recognizing fertility	Natural methods of contraception based on monitoring a woman's cycle and measuring basal temperature. To master this method, one must take special courses that teach you how to use it properly, which then ensures its effectiveness. Does not protect one from STIs.	88-99%
Cycle Computers (baby comp, lady comp, pearly, daisy, natural cycle app)	The device's algorithm measures basal temperature and makes calculations and signals the user about fertile days when another method of contraception should be used. Does not protect one from STIs.	98%

[Intrauterine device](#)

Resource sheet B SESSION #10, activity #3

MAKING A PIERCING	KISSING	USING ONE SYRINGE with an HIV + person	HUGGING
MAKING A TATTOO	GOING TO SAUNA	FROM THE INSECT BITE	SNEEZING
USING ONE TOILET	BLOOD DONATION	SWIMMING POOL	FIGHTING
BLOOD TRANSFUSION	SADOMAZOHISM	DURING ANAL SEX	DURING ORAL SEX
SEX WITHOUT CONDOM	MASTURBATING	USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT	CHILDBIRTH (if the mother is HIV+)
BREAST-FEEDING (if the mother is HIV+)	DURING PREGNANCY (if the mother is HIV+)	USING ONE TOWEL	USING ONE TOOTHBRUSH
USING COMMON SHOWER	PULLING OUT METHOD (pulling the penis out of the vagina before ejaculation)	IN THE ELEVATOR	DRINKING FROM ONE CUP
ABSTINENCE	DURING GROUP SEX	SEXTING	USING SEX TOYS

← ADDICTIONS →

AND THEIR IMPACT

The aim: To provide one with knowledge and understanding about intoxicating, addictive substances and habits and their effects on physical, mental and emotional health.

What Are Substance Abuse and Addiction?

The difference between substance abuse and addiction is very slight. Substance abuse means using an illegal substance or using a legal substance in the wrong way. Addiction begins as abuse, or using a substance like marijuana or cocaine.

You can abuse a drug (or alcohol) without having an addiction. For example, just because Sara smoked pot a few times doesn't mean that she has an addiction, but it does mean that she's abusing a drug — and that could lead to an addiction.

People can get addicted to all sorts of substances. When we think of addiction, we usually think of alcohol or illegal drugs. But people become addicted to medicines, cigarettes, even glue. Some substances are more addictive than others: Drugs like crack or heroin are so addictive that they might only be used once or twice before the user loses control.

Addiction means a person has no control over whether he or she uses a drug or drinks.

Someone who's addicted to cocaine has grown so used to the drug that he or she has to have it.

Addiction can be physical, psychological, or both. ⁷¹

When teenagers are struggling with emotional problems, they often turn to alcohol or drug use to help them manage painful or difficult feelings. In this they are not different from adults. But because adolescent brains are still developing, the results of teenage "self-medication" can be more immediately problematic. ⁷²

Teenage Drug Abuse and Addiction

Teens who abuse drugs may have a greater risk of developing an addiction when they are adults. It is important to know the difference between drug abuse and addiction. Many teens experiment with drugs but are not addicted.

[Teens Health. Dealing With Addiction](#)
[Mental Health Disorders and Teen Substance Use](#)

Teen drug abuse can have long-term cognitive and behavioral effects since the teenage brain is still developing.⁷³

Teen Drug Experimentation

Half of all new drug users are under the age of 18. Experimentation plays the biggest role in teen-age drug use. However, experimentation is a fact of life and just because a teen has tried drugs or alcohol does not mean they will become an addict. It is more important to understand why some teens are tempted to experiment.

Common reasons teens abuse drugs include:

- Curiosity
- Peer pressure
- Stress
- Emotional struggles
- A desire to escape

The majority of adults with an addiction first experimented with drugs before they turned 21. The good news is that the rates of teenage drug abuse have been declining.

Signs of Teen Drug Abuse

There are many signs that a teen is using drugs. It can be difficult to tell the difference between the pangs of adolescence and actual drug use, but parents can be proactive in talking to their teen to find out what's going on.

Some common signs of teen drug abuse include:

- Bad grades
- Bloodshot eyes
- Laughing for no reason
- Loss of interest in activities
- Poor hygiene
- Diminished personal appearance
- Avoiding eye contact
- Frequent hunger or "munchies"
- Smell of smoke on breath or clothes
- Secretive behavior
- Unusual tiredness
- Missing curfew

It's up to parents or any other close adults to initiate a conversation with teens if they suspect drug use (one in five parents who suspect their teen is using drugs do not intervene to prevent further drug use).

[Addiction Center](#)

The best way to get a teen to communicate about their drug use is by asking compassionate and understanding questions. Adults can ask straightforward questions when said in the right tone. Simply asking, “Have you been using drugs or alcohol?” or “Has anyone offered you drugs recently?” can be enough to get the conversation started. Responding to a teen’s admittance or denial of drug use in the right way is just as important as asking the right questions.

If a teen admits to taking drugs:

Parents and other close adults should not overreact if the teen comes clean about using drugs. Overreacting or lashing out can prevent a teen from opening up about their experience. Getting teens to talk is important to determine if their drug use was a one-time thing or if it is becoming a problem. Parents and other close adults should explain how they care about the child and the child’s future. Teens who feel supported and loved are also more likely to stop experimenting with drugs or seek help if they have an addiction.

If a teen denies drug use:

Naturally, there is a possibility that teens may lie about their drug use. Parents and other close adults should reassure the child that they are concerned and want to help. If a teen continues denying using drugs but the adult still suspects untruthfulness, a home drug test or professional help can uncover a teen drug problem. Therapists, pediatricians and addiction specialists can help diagnose a teen drug problem.

Common Drugs that Teens Abuse

The most common drugs abused by teens are not much different from those of adults. But the reasons for abuse may be different as teens often abuse a substance based on its accessibility. Teens are also more likely to take excessive amounts of drugs and alcohol because of how they perceive the risks and dangers.

Alcohol

Alcohol is the substance most commonly abused by teens. The social acceptance of drinking among people of legal drinking age can lead many teens to view alcohol as relatively harmless. Research suggests teens are more likely to binge drink because their impulse control has not fully developed. Binge drinking increases the risk of addiction in people of any age, and the teen-age brain is more susceptible to addiction. Talking to teens about these risks can curb underage drinking.

Marijuana

Regular marijuana users most often started during their adolescence. The perceptions of marijuana use among teens is changing; most high school seniors do not think smoking marijuana occasionally carries any risk. More than 20 percent of teens report having used marijuana at least once in the past month.

Prescriptions and Over-the-counter Medications

Many prescription drugs have intoxicating effects, and this is no secret to most teens. Narcotic painkillers like OxyContin and benzodiazepines like Xanax produce pleasurable effects that teens may seek out. These substances have high addictive potential and a risk of overdose. Teens may also abuse over-the-counter medications. The substance dextromethorphan (DXM), a cough suppressing substance, is found in many common cold and flu medicines. DXM can cause intoxicating effects in high doses, and an overdose is a real possibility.

Vaping

Vaping is the act of inhaling and exhaling the vapor produced by the heated nicotine liquid (often called “juice”) of an electronic cigarette (e-cigarette or e-cig), vape pen, or personal vaporizer. It’s also commonly called JUULing (pronounced jewel-ing).⁷⁴

Certain amount of risk-taking is a normal part of adolescent development. The desire to try new things and become more independent is healthy, but it may also increase teens’ tendencies to experiment with drugs. The parts of the brain that control judgment and decision-making do not fully develop until people are in their early or mid-20s. This limits a teen’s ability to accurately assess the risks of drug experimentation and makes young people more vulnerable to peer pressure. As noted previously, early use of drugs increases a person’s chances of becoming addicted. Remember, drugs change the brain—and this can lead to addiction and other serious problems. So, preventing early use of drugs or alcohol may go a long way in reducing these risks.⁷⁵

[Child Mind Institute. Teen Vaping: What You Need to Know](#)

[National Institute of Drug Abuse. Why is adolescence a critical time for preventing drug addiction?](#)



Here are variety of activities group leader can choose from, depending on the need of the group!

Activity #1: What are addictions?

The aim: Talk about different types of addictions and what society thinks about them: what kind of affect these addictions leave on teens and young people.

Duration: 60 minutes

Necessary: 4 large sheets of paper, markers and scotch tape.

Planning: As a group leader, it is important for you to discuss this issue free from prejudice, remembering that you do not have to know everything about everything (you can let the group know if you do not know something: prepare an answer for the next lesson!). Teens obviously can have strict thoughts regarding the attitudes of adults and towards policies and legislation related to the drug abuse.

Procedure:

Before starting the activity, write each of these questions separately on a large piece of paper:

- *What comes to your mind when you hear the words “addictive substances and behaviors”?*
- *Who is abusing drugs and who can become addicted to different substances and processes?*
- *What are some examples of addictive substances and behaviors? Where are they available?*
- *What are the risks associated with addictions?*

Place these large pieces of paper (posters) in four different places in the room.

At the beginning of the activity, divide the participants into four groups.

Assign each group one of the above questions and explain to spend 5-7 minutes to discuss the question and write the answers on the large paper.

After 5-7 minutes, have the groups to move clockwise. Give them 5-7 minutes to discuss the next question and write answers or add to already existing answers.

Repeat step 4 until all groups have had the opportunity to discuss and answer all four questions.

Summarize the answers and read them aloud. If one of the groups has not written the answers, then invite them to tell their thoughts and points of view to the others.

Create an open conversation / discussion about addictions and their impact on everyone.

Discussion in the group:

- Did all groups have the same idea about what these addictions are, who uses different substances and about the risks associated with using them? What was similar, what - different in these notions?
- Is it easy for people in your communities / environments to get alcohol and cigarettes? Is it forbidden for young people under the age of 18? Are the laws strictly followed? Why yes / no?
- Do people have easy access to other drugs?

- What are your thoughts on phone, computer, and gambling addictions?
- What do you think determines whether drug use is allowed (legal) or prohibited (illegal)?
- Are cigarette and alcohol ads allowed in newspapers, magazines, or television? How do these ads try to promote these substances? What do you think about that?
- How do these ads portray women who use their products? How do these ads portray men who use their products? Do you think these depictions are accurate? How do these ads affect men's and women's attitudes toward alcohol, cigarettes, vaping, and other drugs?
- Are there campaigns where you live that try to reduce addiction?
What do you think of these campaigns?
- What can you do to give people around you the right information about the consequences of different addictions?

Activity #2: Body mapping

The aim: To discuss different types of addiction and determine what society thinks of them, especially young people. To learn in an interactive way about the effects of the use of different substances.

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Necessary: large sheets of paper, markers and scotch tape.

Planning: It is important for you as the group leader to discuss this issue with group without prejudices, bearing in mind that you do not have to have all the answers (you can tell the group that if you aren't sure about something you'll have the answer at the next session!) There is no doubt that young people may be critical of the attitude of adults and of the policies and laws related to the use of intoxicating substances.

Procedure:

The activity consists in dividing in 3-4 groups, sticking two pieces of flip-chart paper together, having one of the participants from each group lying on the flip chart papers while the others draw around his/her body.

Each team must write long term effects and short-term effects of different substances use/abuse (give each group one type of substance – alcohol, tobacco, cannabinoids, opioids and others).

Each group presents its findings. The task allows the young people to demonstrate their existing knowledge through visual activities, will keep them engaged and allow them to learn new facts about using different substances.

Activity #3: Rating addictions

The aim: To agree by means of discussion and debate which are the most and the least harmful addictions people face

Duration: 30 min (depending on the number of participants and their activity during the debates)

Necessary: pages containing different names of addictive substances. **Procedure:**

Each member of the group receives one or more substances.

The pages must be placed in a row with the most harmful substance on one end of the line and the least harmful on the other.

First, everyone introduces the group with the substance/addiction they've been given and tells the group what they know about it (is it legal or illegal, how much it costs, what it looks like, etc.)

Then they place the substance/addiction sheet in the row of pages, explaining their decision.

If anyone in the group disagrees with the decision, he or she must make an argument for his or her case and persuade the group. If this happens, you can change the position of the relevant addiction/substance in the hierarchy.

Names of substances/addictions: Tobacco or nicotine; vaping; alcohol (beer, vodka, wine, "moonshine", etc.); hemp-based substances; "Spice" (synthetic cannabinoids); glue; gasoline; gas; amphetamines; ecstasy; LSD; antidepressants; coffee; Coca-Cola; sleeping-pills; chocolate, phone, computer, gambling, pornography, etc.

Activity #4: "Hot chair": Talking about alcohol and alcoholism

The aim: To question various myths related to alcohol use and alcoholism

Duration: 35- 40 min

Necessary and procedure: Arrange the chairs in the circle. Each participant has a chair, they sit on. Leader is reading out loud statement. If participants agree with the statement - they change places (sit elsewhere), if they disagree or they do not know, they stay seated. There are one or 2 extra empty chairs (if there is just 1 person, who agrees with the statement).

THE STATEMENTS

- Alcohol is not a drug
- Having a high alcohol tolerance means that the person will not become an alcoholic
- Mixing drinks makes you drunk
- Beer does not make you drunk
- Alcohol is sexually stimulating
- Alcoholism is an illness that affects older adults

- Alcoholics are those that drink daily
- Having a coffee or washing your face with cold water reduces the effects of alcohol
- Alcohol is good for making friends
- Parties are not parties without alcohol
- Its worse when girl is drunk than the boy is drunk
- Alcohol does affect one's fertility

After every statement reveal the "right answer" from the **Resource Sheet (session #11, activity #4)**

Activity #5: What do you know about vaping and e-cigarettes?

The aim: To break myths about vaping and e-cigarettes and raise awareness of its harmful effects on teenage development. For educators - to rise understanding, why vaping and e-cigarettes are so appealing among youth.

Duration: 35- 40 min

Necessary: Resource Sheets A & B (session #11, activity #5)

Procedure:

***Check what are the legal restrictions in your country regarding vaping and e-cigarettes usage among minors!**

Introduce the topic to the group and hang out Resource Sheet A (session #11, activity #5). Invite participants (individually or in pairs) to read statements and tick either "TRUE" or "FALSE" box.

Once that's done, invite participants to read out loud every statement and argument - why they think it is true or false. provide them with arguments from the Resource Sheet B (session #11, activity #5).

If the time allows and group is interested, you can watch the Ted Talk video together and have a conversation around that.

Video:

https://www.ted.com/talks/suchitra_krishnan_sarin_what_you_should_know_about_vaping_and_e_cigarettes

Discussion in the group:

- Why vaping and e-cigarettes are so popular among young people?
- Is there any linkage between social status/gender and using vaping and e-cigarettes?
- Why these myths we discussed are so common among youth and adults in general?
- What are the risks of vaping daily?
- What would be the best strategy of quitting vaping and/or using e-cigarettes?

Reflection questions:

- Was there anything new, what you learned during this activity? What was that?
- Was there anything surprising or mind-blowing? What and why?
- Is it easy for people in your communities to acquire alcohol and cigarettes? Is it legal to do so for young people under the age of 18? Do people comply with the law?
- Do people have easy access to other drugs?
- What are your thoughts on phone, computer and gambling addictions?
- What do you think determines whether drug use is allowed (legal) or prohibited (illegal)?
- Are cigarette and alcohol ads allowed in newspapers, magazines, or on television? How do these ads try to promote the use of these substances? What are your thoughts on the matter?
- How do these ads portray women using their products? How do these ads portray men using their products? Do you think these representations are accurate? How do these ads affect the attitudes of men and women towards alcohol and cigarettes?
- Are there campaigns in your area that try to reduce addiction in your community? What are your thoughts on such campaigns?
- What can you do to ensure that people around you have correct information about the consequences of various addictions?

Concluding comments:

We often must make important and less important choices in our everyday lives. What should you do if someone offers you addictive substances? What if you feel that “being on the phone” takes time away from your other activities or people that are important to you? A step forward is to openly admit to yourself – yes, it’s starting to bother me, and it might be an addiction. The second important question is – why is that? Answering yourself honestly will make it easier for you to decide to abstain from whatever is bothering you. Because you have power over this decision. Being independent means being able to decide for oneself. To say “no” and protect yourself, your friends and family from the trials of addiction, you need to make a firm decision beforehand that you won’t do it and be aware of the reason why. And this can only be done by a person who has a healthy amount of self-esteem and who feels confident.⁷⁶ But don’t worry – you’re not alone in this process! Remember, seeking help or support is not a sign of weakness but of courage!

*Closing evaluation remarks on the session.

[Atkarību veidošanās pusaudžiem](#)



Additional resources:

[National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens. Brain and Addiction](#)

[American Psychiatric Association. What Is Addiction?](#)

[Child Mind Institute](#)

[What happens when we smoke -- and when we quit \(video\)](#)

[Is Alcohol Harming Your Fertility](#)

[Fertility and Substance Abuse](#)

[Center for Disease Prevention and Control. Information for parents – adolescents and alcohol](#)

[Children meet young people in rehabilitation from addictive substances \(video\)](#)

[National Institute on Drug Abuse. Shatter The Myths](#)

[Vape Myths](#)

[Vaping and Teens](#)

[Vaping Rises Among Teens](#)

Resource sheet for the group leader (session #11)

What are drugs?⁷⁷

A drug can be defined as any substance that can alter the way a living organism functions, psychologically or in terms of behavior. There is a specific category of drugs called psychotropic or psychoactive drugs that change a user's mood, perception, feelings and behavior according to the variant of the drug that is taken, the amount consumed, the physical and psychological traits of the user, the particular situation the user is in, and what the user expects the effects from the drug will be like. These psychoactive or psychotropic drugs can be classified into three groups according to their effect on the brain:

- Depressants suppress brain activity, leading to fatigue and indifference.
Examples include alcohol, sleeping pills, inhalants.
- Stimulants increase brain activity, causing wakefulness and alertness.
Examples include appetite-controlling drugs, cocaine, and caffeine.
- Hallucinogens change the way the brain functions by changing the way it perceives reality, time, space, visual and auditory stimuli. Examples include LSD and ecstasy.

Drugs and alcohol

Depressants	Effect	Consequences of effects
Tranquilizers	Relieve tension and anxiety, relax muscles and induce sleep.	In high doses, they can cause a drop in blood pressure; can cause a coma if mixed with alcohol; increase the risk of fetal abnormalities if taken during pregnancy. Tolerance increases during frequent use, demanding higher doses.
Solvents and inhalants (glue, gasoline, correction fluid)	Euphoria, hallucinations, and agitation.	Nausea, a drop in blood pressure; frequent use can kill neurons and cause damage to the spleen, kidney, liver and peripheral nervous system.
Cough syrup and drops containing codeine and zipeprol	Pain relief, a feeling of wellbeing, drowsiness, floating sensations.	A drop in blood pressure and temperature; risk of getting into a coma; convulsions. Tolerance increases during frequent use, demanding higher doses; when use is interrupted, users may experience convulsions and insomnia.
Sedatives	Relieves tension, calming effect; feeling of relaxation.	If mixed with alcohol causes a drop in blood pressure and respiratory rate which can lead to death. Tolerance increases during frequent use, demanding higher doses.
Opium, morphine, heroin	Drowsiness, pain relief, apathy, isolation from reality, dreaminess, hallucinations.	Causes addiction that is difficult to recover from. Slows down heart and respiratory rate, which can lead to death; needle sharing can spread AIDS.
Alcohol	Euphoria, makes one talkative, feeling of anesthesia.	Nausea, tremors, vomiting, sweating, headaches, dizziness, convulsions, aggression and suicidal tendencies.

Hallucinogens	Effects	Consequences of the effects
Marijuana	Peace, relaxation, desire to laugh.	Immediate memory loss: some people may see hallucinations; long term use can affect the lungs and the production of sperm; loss of willpower.
LSD	Hallucinations, distortions of perception, various overlapping of senses (sound acquires physical form).	Anxiety and panic attacks, delirium, convulsions; risk of addiction.
Plants (such as lilies and some medicinal plants)	Hallucinations.	Bad trips; tachycardia, dilated pupils; constipation and elevated temperatures can cause convulsions.
Ecstasy (MDMA)	Hallucinations, distortions of perception, various overlapping of senses (sound acquires physical form); works as a stimulant.	Bad trips accompanied by anxiety and panic attacks, delirium, convulsions, risk of addiction.

Stimulants	Effects	Consequences of the effects
Amphetamines	Resistance to sleep and fatigue, tachycardia, surge of energy, agitation.	Tachycardia, high blood pressure; dilated pupils, dangerous when driving, high doses can cause delirium and paranoia.
Cocaine	A feeling of power, the world appears in brighter colors, euphoria, loss of appetite and sleep, fatigue.	High doses cause elevated temperature, convulsions and severe tachycardia, which can lead to cardiac arrest.
Crack	A feeling of power, the world appears in brighter colors, euphoria, loss of appetite and sleep and fatigue.	High doses cause elevated temperature, convulsions and severe tachycardia, which can lead to cardiac arrest. Causes physical addiction and mortality.
Tobacco (cigarettes)	Stimulating, gives pleasure.	Lowers appetite, can lead to chronic anemia. Escalates diseases such as bronchitis and can affect sexual performance. Increases the risk of miscarriage in pregnant women. Associated with 30% of all types of cancer.
Caffeine	Resistance to sleep and fatigue.	Excessive use can cause stomach problems and insomnia.

Resource sheet for the group leader (session #11, activity #4)

Statement/ Myth	Explanation/ Truth
Alcohol is not a drug.	Alcohol is a drug in the sense that it alters the functioning of the organism that ingests it, particularly the central nervous system on which thoughts, emotions, and behavior depend. It can also cause dependence.
Having a high alcohol tolerance means that the person will not become an alcoholic.	The truth is exactly the opposite; high tolerance means that the brain is becoming accustomed to the drug.
Mixing drinks makes you drunk.	What really gets one drunk is the quantity of alcohol and the speed that one drinks.
Beer does not make you drunk.	In the case of beer, the absorption of alcohol through the stomach is a little slower, but depending on the quantity consumed, it does cause drunkenness.
Alcohol is sexually stimulating.	Initially alcohol can reduce inhibitions and help people to become more outgoing, but since alcohol has a depressant effect on the nervous system it ends up reducing these sensations and can hamper sexual relations. Alcohol use is one of the most frequent causes of erectile dysfunction (impotence).
Alcoholism is an illness that affects older adults.	Most alcohol dependent persons are young men of working age.
Alcoholics are those that drink daily.	Most alcohol-dependent persons, in the initial and intermediate stage of the process, drink mainly on the weekend, and continue with their normal school and work activities, but with increasing difficulty.
Having a coffee or washing your face with cold water reduces the effects of alcohol.	The only thing that really reduces drunkenness is the gradual elimination of alcohol from the organism, which means forcing the liver to work, which takes time.
Alcohol is good for making friends.	Alcohol creates complicity around drinking, but true friendship includes much more than that.
Parties are not parties without alcohol.	The media often tries to convince us that parties need alcohol, and that alcohol must be at the center of every social gathering. But is this true? What makes a social gathering or a party – the alcohol or the people?
Its worse when girl is drunk than the boy is drunk.	Although there might be and are certain expectations how girls and boys should or should not behave (and therefore are judged) in different circumstances, alcohol does harm to one's body and mind, without taking into account ones gender and biological sex.
Alcohol does affect one's fertility.	Yes, it does. And goes for both -male and female (affecting libido, quality of sperm and ovum (egg), pregnancy etc.)

Resource sheet A (session #11, activity #5): to be given to participants.

Statement	True	False
There are more than 15000 e-liquid flavors out in the market		
It's just harmless water vapor		
Vaping is a healthy alternative to cigarettes		
Vaping can cause smoking regular cigarettes later on in life		
Vapes contain nicotine		
E- cigarette is not harmful for others		
E- cigarettes contain tobacco		
Vaping has no health risks		
E-cigs can help you quit smoking		
E-cigarettes are 95% safer than conventional cigarettes		
Nicotine is addictive, and it does pose any other substantial risks as well		
It is illegal to use vaping and e-cigarettes in the school		
It is easier for teenagers to become addicted than an adult		
E-cigarettes can be explosive		

Resource sheet B (session #11, activity #5) for correct answers.

There are more than 15000 e-liquid flavors out in the market. TRUE

Based on the web pages found on the internet, which sell e-liquid for vapor, there can be a huge variety of smells and tastes found. Some of them have very common names like mint, vanilla, strawberry, peach, caramel etc., some - very extraordinary like Alien Sauce, Nut House, Vampire Breath, Unicorn Vomit and even Unicorn Poop.

It's just harmless water vapor. FALSE

It's not harmless, and it's not just water vapor. It may contain toxins, potentially cancerous agents and dangerous chemicals like diacetyl, which is known to cause a potentially fatal lung disease called popcorn lung. It most often contains a combination of propylene glycol, vegetable glycerin, flavorings and nicotine.

(Source: <https://chronicdata.cdc.gov/Policy/Electronic-Nicotine-Delivery-Systems-Key-Facts-Inf/nwhw-m4ki/data>)

Vaping is a healthy alternative to cigarettes. FALSE

Vape e-juice may contain nicotine, chemicals that cause cancer, and can lead to health problems including wheezing, coughing, sinus infections, nosebleeds, shortness of breath and asthma.

(Source: <https://www.livescience.com/46053-e-cigarettes-myths-safety-facts.html>)

Vaping can cause smoking regular cigarettes later on in life. TRUE

Young people who took up vaping were more than four times more likely to smoke traditional cigarettes a year later, according to one study.

(Source: <https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/26/e2/e106?paperoc=>)

Vapes contain nicotine. TRUE

A 2015 study found that 99 percent of e-cigarettes sold in U.S. convenience stores, supermarkets, and similar outlets contained nicotine, the same highly addictive substance that is found in regular cigarettes. It's worth noting that 100 percent of JUULs – teens' top choice for vaping devices – contain nicotine. And each JUUL pod contains the same amount of nicotine as a whole pack of cigarettes.

(Source: https://www.tobaccofreeco.org/tfc/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CDPHE_Vape_MythsvsFacts.pdf)

E- cigarette is not harmful for others. TRUE

There is no evidence so far that vaping causes harm to other people around you. This contrasts with smoking, where exposure to secondhand smoke is known to be very harmful to health. Unlike cigarettes, there is no side-stream vapour released by an e-cigarette into the atmosphere, just the exhaled aerosol. Unlike tobacco smoke, e-cigarette vapour dissipates quickly in the atmosphere.

(Source: <https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree/help-and-advice/e-cigarettes>)

Public Health England's 2018 independent evidence review found that to date, there have been no identified health risks of passive vaping to bystanders.

(Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-cigarettes-and-heated-tobacco-products-evidence-review>)

E- cigarettes contain tobacco. FALSE

An e-cigarette is a device that allows you to inhale nicotine in a vapor rather than smoke. E-cigarettes don't contain tobacco and don't produce tar or carbon monoxide, two of the most damaging constituents in cigarette smoke. E-cigarettes work by heating a solution (e-liquid) that typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol and/or vegetable glycerin, and flavorings. Using an e-cigarette is known as vaping.

Vaping has no health risks. FALSE.

Vape cigarettes have their own unique potential health risks. There are organs in the body that are immune to the effects of cigarette smoke but can potentially be harmed by e-cigarette aerosol. For example, e-cigarette aerosol contains propylene glycol. Accumulated in the body it increases the potential for liver damage. This chemical also accumulates in the retina, so there's the potential for retinal damage and blindness. Additionally, the American Lung Association also recently revealed that many e-cigarette products may contribute to a rise in the number of cases of "popcorn lung" - a scarring of the tiny air sacs in the lungs resulting in the thickening and narrowing of the airways. Many e-cigarette products are not as natural or healthy as they claim to be. In fact, most of these products, especially those with added flavors, contain diacetyl, a dangerous chemical known to cause "popcorn lung". "Popcorn lung" is a serious lung disease that causes coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath, like the symptoms of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

(Source: <https://www.pennmedicine.org/updates/blogs/health-and-wellness/2019/july/vaping-myths>)

E-cigs can help you quit smoking. FALSE

The few studies looking at whether or not using e-cigs helps people kick the habit have had mixed results. Some studies have found people who tried e-cigs wound up smoking fewer regular cigarettes, but they were no more likely to give up smoking entirely. Overall, the authors of a recent scientific review conclude, "studies that reflect real-world e-cigarette use found that e-cigarette use is not associated with successful quitting ... Taken together, the studies suggest that e-cigarettes are not associated with successful quitting in general population-based samples of smokers."

(Source: <https://www.livescience.com/43293-quit-smoking-tips.html>)

And there is even some evidence that e-cigs may get non-smokers hooked on nicotine. Studies have found as many as one-third of young e-cigarette users have never tried conventional cigarettes.

E-cigarettes are 95% safer than conventional cigarettes. FALSE

There has been a substantial literature published indicating important cardiovascular and pulmonary risks associated with e-cigarette use. Cardiovascular and pulmonary disease kill about 2/3 of smokers.

(Source: <https://tobacco.ucsf.edu/five-myths-about-e-cigs-and-some-evidence-they-are-well-myths>)

Nicotine is addictive, and it does pose any other substantial risks as well. TRUE

Nicotine is a reproductive toxin. While not a carcinogen, nicotine plays an important role in promoting tumor progression by promoting cell proliferation and inhibiting normal cell death by activating nicotinic acetylcholine receptors and β adrenergic receptors. Nicotine also promotes the angiogenesis needed to supply blood to growing tumors. Nicotine's effects on nicotinic acetylcholine receptors also accelerates atherosclerosis. It also aggravates lung disease and other diseases.

(Source: <https://tobacco.ucsf.edu/five-myths-about-e-cigs-and-some-evidence-they-are-well-myths>)

It is illegal to use vaping and e-cigarettes in the school. TRUE

In front of the law - vaping and e-cigarettes is as illegal for minors as smoking, alcohol and any other substance use. (Important to check national laws.)

It is easier for teenagers to become addicted than an adult. TRUE

Because of these high nicotine levels, vaping is extremely addictive — and teens are already more susceptible to addiction than adults because their brains are still developing, which makes them more likely to habituate to using drugs and alcohol.

(Source: <https://childmind.org/article/teen-vaping-what-you-need-to-know/>)

E-cigarettes can be explosive. TRUE

Exploding e-cigarettes can cause severe burns and injuries that require intensive and prolonged medical treatment, especially when they explode in users' hands, pockets or mouths.

Incidents are very rare; the cause is uncertain but appears to be related to malfunctioning lithium-ion batteries.

(Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-44161348>)

← HOW TO SAY "NO!" → WITHOUT SEEMING "UNCOOL"?

Continued: on "Addictions"

The aim: To improve young people's understanding of the destructive effects of addictive substances by examining case studies.

One of the defining characteristics of adolescence is the way social relationships become front and center in a teen's life. While staying connected to the family was of great importance throughout childhood, now teens are slowly pulling away from the family unit. They are exploring the world around them, putting their friends first, and testing the limits their parents place before them. It's not family; it's friends that are most meaningful for teens.

For all of these reasons, peer pressure can be a great force of influence on a teen. Parents and other close adults may be concerned about what happens if the pressure teens feel from their peers is pushing them in the wrong direction, such as towards drugs, drinking, or dating. Part of the balancing act for parents and educators is to help the teen mature while at the same time making sure the teen does so safely and securely.

Why Teens Might Say Yes

There is so much a teen yearns for during adolescence. They want to be liked, accepted, and welcomed by their friends. They want to be seen as mature and independent by their parents. They want to be seen as intelligent by their teachers. Teens may have these desires whether they actually possess these traits or not. So, when given an opportunity to be seen as smart or mature or cool, often teens will go for it. This frequently plays a role in a teen's decision to say yes to something that might feel a little uncertain. Here are some additional reasons teens might give in to the pressure they get from their friends:

- Teens may not know how to say "No".
- They may not know the best way to get out of a situation.
- Teens may not understand what's being asked of them.
- They want to appear that they are in control.

- They want to appear cool or worthy of acceptance by friends.
- Teens may not want to lose a friendship or social relationship.
- They may not want to be made fun of or teased by friends or peers.
- Teens don't want to be rejected by their peers.
- Teens may not want to hurt anyone's feelings.
- They may want to be seen as grown up, mature, or independent.
- They may feel the event or environment calls for what they're being asked to do (going out at night means having a drink).⁷⁸

What to say to your teen?

Have you ever been pressured by your friends to do something you don't really want to do? Perhaps your friends have tried convincing you to experience an illicit drug or maybe attend a late-night party when all you want to do is sleep or study for your upcoming exams.

We know it can be tough to say "no" to your friends, especially when there is more than one person trying to convince you. But, what can you do?

Know that it's okay to say no when you don't want to do something — it's your life after all.⁷⁹

Peer pressure

Many people think peer pressure is about one forceful teen demanding that another, "Try this... or I'm not hanging out with you." It is far more subtle. It's more like a dance where everyone tries different moves to look like they know what steps to take. People make choices and engage in behaviors because they think it's how they'll fit in. And the people suggesting the behaviors often do it to show they are the trendsetters.

There is perhaps no better way to protect teens from peer pressure than to prepare them with social skills to make wise choices — as they still learn "to dance." When teens are equipped with concrete social skills, they gain confidence in their ability to navigate challenges and stand up for what they believe in. They gain the strength needed to say "No," even if it may be unpopular with friends.

We have learned that educating teens about what not to do is not enough. Drug prevention programs that have had success have gone far beyond teaching young people to say no. They tend to teach the "whys" behind avoiding drugs, offer social skills to refuse drugs, and give opportunities to practice those skills over time.⁸⁰ Group sessions are a safe environment where you can train the ability to say "No", observe and create not only your own, but also the boundaries of your peers.

[How to Help Your Teen Say "No" to Peer Pressure](#)
[7 Creative Ways to Say No to Peer Pressure](#)
[8 Strategies to Handle Peer Pressure](#)

20 Ways to Avoid Peer Pressure:⁸¹

Ask 101 questions. For example, if a pal pressures you to smoke, ask her why she smokes, how long she has smoked, if she minds having ashtray breath.

Say “No” like you mean it. Make eye contact, then say “No” forcefully, with authority. The more certain you are in your refusal; the less people will bug you.

Back-up a no with a positive statement. For example, if you’re turning down an offer to smoke weed, say something like, “I like my brain the way it is, thanks.”

Be repetitive. Don’t hesitate to state your position over and over again.

Practice saying no. Practice saying ‘no’ in safe environments, like when your big brother asks you if you’d like to spend Saturday night doing his laundry.

Get away from the pressure zone. Leave the scene... make your exit.

Avoid stressful situations in the first place. If you know there’s going to be alcohol or drugs at a party, make other plans. Or, if you’re going out with a person, avoid being alone with him/her/ them... anywhere they might pressure you to get more physical than you want to be.

Use the buddy system. Find a friend who shares your values and back each other up.

Confront the leader of the pack. The best way to handle a peer pressure bully is to nab him (or her) when the two of you are alone and explain how you’re feeling and ask him/her to get off your case.

Consider the results of giving in. Take a moment to think about the consequences of your actions.

Look for positive role models. Ever notice that the real popular and successful teens at your school are the ones who weren’t afraid to say what they like and don’t like?

Don’t buy the line that everyone’s doing it. The truth is, everyone’s NOT doing it.

Seek support. Talk out any peer pressure you’re experiencing with other friends who are also feeling the squeeze. It can be reassuring to know that you’re not the only one.

Be your own best friend. Remind yourself every now and then that you’re special and nuke any negative statements.

Find ways to excel. Challenge yourself to do your best. Focus your attention on following your personal goals instead of the goals of the group.

Don’t pressure others. Watch out for any subtle forms of pressure you may be exerting.

Speak out! Fight peer pressure by taking the side of the underdog. Supporting others’ opinions will send the message that you think for yourself.

Watch your moods. Be aware that your moods can affect your sensibility.

Evaluate your friendships. If your friends are always bugging you to do something you’re not comfortable with, remember that true friends like you for who you are, not who they want you to be.

Find new friends. If you’ve decided that your friends don’t have your best interests at heart, search out new friends who share your values and interests.

Remember that you are important. Your life counts, and you can make a difference in this world!

Activity #1: “Hot chair: addictions”

The aim: To express your opinion on a specific subject. To practice listening to and accepting opinions that differ from yours.

Duration: 20 min

Necessary: chairs (number of players +1) placed in a circle. Prepared statements.

THE STATEMENTS

- Anyone can become an alcoholic.
- Trying hashish is not dangerous.
- Most adults drink alcohol because it is delicious.
- Most adults use alcohol during celebrations to get high.
- Most young people use alcohol to become more confident of themselves.
- Drug addiction is a societal problem.
- There are no benefits from using alcohol.
- The only people that get addiction to their phones are those who have no friends in “real life”.
- Alcoholism is a huge societal problem.
- Parents should forbid their children from drinking alcohol.
- It’s worse when girls get drunk as opposed to boys.
- It’s worse when boys get drunk as opposed to girls.
- You can never trust someone who is drunk.
- You can have fun at a party while you’re sober too.
- Whenever you go to a party, your peers make you use alcohol.
- It isn’t strange to stay sober at a party.
- Parents shouldn’t monitor what young people do or watch on their computers.
- One can quit smoking at any moment. You only need it really want it.
- The reason people get addicted to things is because they’re bored.

Activity #2: “Addictions in our lives and communities”

The aim: To discuss different situations in which men and women might use drugs and the consequences of this choice.

Necessary: Copies of resource sheet A (session #12, activity #2)

Duration: 50-60 min

Planning: Look at the case examples described on resource sheet A and, if you find it necessary, adapt these examples to your local social context by making changes. If these examples are not adaptable, you should create examples that are more familiar to the participants’ experience. If possible, invite a professional or someone knowledgeable on the subject to participate in the activity.

Procedure:

Divide the participants into four small groups. Give each group one example from the cases laid out on resource sheet A and explain that they should discuss and analyze it, and come up with a conclusion to end the story.

Give the groups 10 minutes to discuss the examples they were given.

Then ask the groups to present their cases and fictional endings. These presentations can take the form of narration, or they can be staged by the participants. In their presentations, participants should answer the following questions:

- *Is the situation realistic? Why do you think it is/isn't?*
- *What factors influenced the hero's decision to use drugs?*
- *What are some of the possible consequences the hero may face? - What other options did they have besides drug use?*

After the presentations, use the questions below to stimulate the discussion about the different situations in which young people use drugs and the possible consequences this may bring about.

Reflection questions:

- What are the most common reasons why men use addictive substances? Are they different from the most common reasons why women use addictive substances? How are they different?
- Could people that use addictive substances be categorized into different types? What could these types be? (See resource sheet B)
- What are the cultural norms in your community regarding alcohol consumption?
- What are the effects of alcohol and other intoxicating substances on decision-making in sexual matters and other behavior? (See resource sheet B)
- How can alcohol or other intoxicating substances increase the risk of unplanned pregnancy, STIs, and HIV/AIDS?
- How does drug use affect relationships with one's family, community?
- What can you do if your friends consume too much alcohol or other intoxicating substances? (Discuss this issue with the participants and then use resource sheet C to add to and supplement their ideas.)
- How does one quit alcohol, cigarettes and other substances, resisting peer pressure?
- How can we create other ways of entertainment and social activities that don't focus on the use of intoxicating substances?

***Closing evaluation remarks on the session.**

Additional resources:

[How to Talk to Your Teen About Substance Use](#)

[Center for Parent and Teen Communication. 8 Strategies to Handle Peer Pressure](#)

[How Peer Pressure Influences Addiction](#)

[National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens. Quiz: how much do you know about addictive substances?](#)

Examples of the use of addictive substances

#1

Tom is a quiet boy who likes to relax with his friends and play football. One Saturday, some friends invited him to a bar for a drink. When he got there, he soon started feeling insecure and shy and gave in to his friends' teasing and agreed to have a drink. He ended up drinking four bottles of beer in a very short time.

#2

Charles loves football. One day, he received an invitation to participate in an inter-school championship. He has trained very hard and, hoping to improve his skills, he decided to try some steroids he bought at a local gym.

#3

Sarah and Philip have been seeing each other for a couple of months. On Philip's birthday, Sarah arranged a surprise party for him. She invited all their friends and even asked her older brother to buy them some beer for the party. Philip was really surprised about the party Sarah threw for him. They did a lot of drinking and dancing. That night, they had sex without a condom.

#4

It's New Year's Eve, everyone is drinking and partying. Someone has brought some ecstasy to the party. Like most of the other people at the party, Marianna thinks to herself: "Why not lighten the mood with a little ecstasy?! It'll be fine if I have just one pill, right?!"

#5

Bruno had a bad day at school – he received bad grades in physics and literature. He decided to relax by going to a local park with his friends, one of whom had some marijuana. Bruno decided to give it a try to see if what they say is true and whether it really had a relaxing effect.

#6

One Friday night, a bunch of friends went to a club to meet some girls they liked. It was a cool party, the music was great, and the girls were already there when they got there. David sees that some of them are taking pills, and he realizes they are prescription drugs, but he wasn't sure what they were exactly. One of the girls, Maria, comes over to him and offers him some. He refuses, but Maria says: "Try it, it will help you relax and enjoy the party!" David takes the tablet and swallows it.

Resource Sheet B (session #12, activity #2) Types of users of intoxicating substances

The United Nations distinguishes four types of users:

The experimenter limits him or herself to one or a few intoxicants for different reasons, such as curiosity, a desire for new experiences, peer pressure and publicity. In most cases, contact with intoxicants does not go beyond the initial experience.

The occasional user uses one or more intoxicants from time to time if the environment to do so is favorable and the substances are available. Isn't addicted to the substances and his or her usage doesn't interrupt or impact his or her professional and social relationships.

The regular user uses intoxicants regularly. Signs of alienation are present in his or her relationships with others. Nonetheless, he or she, while questionably, is still socially functional and is at risk of addiction.

The addicted or dysfunctional user lives by using drugs and therefore – lives to use drugs. As a result, all social ties are broken and this leads to isolation and marginalization.

Use of intoxicating substances and sexual behavior

Many people believe that certain intoxicants can improve their sexual performance, but in reality, the effects of intoxicants vary from person to person and depend on several factors, such as biological factors (body metabolism), frequency of use, one's environment, culture, and his or her psychological characteristics. Often what people perceive as the positive effects of an intoxicating substance are more related to what people believe will happen to them instead of the pharmacological properties of the substance.

Contrary to what many people think, alcohol may initially make a person feel less intimidated, but as William Shakespeare once said: *“Alcohol provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance.”* In other words, alcohol consumption can have a negative effect on erections, or marijuana can reduce testosterone production and can temporarily reduce sperm production. Cocaine reduces desire and arousal, given that users become more interested in using the sub-stance than in having sex. In addition, when people use drugs, it is much more difficult to communicate and agree during sexual intercourse because people under the influence become more concerned about their feelings than those of their partner or the risk of unplanned pregnancy, HIV/AIDS or STIs.

According to various surveys, a person under the influence of intoxicants is unlikely to be able to use a condom because his or her reasoning and reflexes will be reduced. It is important to remember that even rare use of alcohol and other intoxicants can put individuals at risk, as it requires only one instance of excessive use of alcohol and one instance of unprotected sex to become infected with STIs, HIV/AIDS, or become pregnant.

Resource sheet C (session #12, activity #2)

Why do teenagers start using addictive substances?

- they are curious to try them
- peer pressure and as a sign of protest against the values in society
- inability to deal with one's problems, concealment of emotions
- feelings of exclusion and insecurity in the family, violence
- psychoactive substances are easily obtainable
- indirect promotion of drug use in cinema, fashion, and social networking
- the desire to feel the risk
- the belief that everybody – one's peers and friends – are doing it
- the desire to feel like "an adult"
- they want to build their self-confidence
- ask the young people in your group: what do they think, and could they add something to this "list of reasons"?

How can I help my friends who are struggling with the use of intoxicating substances?

- Don't turn away from them.
- Listen to them and hear them out.
- Do not criticize them, not even in the presence of other people.
- Give them advice by suggesting what they could do, but don't be obtrusive. They will have to make their own decisions.
- If they agree, offer to accompany them to a rehabilitation facility, a doctor or a counselor.
- Encourage them to be positive about themselves.
- Encourage them to feel empowered to deal with their problems.
- Encourage them to start medical treatment and offer help finding a rehabilitation facility that can help them.

Consider whether there are adults in your life who you can trust and who you can turn to for help and support. Here are some examples:

- a parent, aunt, uncle, or grandparent.
- a leader of a youth group.
- teacher, school nurse, social pedagogue or school psychologist.
- a free hotline in Latvia for young people: 116111
- Adolescent Resource Center in Riga and Liepaja

<https://pusaudzim.lv/pusaudziem/>

POWER AND RELATIONSHIPS

The aim: To develop one's understanding of what unhealthy relationships are and what they are like. How to recognize them and how to act in various situations.

During adolescence, young people learn how to form safe and healthy relationships with friends, parents, teachers, and romantic partners. Both adolescent males and females often try on different identities and roles during this time, and relationships contribute to their development. Peers, in particular, play a big role in identity formation, but relationships with caring adults – including parents, mentors or coaches – are also important for adolescent development. Often, the parent-adolescent relationship is the one that informs how a young person handles other relationships. Unfortunately, adolescents sometimes develop unhealthy relationships and experience or exhibit bullying or dating violence.⁸²

We are all born with the ability and need for sense of love and belonging. Skills such as respect, empathy, mutual understanding, and the ability to resolve conflicts in a non-violent way are important components of a good relationship. They are also skills that we acquire and develop throughout our lives. The first step to building a healthy relationship is learning to recognize the difference between unhealthy and healthy behavior.

Healthy relationships

Regardless of how serious your relationship is, it is important that you feel safe, respected, and listened to in them, as is the case with friendship.

The key to a healthy relationship is made up of several parts:

Freedom – you can spend a lot of time with your partner, but you also need your own space. Both partners should be able to dedicate time to their hobbies, interests, and friends. Always be yourself and know that you have the right to feel free in your relationships.

[Healthy Relationships in Adolescence](#)

2. Fairness – relationships should not be one-sided. Each person must be able (and willing) to seek compromises and listen to the other person’s thoughts and needs. The opinions of both partners matter.

Borders – each person has the right to decide what is permissible in a relationship. This includes physical relationships, how often you meet, communicate, or whether you share your social media passwords with one another. If you are not feeling well because your partner is texting and calling you too much or isn’t giving you adequate time alone, you have the right to object.

Trust and support – being able to rely on your partner is an essential part of a safe and healthy relationship. This means that your partner is acting in your best interests, they will be honest with you and will not betray you.

Open communication – communication is an essential part of any relationship. Being able to express how you feel and taking the time to listen to the other person is an essential part of any relationship.



Unhealthy relationships

Every relationship is different, but unhealthy and offensive relationships always have something to do with abuse of power and control over the other person. Violent words and actions are tools used by violent partners to maintain power and control over the partner.

Any young person can end up in unhealthy relationships and experience violence from close people, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, social class, religion, culture or ethnicity. Violence in relationships is more common than we might think. One should never forget that violence is never the victim’s fault and the victim should never feel shame about seeking help!

Recognizing healthy, unhealthy, and violent relationships can sometimes be much harder than we think. No relationship is the same – something can be perceived as unhealthy in one relationship and be perceived as violent in the next.

Warning signs indicating that a relationship may be unhealthy or violent:

- monitoring of one's telephone, email, social networks without the owner's consent
- extreme jealousy or insecurity
- constant humiliation
- “explosive” temper
- isolating someone from one's family and friends
- false accusations
- constant mood swings towards one's partner
- causing physical pain and abuse to someone
- a feeling of ownership towards someone
- specifying what one's partner can and cannot do
- repeatedly forcing someone to have sex

How can I help a friend who is in an unhealthy relationship?

One should realize that helping a friend in an unhealthy relationship may not be easy. Perhaps you may have already tried to talk to them, but they were not ready to hear you out or take action to change something. When people are in unhealthy relationships, they may not always be able to recognize and see the warning signs themselves. Furthermore, even if they recognize the signs, they often fear their partner or feel too threatened, ashamed, or hopeless in their situation, making leaving such relationships difficult and even dangerous.

To help a friend, it's important to keep the following in mind:

- **Start a conversation** – let him or her know you've noticed some things that concern you. Ask him or her if he or she has noticed these things too and how he or she feels about them. Help your male/female friend identify signs of unhealthy behavior in their relationships and give them the necessary information and resources to look for help and information about healthy relationships.
- **Be supportive** – remember that your male/female friend may not recognize the signs of an unhealthy relationship and may not want to leave that relationship or stop certain behavior from happening. It is extremely difficult to look at such relationships from afar, but keep in mind that supporting your friends and not condemning them is key. Be open and ready to help when your friend is ready to leave his or her relationship.
- **Be open to communication** - your support and ability to listen are very important to them. Even if their actions worry or anger you, it is important to stay calm and not give them ultimatums. Be open and let them know you are ready to help when they are ready to change something.
- **If necessary, seek help** – don't hesitate to call 112 (in Latvia) and involve the emergency services if the situation becomes critical. It is equally important that you have someone to discuss the situation with; someone you trust, such as a psychologist, a trusted adult, and so on.

Activity #1: Mirroring

The aim: To increase understanding about the role of power in relationships and reflect on how we communicate and share power in relationships. **Duration:** 30-40 minutes.

Procedure:

Part 1 – mirroring

Ask the participants to stand and divide themselves into pairs. Each pair has to decide which one will play the role of a person and who will play the role of a mirror. Explain that the mirror in each pair must emulate the other person's movement. Give them 2-3 minutes.

Have each pair swap roles and repeat the process.

There can also be music involved into this activity, in order to help participants to relax.

Use the questions below to stimulate the discussion:

How did you feel when you played the role of a person?

How did you feel when you played the role of a mirror?

Have there been situations in your life where you felt like the person? When?

Have there been situations in your life where you felt like the mirror? When?

Part 2 – power and relationships

4. Have the participants divide into pairs and create short scenes depicting the power relationships listed below. The group leader should add other relationship models to this list that are more appropriate to the local and social context and experience.

Teacher and student.

One of the parents and a child.

Husband and wife.

Employer and employee.

Two friends.

Loved ones etc.

Reflection questions:

- Are these scenes realistic?
- Do you find that others use power in a negative way in your daily lives? Who? Why?
- Do you tend to use power in a negative way in your daily life? Against whom? Why?
- Why do people treat each other this way?
- What could be the consequences of a relationship where one person treats the other as an object?
- How does our society/culture promote or support these types of relationships where some people have more power over others?
- How does this activity help you think about making changes in your life?

Activity #2: A story about Mary and John

The aim: To develop an understanding of values in relationships and the causes and potential consequences of unhealthy relationships by analyzing the situation described below.

Duration: 30-40 min

Necessary: a prepared story, small slips of paper, writing utensils, a large sheet of paper

Procedure:

Tell the story and introduce the characters one by one. Write their names on the A4 page (also mentioning their age)

Characters in the story:

Mary – 16 years old (falls in love with John)

John – 17 years old (falls in love with Mary)

Mary's mother – 50 years old.

Chris – 19 years old (says he will take Mary to see John if she agrees to have sex with him)

Leon - 16 years old (offers Mary help)

The story:

- It's a very different spring in Mary's life – Mary is in love for the first time in her life! She spends a lot of time with John. They visit each other, meet their friends and families.
- One day, John tells Mary that his family is moving abroad. John's father who is a doctor has been offered a job with better pay. John's parents have decided that they should all go together.
- John and Mary promise each other that they will maintain their relationship and do their best to stay together.
- John leaves. Mary's world is shattered. Even though they communicate via Skype, Whatsapp, etc., it's not the same because the other person isn't nearby.
- Mary wants to go visit John. But since Mary's family (she lives with her mother, who owns a farm) has no means to support Mary's idea, Mary decides to get a job. She washes dishes at a local café in the evenings and earns money on weekends, cleaning her neighbor's houses and babysitting. It's also very important to Mary that she performs well at school, so her daily routine consists of school-work-home-school-work-home.
- One Friday night, a friend persuades Mary to go to a party. Mary is hesitant at first because she is exhausted but agrees in the end.
- At the party, Mary meets Chris, who invites her to dance. He noticed Mary some time ago, and now they finally have a chance to get to know each other! During the dance, Chris tries to kiss Mary. Mary rejects him and tells her that she has a boyfriend. When Chris asks "Then why are you alone here at the party and without your boyfriend?" Mary tells him the story.
- Chris listens to her story and says, "Me and some friends are going to a road trip to Europe in 2 weeks. And we have 1 free seat in the car. We can take you!" Mary is overjoyed (because she's sure has saved up enough to pay for fuel), but Chris says, "On one condition – you have this spot in the car only if you have sex with me. You have 2 weeks to decide."

- Mary is very confused and isn't sure what to do. For some days she tries not to think of this situation. But the more time passes, the more confused she feels.
So, she goes to her mom for advice.
- After hearing Mary's story, her mom says, "Honey, you're grown up now and that's your decision. I do not want to tell you or teach you what you should do. These are your relationships and your responsibility as well."
- After long and painful deliberations, Mary agrees and has sex with Chris.
- Chris keeps his word and takes Mary to John. During the whole journey Chris treats Mary nicely and no one knows -what has happened in between them.
- Mary arrives at Johns place. After the initial excitement and joy is over, John, naturally, asks Mary how she got here. Mary hesitates with her answer at first, but eventually tells him the truth and asks John for forgiveness.
- John is furious and says, "If that's what you did, I don't need you anymore! I never want to see you again!"
- Mary calls her mom, who sends some money for the way back. When Mary gets home, her whole life has turned upside down. She still attends school and goes to work but nothing gives her happiness anymore. She is angry with herself and blames herself for what she did. Mary's heart is broken, and she sees no meaning in her life. Although she tries to reach John through various ways, nothing helps and John is not responding.
- One day, while Mary was sitting on a park bench crying, a childhood friend – Leon – spotted her and came up to say hi. They are very good friends as they grew up together and Mary surely can trust Leon. So Mary confides in him and tells him the whole story.
- Leon listens to her story and says, "It's going to be alright, Mary! I'll help you!"

Ask each of the participants to rate each character's behavior by themselves, ranging from 1 (if you find the character's behavior completely unacceptable) to 5 (you found the character's behavior acceptable). Remind the participants that you cannot give characters the same score (each character gets either a 1, or a 2, or a 3, and so on).

When they're done, ask the participants to sit in pairs or groups of 3 and repeat the process in pairs/small groups.

Write down each group's answers on the large A4 page or a blackboard

Example:

	Group #1	Group #2	Group #3	Group #4
Mary	2	5	1	5
John	1	3	2	4
Chris	3	2	3	2
Mom	4	1	5	1
Leon	5	4	4	3

Ask each pair/group to comment on their decision: how did you find the agreement process and explain why you gave the characters these scores?

Reflection questions:

- What kind of emotions went through you while listening to this story?
- How realistic or unrealistic did you find this situation/story?
- What power relationships did you see in this story? Why do you think they formed as they did?
- What would have been the best way to act for each character?
- Who else could Mary turn to for advice?
- What could John have done differently (in every step of the story)?
- What would it have been like if Mary and John were in opposite roles? (role switch)
- Would Chris be prosecuted for having sex with a minor? How would this happen?
- How could Leon help Mary?
- What else did you find striking/unusual/interesting, etc. about this story?
- What kind of gender roles/ behavior patterns you could notice in this story, which also reflects on the society you live in? (how girls/boys “should” behave etc.)

Concluding comments:

Healthy relationships bring out the best in you and make you feel good about yourself. A healthy relationship does not mean a “perfect” relationship, and no one is healthy 100% of the time. Healthy relationships manifest themselves as healthy communication; another important part of a healthy relationship is loving yourself. You can be truthful and candid without fearing how the other person will respond. You have space to be yourself outside of the relationship. In a healthy relationship, you’re not rushed or pressured in a way that makes you feel overwhelmed. You feel comfortable setting boundaries and are confident that the other person will respect those boundaries. They cheer for you when you achieve something, support your hard work and dreams, and appreciate you. You enjoy spending time together and you bring out the best in each other. A healthy relationship should feel easy and make you happy. You can let loose, laugh to-gether, and be yourselves — the relationship doesn’t bring your mood down but cheers you up. No relationship is fun 100% of the time, but the good times should outweigh the bad.⁸³

***Closing evaluation remarks on the session.**

[10 signs of a healthy relationship](#)

Additional resources:

[What Healthy Dating and Romantic Relationships Look Like](#)

[How healthy relationships are like a cake \(video\)](#)

[Handout materials](#)

[The difference between healthy and unhealthy love \(video\)](#)

[Skills for healthy romantic relationships \(video\)](#)

[Power and control wheel](#)

[Warning signs](#)

[Help a friend](#)

[Supportive things to say to a friend](#)

[Creating, understanding & respecting boundaries](#)

→ [Freedom and space](#) <https://youtu.be/4F6NYk-4HQ>

[Arguing fairly](#)

[Sexual bullying in young people across five European countries. Research report for the](#)

[Addressing Sexual Bullying Across Europe \(ASBAE\) project](#)



RECOGNIZE VIOLENCE



The aim: to provide young people with the understanding and knowledge necessary to recognize different types of violence.

When you see an image of a violent adult, it's hard to imagine the innocent baby they once were. Is there such thing as being born violent? Are there really "bad seeds" when it comes to human life? Like so many qualities, violence involves an interaction between genetics and the environment. We may not be able to alter the DNA we are born with, but we can strongly influence how these genes are expressed. With all the factors proven to contribute to violence, we can no longer say that violent individuals are just "born that way." There is a lot we can do to prevent violence, and hardly anyone at any age is hopeless or beyond help.

Violence is the result of a combination of biological, social, and psychological factors, especially those that increase exposure to vulnerability, shame, and humiliation. Preventing violence must involve the opposite: making sure people feel safe, cared about, and connected, while ensuring they have a healthy and realistic sense of self-esteem and self-worth.

Many environmental factors can contribute to violence. These include adverse childhood events such as abuse, neglect, trauma, loss, and abandonment. Victims of poverty, children who are missing basic necessities and who struggle with poor healthcare or nutrition are more likely to encounter or engage in violence.⁸⁴

Latvian law distinguishes between different types of violence, such as physical, sexual, psycho-logical and emotional violence, and violent control (an act or set of action involving harassment, threat of sexual coercion, humiliation, intimidation, or other abusive behavior intended to harm, punish or intimidate the victim), parental negligence, human trafficking. In addition to the above, we also see pay attention to cyberbullying, hate speech, sexism and other forms of violence.

The main types of violence:⁸⁵

Physical violence – physical assault such as beating, kicking, slapping, hair pulling, strangling, pushing, grabbing, use of weapons, etc.

[7 Ways to Stop Violence at Every Age](#)
[Forms of violence](#)

Sexual violence – sexual assault, such as rape, forced or violent sexual intercourse, violent involvement in sexual activities, sexual assault against the will of a victim, etc.

Emotional/psychological violence - any verbal, emotional or psychological harassment, such as regular threats, threats of physical or sexual abuse, threats of child abduction, naming and sham-ing, stalking (following someone, waiting for someone at their home or workplace, regular and un-wanted calls, texts or emails), prohibiting someone from seeing their friends and relatives, etc. **Bullying** - unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or per-ceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems. **Cyberbullying** – abuse that occurs during the use of digital devices such as mobile phones, com-puters, and tablets. Cyberbullying can happen via SMS and other messages (Whatsapp, Viber, Snapchat, etc.) as well as online on social networks, games or forums where people can view, contribute with or share content. This type of abuse involves the sending, posting or sharing of negative, harmful or false content about another person. This may include sharing someone’s personal or private information, causing shame or humiliation.

Economic violence – any action aimed at trying to control a victim or bringing him or her into submission by using one’s financial situation, such as hiding income, depriving the victim of in-come, attempting to prevent the victim from gaining money, giving the victim money after he or she has fulfilled certain requirements, etc.

Other types of violence are:

Prostitution⁸⁶ – sexual acts in exchange for money. This is regarded as abuse because people who are in prostitution suffer physical, verbal, psychological and sexual abuse. Performance and repetition of sexual acts without physical desire, but because of financial necessity, or because someone is taking advantage of someone who is in an unequal or vulnerable position, is consid-ered sexual abuse. Most persons involved in prostitution have been subjected to abuse, often – sexual abuse, before they got involved in prostitution.

Human trafficking⁸⁷ – this is a form of abuse that involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, concealment or receipt of human beings for the purpose of exploitation, using force, threats or other forms of coercion. Human trafficking also involves abduction, fraud, deception or other forms of fraudulent behavior, as well as abuse of power or the exploitation of human vulnerability by giving or receiving payments or benefits from the victim in order to obtain their consent.

Human trafficking means the prostitution of other persons or their involvement in other forms of exploitation, such as forced labor or practices resembling slavery or servitude, and the removal of organs. Victims of human trafficking are exposed to extreme psychological stress, which can lead to emotional trauma, depression, addictions and in some cases even suicide. Persons who have been subjected to sexual exploitation may suffer the consequences of these experiences for their entire lifetimes.

[Prostitution](#)
[What is human trafficking](#)

What is bullying? ⁸⁸

It's easy to assume everyone knows what bullying is. But often the term bullying is used to describe other aggressive behavior. This can make it hard for schools, parents and the wider community to consistently identify and deal with bullying when it happens. Most widely-accepted definitions of bullying are based on four elements: bullying is deliberate, harmful, involves a power imbalance, and has an element of repetition.

Defining Bullying

Whether bullying is physical, verbal, or social (relational), four widely-accepted factors can be used to identify it:

- Bullying is deliberate - harming another person intentionally
- Bullying involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- Bullying is usually not a one-off - it is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated over time
- Bullying involves behavior that can cause harm - it is not a normal part of growing up.
- Bullying can happen anywhere, in person or online (cyberbullying), at any time, and can be verbal, physical or social (relational). It can be obvious or hidden.

Kids who bully use their power — such as physical strength, knowing something embarrassing, or popularity — to control or harm others. Bullying is when one student (or a group of students) keeps picking on another student again and again to make them feel bad. They say or do things to upset them, make fun of them, stop them from joining in, or keep hitting or punching them.

What is not bullying?

Bullying is a word often used to describe behavior that is not actually bullying — not all verbal or physical aggression is bullying.

For example:

- a one-off fight or argument, or difference of opinion between friends where there is no power imbalance and they can sort it out between themselves
- not liking someone or a single act of social rejection
- one-off acts of meanness or spite
- isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence
- using sexist or racist terms but doesn't mean to cause harm
- theft: taking someone else's things once is theft but not necessarily bullying.

These other behaviors may be just as upsetting and serious, but may need to be dealt with in a different way. You will need to use your judgment to decide whether or not a specific incident is bullying.

The following diagram shows the typical elements of teasing/hassling, aggression and bullying.

Looking at the interaction...	Hassling / teasing	Fighting / aggression	Bullying
Does it go both ways?	Usually both students are hassling each other	Not usually – one tends to initiate it	No, one student is targeting the other
Does it look like they're having fun?	Usually takes place between students who are familiar with, and like each other	No, one is the aggressor	No, one person is in distress
Is it well-meaning?	Yes, it's mostly good natured hassling	Not usually – it is often intentional, but can also be an involuntary reaction to something	No, one student is deliberately harming the other
Is it a one-off?	No, it's usually ongoing, because the students hang out together regularly	Often a single incident	No, it happens repeatedly over time
Is it between equals?	Yes	Possibly	No, there is a definite power imbalance

Understanding Conflict vs. Bullying

Conflicts can be Resolved, Bullying has to be Reported!

Conflict is different than bullying. Not all disagreements and fights are bullying. Conflict is a normal part of human interaction and arises frequently in our day to day lives. Part of learning to be independent and grown up is learning how to deal with and respond appropriately to conflict at home, at school, and in your community. Recognizing the difference between conflict and bullying will help students, parents and teachers know how to respond.

Conflict is:

- All parties have equal power to solve the problem
- All parties have an equal interest in the outcome
- All parties are of relatively equal size, age or status
- A conflict can be resolved by talking or working things out together or with help from an adult.

Bullying is:

- A repeated form of mistreatment where the victim cannot defend him/herself
- An imbalance of power – usually one person is either bigger or older than the other or has a higher social standing (is more popular) and uses this against the other person
- Usually involves repeated acts of harassment, harm or humiliation.

Differences in Addressing Conflict and Bullying

Conflict is an important part of growing up but bullying is not. Conflict teaches kids how to give and take, how to come to an agreement and how to solve problems. But bullying only wounds kids. When it comes to conflict, it's good for kids to learn conflict resolution and resiliency skills. These skills promote listening and working together to come to an agreement or plan to move forward. Conflict resolution works based on the assumption that both people are in part responsible for the current problem and need to work it out. In this situation, both kids make compromises and the conflict is resolved. When bullying occurs, the bully is fully responsible for the situation. And the bully bears all the responsibility for change. For instance, bullies need to be told that their behavior is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. They also need to experience consequences for their behavior. Likewise, targets of bullying need to be reassured that they didn't cause the bullying, they did the right thing by reporting and that they are not to blame. They also should receive interventions that will help them overcome the negative impact of bullying so they can build self-confidence and resiliency.⁸⁹

How schools can identify and respond to bullying?

- Do staff and board members understand all the students within the school and why all students need to be included in our school's approach to bullying?
- Are we committed to a whole-school approach to ensure a positive, safe and inclusive school environment for all staff and students?
- How does our school manage change to improve policies related to bullying?
- Do we understand what 'bystanding' may look like online, and how this relates to the real world?
- Do we understand the culture in which digital technology is used at our school?

**Group leader is invited to choose from the activities listed below depending on the needs of the group!*

Activity #1: The circle of pain

The aim: To establish the nature of abuse and establish what happens if no one shows the initiative to stop it. To understand why abuse exists and grows into more serious forms if nothing is done about one's behavior.

Duration: 20-30 min

Necessary: All participants must be seated in chairs in a circle.

Procedure:

- When everyone is seated in a circle, the group leader explains the rules of the activity:
- This is just simulation game (simulation games are an artificial environment intended to portray real life as closely as possible but through acting. They are a teaching technique) and no one is allowed to cause real pain. No interaction between the participants can cause harm!
 - You may ask the participants whether someone thinks they could accidentally touch someone in a way that would cause the other person pain. In this case (without condemnation), suggest that the participants try out all kinds of touching (prodding someone with their finger, pressing someone with their palm, bump into someone with one's shoulder) to feel the limits of their power and get immediate feedback.

The group leader gives everyone the command "Start!" and "Now, starting with you (point to one of the participants), each of you poke the person on your right and watch what happens to yourself and everyone else."

After the participants have come full circle, ask them these questions: What did you observe? What just happened? How do you feel?

The group leader observes the group and if the participants feel safe, they may suggest another type of touch – a light slap with the palm or a bump with one's shoulder.

If this becomes too intense for someone, they must say "Stop!" or "No!" or "Please stop!"

Reflection questions:

- Discuss how everyone felt when someone made them hurt someone else.
- How does a person feel when someone hurts them like this? What if it's several times more painful?
- Why can someone ask others to hurt someone? Should one actually listen to such a person? Why do some people listen to, obey such people?
- What can be done to prevent abuse like this from continuing?
- Who is responsible for stopping and continuing abuse?
- What are some of the long term and short term consequences of abuse?

Activity #2: Agree or disagree? ⁹⁰

The aim: To enable participants to examine how they view bullying, challenge their thinking, and encourage discussion.

Necessary: Draw a line on the floor, real or virtual, and place the words AGREE at one end and DISAGREE at the other end. Prepare the statements.

Procedure:

Read a set of statements out to the class and ask the participants to position themselves on the line depending on whether they agree or disagree with the statement.

Ask participants to volunteer their reasons for their choice; they are allowed to move along the line if they are persuaded by other people's opinions.

Remind your participants that there are no wrong answers and that respecting the opinions of others is important.

Below are some suggested statements, or you can develop your own to suit your setting or to address particular issues:

- Spreading rumors about someone is bullying.
- Getting bullied is a natural part of growing up; it's character building.
- Bullying doesn't happen in my class / school.
- Forwarding pictures or texts that upset people is bullying.
- Always making fun of someone's hair is just banter.
- It's their fault for not standing up for themselves.
- A diverse student group is more interesting and better for learning about life than a group where everyone is the same.
- There's no point in students challenging other students who frequently use namecalling, racist or sexist slurs and/or personal insults.
- Most people who bullied are asking for it.
- Sometimes people who think they are being bullied just can't take a joke.
- Taking the mickey out of the way someone speaks, how they look, walk or dress is only bullying if they get upset about it.

Reflection questions:

- How easy/ hard it was for you to decide – where to stand?
- What affected your decision (previous knowledge, experience, peer pressure etc.)?
- Which of the statements were the most challenging and why?
- Which other statements you would add?
- How prevalent is bullying in your local reality?
- How you/ school system/ adults are addressing it?
- What else should be done in order to prevent bullying from happening?

Activity #3: Recognize violence!

The aim: To provide knowledge about types of abuse and train the participants' ability to identify abusive situations.

Duration: 30-40 minutes

Necessary: Give everyone a copy of resource sheet A (session #14, activity #3).

Procedure:

Give each participant their own worksheet and ask them to mark the answer that corresponds with their opinion. One statement can have multiple answers.

The participants must do this independently and without talking.

When done, read each statement aloud and ask the participants to express their opinions/answers. Compare the answers and discuss them – find out whether the situation is abusive/violent and what type of abuse/violence it is.

Activity #4: Bullying: myth or truth?⁹¹

The aim: To challenge and dispel myths, and to reinforce information that is factual, reliable and valid.

Duration: 20 min

Necessary: Get familiar with resource sheet B (session #14, activity #4).

Procedure:

Explain this activity deals with 'biased information' and 'myths' about bullying. Clarify that 'myth' refers to untrue information that is passed around like a fact. Some myths may contain some accurate information, but generally they are not true.

Divide the room into two parts with an invisible line – the left part is for myths and fiction; the right one is for facts and reality.

Read the statements to the participants – ask those that think the statement is a myth, to move to the left part; and those who take it as real, move to the right.

After all the participants have made their decision, take some time to discuss why they chose to stand where they are.

Following discussion on each statement, explain to the students whether a statement is true or a myth.

Reflection questions:

- How easy or difficult was it to identify - the statement is a myth or truth?
- Which of these myths do you think are most popular? Why?
- Why can myths be "dangerous"?
- What can we do to prevent these myths from spreading? Invite participants to offer at least 1-2 options each. Write each of these actions on the board or on a large page.

Activity #5: Debate on pornography and prostitution*

The aim: To train participants' ability to develop arguments regarding topics and recognize inherent risks and abuse in both industries.

Duration: 1h 40 minutes

Necessary: Slices of paper with statements and group positions:

- *Porn is sexual liberation. Affirmative group*
- *Porn is sexual liberation. Negative group*
- *Prostitution is a choice. Affirmative group*
- *Prostitution is a choice. Negative group*

Procedure:

1. Divide participants in 4 groups. Two groups will debate on statement "Porn is sexual liberation" and two groups will debate on statement "Prostitution is a choice". Each statement has an affirmative group and a negative group that has to prepare according arguments.
2. Give to each group a slice of paper with statement and group position.
3. Give all groups 30 minutes to do research and prepare their speech.
4. First two groups on first argument start the debate. Other two groups are the audience that listens and at the end chooses the winner.
5. Affirmative group presents first for 2 minutes.
6. Negative group presents for 2 minutes.
7. Give both groups time to prepare reply and summary arguments for 5 minutes. 8. Negative group presents for 2 minutes.
9. Affirmative group presents for 2 minutes.
10. Audience votes on the most convincing group and determines the winner. 11. Other two groups start their debate and first ones become audience.

Be strict with timing

**Can be organized as a separate session.*

Reflection questions:

- How did you feel while doing this activity?
- How did it felt when you had to defend an opinion that doesn't match your beliefs?
- What was the easiest thing?
- What was the hardest thing?
- Did something surprise you?

Activity #6: Human trafficking

The aim: To understand the possible risks for becoming a victim of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Duration: 20 min

Necessary: Sheets of paper on which it is written “low risk”, “medium risk”, “high risk”.

Procedure:

Group leader reads statements and participants are invited to discuss and decide how risky is each of the statements (there is no one correct answer).

After each statement group can have a brief discussion.

STATEMENTS:

- Sending one’s naked photo to a crush
- Traveling without passport/ID card
- A job offer abroad by an acquaintance
- Traveling together with a person you met only recently
- Hitchhiking
- Sleeping in a hostel abroad
- Giving away your passport while signing a job contract
- Agreeing to film half-naked in a video

Activity #7: Terms of Human trafficking

The aim: To develop an understanding of ways of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Duration: 20 min

Necessary: Large sheets of paper, markers.

Procedure:

Write down on the large sheets of paper the terms: sexual exploitation, prostitution, pimping, human trafficking.

Divide participants in 4 groups, give each one sheet of paper with a term.

Groups have 10 minutes for developing their own definitions for these terms.

Each group presents their definition and discusses similarities and differences among definitions.

Group leader explains each term more in details.

Reflection questions:

- What surprised you the most in definitions or additional information? Why?
- Did this activity change your perception about any of the topics discussed?

Terms:

Sexual exploitation

Definition: The abuse of power or social position to make money by harming someone sexually; it includes pimping, sex trafficking, pornography, and other adult entertainment. Brief background information:

- It is important to remember that people in prostitution – including people in street or brothel prostitution, escort services, pornography, and strip clubs – are usually being exploited by a pimp or other sex trafficker.
- Pimps and other sex traffickers control people in prostitution through threats and abuse and take all or most of the money they earn.

Prostitution

Definition: Engaging in or offering to engage in a sexual act in exchange for something of value, such as money, drugs, clothing or shelter.

Brief background information:

- Most prostituted persons were sexually abused or assaulted before entering prostitution.
- The vast majority of people in prostitution have pimps or other sex traffickers who take all or most of the money they earn and often physically and sexually abuse them.

Human trafficking

Definition: Forcing, coercing, or deceiving people into labour or commercial sex. A trafficking victim is a person who believes she or he would experience serious harm if she or he tried to leave a labour or commercial sex situation. Human trafficking is broken into two categories: labour trafficking and sex trafficking. Pimping is a form of sex trafficking. Brief background information:

- Similar to slavery, human trafficking involves forcing other people to work for your own financial gain.
- It is often referred to as a form of modern slavery.
- There are approximately 27 million victims of human trafficking in the world today. This means that more slaves exist today than at any other time in human history.

Pimping

Definition: Using power, control, trust, threats, force, or deception to prostitute someone for personal financial gain.

Talking to a Friend⁹²

If you think a friend is experiencing or perpetrating abusive behaviors, there are ways you can help. First off, know that approaching a friend about an abusive relationship may be difficult. You might have already tried to talk to your friend and it may seem like they don't listen or want to hear it. Know that while your friend is in the abusive relationship, they may not recognize the warning signs of abuse like you have. Even when they do recognize the signs of abuse certain obstacles like threats, fear, embarrassment, or feeling like they have nowhere to go, can make seeking help or getting out extremely dangerous.

Tips to Helping a Friend

1. Start the Conversation

Let them know you have noticed certain things that concern you. Ask them if they have noticed the same and how that behavior makes them feel. Help your friend identify these behaviors by connecting them to resources or sharing information about healthy relationship signs.

2. Be Supportive

Remember your friend may not recognize the abuse or even want to leave or stop. This is difficult when you clearly see the signs. When talking to your friend or if your friend approaches you with concerns, be supportive. Don't judge them, keep an open mind and help them get the resources they need like creating a safety plan.

3. Keep Your Communication Door Open

Your friend needs you to listen and be supportive. What you see or hear may make you frustrated and upset. If this happens try to stay calm. If you give your friend an ultimatum like "if you don't leave, I won't talk to you again" that closes the door of communication. People in abusive relationships will most commonly speak out to a friend first and sometimes they won't talk to anyone else. If you shut your door and tell them that you won't talk to them again, you may be shutting down their only resource or connection to help. Instead, let them know that you want to help and can connect them to resources when they are ready. Check out this graphic for great examples of supportive things to say during the conversation.

4. When in Need Get Support

If you feel that your friend is in immediate danger or that their life is at risk or has been threatened, you may want to get emergency support by calling 911. It may not be your first choice for help, but if things are serious it's important to call professionals for support. You may also consider talking to a counselor, trusted adult, or legal aid if there is no immediate danger present.

Remember boundaries, warning signs and healthy relationships are not as clear when you are in an abusive relationship. That's why it's important to educate your friends and community about dating abuse and how to have a healthy relationship.

Closing comment:

Dr. James Gilligan wrote in his book *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic*⁹³, “The self cannot survive without love. The self-starved of love dies. That is how violence can cause the death of the self even when it does not kill the body. The two possible sources of love for the self are love from others, and one’s own love for oneself. Children who fail to receive sufficient love from others fail to build those reserves of self-love, and the capacity for self-love, which enable them to survive the inevitable rejections and humiliations which even the most fortunate of people cannot avoid.”

The solution to the problem of violence is never to turn our backs, but to keep our hearts and minds open to how we can individually affect change—and that change starts with how we raise our children from the day they are born.⁹⁴

***Closing evaluation remarks on the session.**

[Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic](#)
[7 Ways to Stop Violence at Every Age](#)



Additional resources:

[Definition and typology of violence](#)

[European Institute for Gender Equality. Gender – based violence](#)

[World Health Organization. Violence – a global public health problem](#)

[18 Myths on prostitution](#)

[School violence: Bullying](#)

[Stop Bullying](#)

[Council of Europe. Bullying](#)

[European Anti-Bullying Network](#)

[Bullying Prevention Training Center](#)

[Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment Training for Trainers](#)

[Escaping the pain of human trafficking \(video\)](#)

[Human trafficking is all around you. This is how it works \(video\)](#)

Resource sheet A. Session #14, activity #3

	PHYSICAL	EMOTIONAL PSYCHO- LOGICAL	SEXUAL	CYBER- BULLYING	NOT ABUSE
During an argument, someone calls you a blockhead and an idiot					
You notice that your neighbors don't seem to care about their little son, and they often leave him home alone. The boy is 5 years old.					
He insists on having sex, although she doesn't feel ready					
While arguing with your friend, you throw a book at him. Moments later, you realize how unnecessary that was and apologize.					
A boy in the class is regularly ridiculed for being very quiet and calm.					
While arguing, she grabs him by the arm and fiercely pushes him.					
The girls in class lock a girl in the gym dressing room because she doesn't own "stylish sports apparel, and she can't participate in sports class dressed like that". The rest of her classmates see this as a funny joke.					
She regularly spreads nasty rumors about her ex-boyfriend's current girlfriend, thinking that this will make the boy come back.					
You both argue a lot so you decide to break up. Your relationship improves thereafter.					
You tell your friends you had sex with someone last night (even though you just talked)					
Your friend sends you a nude photo of his girlfriend. You share the photo in your friends' group chat					
One of the girls in class regularly receives anonymous comments online like "You're a fat pig, and we hate that you're in our class!"					
They tell each other their secrets					
You don't talk to one another after an argument					

Resource sheet B. Session #14, activity #4

Myths and Facts statements

Bullying is a normal part of growing up.	MYTH Getting teased, picked on, pushed around, threatened, harassed, insulted, hurt or abused is never normal.
Bullying often resolves itself when you ignore it.	MYTH Bullying reflects an imbalance of power that happens again and again. Ignoring the bullying teaches students who bully that they can bully others without consequences. Adults and other students need to stand up for children and young people who are bullied, and ensure they are protected and safe.
Students with disabilities are at greater risk of being bullied.	FACT Students with disabilities (including physical, learning, developmental, intellectual, emotional and sensory disabilities) are at greater risk of being bullied.
All bullies have low self-esteem; that's why they pick on people.	MYTH Many people who bully are popular and have average or better than average self-esteem. They often take pride in their aggressive behavior and control over the people they bully. People who bully may be part of a group that thinks bullying is okay. Some people who bully may also have poor social skills and experience anxiety or depression. For them, bullying can be a way to gain social status.
Bullying is usually something done by males.	MYTH A number of studies have shown that females bully equally as often as males. Often, females engage in more social bullying than males. This involves spreading rumours, excluding someone from a group or other harmful methods of bullying that humiliate the person within their social group.
Bullying is not only a school problem.	FACT Bullying occurs wherever people gather to live, learn, work or play. Although bullying tends to occur in school, we know that bullying is a community problem, not just a school problem.
People are born bullies.	MYTH Bullying is a learned behaviour and these behaviours can be changed.
Children and young people who are bullied will almost always tell an adult.	MYTH Adults are often unaware of bullying – in part because many students don't report it. On average only a third of students who are bullied talk to an adult about the bullying. Targets may fear retaliation. They also may fear that adults won't take their concerns seriously, or will deal with it inappropriately.
Excluding someone from a group or spreading rumours can be as harmful as physical violence.	FACT Although the impact differs for different people, it may be at least as harmful to be excluded from a group or to have rumours spread about you. Many young people report that the daily psychological abuse of this type of bullying behaviour has long-lasting effects and is worse than physical violence.
It is easy to spot the signs of bullying.	MYTH It is not always easy to spot the signs of bullying as it is not always physical and obvious. Social and verbal bullying can often leave scars that people don't see.
Bullying usually occurs when there are no other students around.	MYTH Bullying incidents are typically public (rather than private) events that have witnesses. Studies based on playground observations have found that in most bullying incidents at least 4 other students were present. Although 9 out of 10 students say there is bullying in their schools, adults rarely see it even if they are looking for it.
Students grow out of bullying.	FACT Some students engage in bullying for a short time only and then stop, either because they realise it's wrong or they learn more appropriate behaviour. A small group of students continue to bully others. Unless someone intervenes, the bullying will likely continue and, in some cases, grow into violence and other serious problems.

VIOLENCE. WHO WAS WRONG?

The aim: to develop the necessary skills to recognize and respond to unhealthy, abusive or violent situations. To practice critically analyzing one's interaction with one's peers and control of one's emotions to not become a victim or an abuser.

The phenomenon of victim-blaming

Victim blaming occurs when the victim of a crime or bullying is held fully or partially responsible and blamed for the harm they have suffered. Throughout history, and even today, stereotypes and prejudices against victims of domestic violence and sexual violence continue to exist, particularly in cases of rape, where the majority of attention is usually focused not to the abuser, but on the victim's clothing, actions, etc.

Every time we as a society discuss what the victim could have done differently to prevent the abuse, we unconsciously participate in victim-blaming culture. People are not always aware that they do this, but we should realize that even simple examples such as hearing about a crime and thinking "I would have been more careful if I were in the victim's place" are a milder form of blaming the victim.

Blaming the victim for what happened is partly a way of ignoring the possibility that such a situation could also happen to you. People often think, "if I'm careful, nothing like that could happen to me." If one blames the victim, it becomes easier to distance oneself from the idea that such events can also happen to them.

One of the phenomena of the human psyche that contributes to victim blame is the so-called "fundamental attribution error". This bias, or disposition, makes people attribute the actions and behavior of other people to intrinsic, personal characteristics, ignoring external forces and circumstances that can have a profound effect on a person's actions.

Cyberbullying⁹⁵

Children and adolescents publish information in the digital environment much more frequently than adults and do so without regard to possible consequences. It is important to remind them that publicly share information that someone may use against you, such as compromising photos, ambiguous videos, private information, etc., is inadvisable because once something is on the Internet, it stays there.

[What is cyberbullying](#)

Below are the main risks children face when using social networks:

- posting photos, videos, and personal information that are too private with location tags
- communication with strangers
- fraudulent accounts intended to deceive, manipulate, or maliciously exploit users
- sexting and extortion with nude photographs
- the availability and distribution of illegal, harmful content (unsuitable for children)
- offensive comments – derision, mockery, negative comments
- availability and distribution of fake news
- private peer interest groups that exchange hateful correspondence and encourage negative action
- chain letters containing harmful tasks and their distribution
- financial fraud (scams)
- viruses and malware

Cyberviolence (cyberbullying): manifests as the sending of unwanted emails or text messages, harassment online, unwanted sexually explicit messages or offers to perform sexual acts, threats, hate speech, nude photos, video sharing without a person's consent, as well as other manifestations in the online environment that are closely related to the reality of violence.

- Cyberbullying – emotional humiliation via the Internet or mobile phone, by threatening, insulting, or sending offensive information to the victim.
- Sexting – sending sexually explicit messages, images, or videos using modern technology and the Internet.

Why do children/young people insult and humiliate each other?

- humiliating others makes one feel dominant and powerful; it is a means of demonstrating one's superiority
- it is a way to become popular and well known at school
- the young person is actually cowardly and tries to hide these feelings by frightening others
- the young person feels unhappy and tries to draw the attention of others towards himself
- the young person has been subjected to humiliation and violence from parents, foster parents, sisters, brothers, schoolmates
- the young person feels angry and helpless because they cannot cope with their difficulties
- the young person has low self-esteem, and they can feel more confident etc.

One should remember that cyber-bullying always involves 3 parties: the victim (suffering from cyber-bullying), the abuser (doing the cyber-bullying), the silent majority (aware of what is happening, but does nothing to prevent it because they are afraid of becoming victims themselves).

How to Deal with “Haters”⁹⁶

What is a “Hater?”

“Hater” is a label used to refer to people who use negative and critical comments and behavior to bring another person down by making them look or feel bad. These hurtful and negative comments can be delivered in person, online, or in texts and apps. Often, the comments and behavior are repeated over time. Haters are often anonymous (especially online) but they can also be acquaintances, peers, or people who were once considered friends. Hateful, critical behavior is another form of bullying or cyberbullying. Like bullying, hater behavior is something that a person does – it is not who they are, and it can be changed.

Often, haters pick on people whom they perceive as being different from themselves. Being the focus of negative and critical comments can be upsetting and trigger feelings of anger, hurt, and confusion, and cause the person being criticized to question their self-worth and behavior. If the negative comments are posted online, it can also make someone afraid to use their social media accounts or feel ashamed of what is happening there.

Many children and teens don’t want to be a part of negative behavior like name calling, criticizing, bullying, and cyberbullying. Dealing with haters isn’t that different from dealing with bullying and cyberbullying. Teens who feel overwhelmed by all the drama on social media will often unfriend or unfollow people online to disengage.

How to Deal with Haters

– *Ignore it.*

Walk away. Don’t react or respond to negative comments. If it continues, there are other things you can do. If someone threatens you, report it to a parent, teacher, or other trusted adult!

– *Block online haters.*

If someone is making negative or hateful comments on your posts or account, or is cyberbullying, block them. If they’re threatening you, tell your parents, report it to the platform, and take screenshots.

[How to report things on Facebook](#)

[How to report a post on Instagram](#)

[How to report abusive behavior on Twitter](#)

[How to report offensive content on Tumblr](#)

[How to report abuse on Snapchat](#)

[How to report on TikTok](#)

[How to block on WhatsApp](#)

[How to report abuse on ZOOM](#)

[How to deal with haters](#)

- ***Be kind and respectful, even to haters.*** It shows that you're in control of your emotions and that you aren't letting negativity bring you down.
- ***Stick with supporters.*** Having a friend nearby if you think you might encounter a hater not only makes it less likely that an incident might happen, but also means you'll have positive reinforcements just in case.
- ***Remind yourself that comments from a hater are a reflection of them and aren't really about you.*** People who feel good about themselves don't need to put others down.
- ***Understand criticism can be a sign of pain.*** People sometimes lash out because they have other life struggles. Negative comments may have nothing to do with you.
- ***Acknowledge your feelings.*** Talk to a trusted adult or friend and get some encouragement and support.
- ***Keep being you.*** Keep moving forward, pursuing your interests, and being who you are.



Sexting

A linguistic blend of “sex” and “texting”, sexting means sending sexually explicit messages, pictures or videos to someone on the Internet. It is content that reveals partial or complete nudity and expresses sexual desires, remarks, etc. This type of content is very often distributed among friends or sexual partners on social networking platforms or messaging apps (Snapchat, What-sApp, etc.). Sexting is particularly widespread among young people in Europe, including Latvia. Young people are often unaware of the risks involved in sending messages like this.

These are the main risks associated with sending nude photos:

- They can be forwarded or shown to someone else.
- They can be posted on the Internet.
- They may be seen by your schoolmates, parents, teachers.
- They may be seen by complete strangers.
- They may be placed on sex services sites.
- You may receive insulting comments, unpleasant calls, you may be humiliated and bullied.
- You may lose control over the image and how it is distributed – the image may remain on the Internet for 10 or 30 years, or even longer.

To send or not to send?

Intimate pictures are mostly shared with boyfriends or girlfriends and you wouldn't send them to someone you don't trust. Many images that are posted or forwarded on the Internet often end up with unknown people after the relationship has ended. So ask yourself if you decide to end a relationship with your other half, can you be sure the other person will respect you enough not to show/forward your private pictures to others?

If you think you can trust your boyfriend/girlfriend with your intimate content, consider whether it is really necessary to send such images anyway, since by doing so you expose yourself to countless risks. Also, remember that there will always be a friend or acquaintance who, upon seeing such a picture, will want to repost it and turn it into a mean joke, wanting similar reactions from other users online. This person can view it as a joke and be completely unaware of the harm he or she is doing to the person in the picture.

What should I do if my picture goes online?

Calm down! You may think this is the end of the world, but it's important to keep a cool mind and help the situation before it gets any worse. You need to establish when you lost control over the image – how it ended up online and who you originally sent it to. Take immediate action! The sooner you deal with the unpleasant situation, the less likely it is that the content will spread further. Ask the person who had this image to delete it to prevent it from spreading further. Contact and report to the administrators of the social network in question requesting that the content be deleted as this type of content generally violates the rules of the social networking platform and violates your rights to privacy. You need to be able to change or delete the content you have posted yourself. A profile picture where you are seen in your underwear might initially look like

a funny joke, but then... Tell the people you trust – your family members, friends, teacher – what happened, so that you can decide together what to do next. However, if you do not want any of these people to find out, contact organizations that can help you.

Where to find help?

***Google for helplines, organizations and/or individuals who are providing support and counseling in your country/ community! You can do a research together with the group.**

Extortion of nude photos is the act of forcing a child/young person to send their nude photos to another person or suggesting that they perform sexual acts in front of a computer camera to subsequently blackmail them with these intimate photos or videos, threatening them that they will publish them unless the victim gives them money or sends them other sexually explicit images and/or videos in exchange.

An online conversation that may seem like friendly banter at first can easily turn into a conversation about sex. A young person may feel interested and even flattered by the conversation and show of attention and continue to engage, thinking that the conversation is harmless. Often the perpetrator will send the young person a nude photo or video found on the Internet first, inviting the child/young person to send them a photo or video back. Often this is enough to blackmail the child/young person: the perpetrator will then threaten them that they will post the nude photos or videos online.

What can you do to stay safe? These are some recommended actions if you are facing extortion:

- Never give in to threats.
- Terminate all communication with the extortionist.
- Block the extortionist from accessing all your social network accounts.
- Delete or deactivate all the social networking accounts that you used to contact the extortionist.
- Do not pay the money the extortionist is demanding.
- Tell a trusted adult what happened.
- Report the offense!

Occasionally someone close to a young person can become an abuser. For example, two young people may start a relationship and then one of them may want to end it while the other does not. Shared intimate photos can become revenge photos or a way of forcing the other person to stay in the relationship. A former partner can even blackmail, threaten, humiliate and force the former partner to do what he or she wants for years. And the victim gives in to the demands out of fear that his or her intimate photo might go online.

Activity #1: Four corners “Sex and power”

The aim: To encourage the participants to reflect on their views on a subject, to train their capability to share their views, explain their opinion, and to learn to listen to the opinions and thoughts of others. During the activity, participants may change their views as well as their physical location. The exercises are not intended to open a debate where the participants attempt to convince each other that they’re right. The aim is to stimulate discussion.

Duration: 30 min

Necessary: Prepared statements.

STATEMENTS AND SCENARIOS

Are there circumstances possible that entitle a person to sex?

- Yes, if the other person has flirted with them and aroused them.
- No, under no circumstances, unless the other person wants to have sex as well.
- Yes, if they are a couple, and they have had sexual relations before.
- Another answer

A boy and a girl at a party have been cuddling, kissing and showing affection towards each other. The boy’s parents are not home, and the girl comes over. When they get there, the girl no longer wants to cuddle and kiss – she just wants to talk and maybe watch a movie together and then go home. The boy becomes angry and upset. She doesn’t stay any longer and decides to go home. Did someone make a mistake?

- The girl made a mistake by sending him signals that they were going to have sex.
- The boy made a mistake because he made hasty conclusions and became angry.
- No one made a mistake.
- Another answer.

A girl has been dancing and flirting with different boys all evening. When the party is over, she goes home with two nice boys. When the three of them reach the door to the girl’s home, she suggests the boys come inside to finish the conversation they had on the way here. When inside, they start pulling off the girl’s clothes and claim that she got them aroused. They rape the girl. Who made a mistake?

- The boys are completely responsible.
- She can only blame herself.
- The boy should definitely be held responsible, but she is guilty too.
- Another answer.

Anna is 13, she is in school, she is the eldest of three sisters. Anna’s dad is unemployed, he can rarely find work, so he watches TV every day and drinks beer, and her mom doesn’t work either because Anna’s younger sister is only a year old. Anna’s mom often drinks beer with her husband, sometimes going for something stronger too. As a result and due to the alcohol, there are terrible quarrels at home almost every night – her parents scream at and fight each other.

To avoid having to see this, Anna often takes walks with her friends in the backyards and playgrounds until midnight. One evening, Anna and a friend were approached by a man they met in a backyard of an apartment building, the man gave the girls cigarettes and alcohol to warm up a little due to the cold and later invited the girls to his apartment. Feeling tipsy and loose, the girls followed the stranger. In the apartment, they continued to drink, and the man figured it would be fun for the girls to loosen up a little more, so he asked them to undress. When Anna and her girlfriend were naked, the man started filming them. The man filmed pornographic material of the 13-year-old girls. In the middle of the night, the man ordered the girls to go home, and when Anna woke up she felt a great sense of guilt and shame, and she felt disgusted that she went with him. Anna didn't tell her parents about the incident because she knew her parents would either condemn Anna or not believe her story. Who made a mistake?

- Anna. She should have predicted how it would end, so she is to blame for getting into the situation.
- Anna's parents, because they should have looked after her.
- Anna's friend. She should have talked Anna out of it.
- Another answer.

Reflection questions:

- At what point can any relationship be deemed unhealthy?
- At what point can any relationship be called abusive?
- Why are girls usually the ones that are raped and boys are the ones that rape?
- What is a rapist? Can boys get raped?
- Most rape cases are not reported to the police at all. Why is that so?
- Is it true that most rape cases that are reported to the police do not go to court?
- What are some of the possible outcome scenarios in the situation above? What are the risks? (for example, is Anna and her girlfriend at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking or sexual exploitation). How does one avoid such situations? Who should get involved and try to solve this situation? How would they do it?

Important! It would be a good idea to bring up statistical data in this discussion to explain that most rape cases are domestic, and most of the time the rapist is someone the victim knows.

Activity #2: Awareness videos on various challenges teens are facing

The aim: to gain in-depth knowledge about abuse on the Internet and its consequences.

Duration: 40-60 min (depending on which videos you decide to watch)

Necessary: the means to play videos from the Resource sheet (session #15, activity #2)

Procedure:

- Use the videos mentioned in Resource sheet (session #15, activity #2).
- Watch the videos with the participants.

Reflection questions:

- How widespread is abuse in your communities?
- Why is it so?
- Why do young people treat each other this way?
- What can we do to prevent these situations and their consequences from happening?



Additional resources:

[The Psychology of victim blaming](#)

[Why Do People Blame the Victim?](#)

[5 Myths Surrounding Workplace Bullying](#)

[10 Common Myths and Misconceptions About Bullying](#)

[Do Girls and Boys Bully Differently?](#)

[Girls more likely to be bullied than boys, English schools survey finds](#)

[Cognitive biases in blaming the victim](#)

[What Is Revenge Porn?](#)

[Revenge Porn. What to do?](#)

[Who is involved? Bullying Roles](#)

[How to Talk About Bullying So Teens Will Listen](#)

[Victim blaming](#)

Questions Every Teenager Needs to Be Asked | Laurence Lewars | TEDxDhahranHighSchool.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEgoEgonx3U>

Types of abuse

Physical abuse – physical assault such as beating, kicking, slapping, hair pulling, strangling, pushing, grabbing, use of weapons, etc.

Sexual abuse – sexual assault, such as rape, forced or violent sexual intercourse, violent involvement in sexual activities, sexual assault against the will of a victim, etc. Video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_G8b7yZapkI

Teen Voices. Sexting. Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZwVT6WnPQY>

Emotional/psychological abuse - any verbal, emotional or psychological harassment, such as regular threats, threats of physical or sexual abuse, threats of child abduction, naming and sham-ing, stalking (following someone, waiting for someone at their home or workplace, regular and unwanted calls, texts or emails), prohibiting someone from seeing their friends and relatives, etc. Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYVvE4tr2BI>

Teen Voices: Dealing With Digital Drama. Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RydKEaiKolc>

Cyberbullying – abuse that occurs during the use of digital devices such as mobile phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can happen via SMS and other messages (*Whatsapp, Viber, Snapchat, etc.*) as well as online on social networks, games or forums where people can view, contribute with or share content. This type of abuse involves the sending, posting or sharing of negative, harmful or false content about another person. This may include sharing someone's personal or private information, causing shame or humiliation. Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zW84ydFucJ4>

Financial abuse – any action aimed at trying to control a victim or bringing him or her into submission by using one's financial situation, such as hiding income, depriving the victim of income, attempting to prevent the victim from gaining money, giving the victim money after he or she has fulfilled certain requirements, etc.



DON'T BE INDIFFERENT!

The aim: To re-emphasize the characteristics and signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships. To raising awareness among young people – why we shouldn't remain indifferent when coming into contact with unhealthy relationships and abuse.

Each of us has experienced witnessing an unpleasant situation – when someone else's boundaries are violated, someone is physically or emotionally offended, called names or mocked. For example, a situation where one of your friends is receiving offensive remarks. You realize that it hurts your friend, but at that moment you don't really know what to say. Or when a friend of yours is receiving unwanted attention from at a party and you are not sure how to act or how to help them get out of this situation. Being witness to these situations, we often feel helpless, confused and un-sure how to act.⁹⁷ The feeling we get in these situations is known as the bystander effect.

The bystander effect occurs when the presence of other people discourages an individual from intervening during an emergency. The greater the number of people, the less likely it is that any of them will help a person in distress. People are far more likely to act to help others in times of crisis when there are few or no witnesses around. Adults, children, young people – anyone can unwittingly become a witness to violent or critical situations. The social paralysis as described by the bystander effect (when we want to help someone but do not) has a profound impact on how we behave both on city streets filled with strangers and anywhere we work, study or socialize. There are plenty of examples of how individuals refuse to deal with a problem and its possible negative consequences, ranging from minor household issues that members of a household collectively avoid violence and abuse.⁹⁸ The reasons why people do not get involved and do not help the distressed person can be very different, but most often they are related to fear: fear of making mistakes, taking responsibility for the situation; fear of losing social status; fear for personal safety; fear of "what others might say/think about me"; fear of being the victim of ridicule, violence or retaliation and revenge. Or someone might think to themselves that somebody else will address the situation and help instead. Therefore, it is important to be able to critically assess the situation and find a solution without being indifferent.

[Bystander Intervention Can Stop Sexual Assault Before It Happens](#)
[Bystander Effect](#)

Activity #1: Relationship scenarios

The aim: To identify the signs of healthy relationships. Critically analyze everyday situations and think of possible healthy solutions to relationship challenges. **Duration:** 30-40 minutes

Necessary: Large sheets of paper, markers, scissors, glue, and copies of the resource sheet.

Remember! People might have different opinions on what constitutes a healthy or unhealthy relationship. As the group leader, you must keep this in mind when trying to keep your personal reactions to different situations and opinions as objective as possible.

Procedure:

Draw two columns on a large sheet of paper. Label one of them “healthy relationships” and the other “unhealthy relationships”.

Divide the participants into three or four groups and give each group the resource sheet “Relationship scenarios”. (Session #16, activity #1)

Ask the participants to cut, arrange, and glue the scenarios on the page in either the healthy or unhealthy relationship column. Give the groups 15 minutes to do this. Inform the participants that, if you don’t have time constraints, they can use the empty squares at the end of the resource sheet to come up with relationship scenarios themselves, and label them as either healthy or unhealthy.

Review the scenarios and invite each group to explain why they labeled them as either healthy or unhealthy.

Invite participants to choose at least 2 unhealthy relationship scenarios and come up with healthy solutions for these situations.

Reflection questions:

- Are these scenarios realistic?
- Have you ever been in one of these scenarios? How did you feel?
- How does your community react to these situations?
- What are some common signs of healthy relationships?
- What are some common signs of unhealthy relationships?
- Do you think young people in your communities have healthy or unhealthy relationships? Explain in detail.
- What are the biggest challenges in trying to build a healthy relationship?
How could one overcome these challenges?
- What should you do if you suspect you are in an unhealthy relationship?
- What could you do if your friends are in an unhealthy relationship?
- What have you learned from this exercise? How could you apply what you just learned to your life and your relationships?

Activity #2: Four corners "Dare to act!"

The aim: To encourage the participants to reflect on their views on a subject, to train their capability to share their views, explain their opinion, and to learn to listen to the opinions and thoughts of others. During the activity, participants may change their views as well as their physical location. The exercises are not intended to open a debate where the participants attempt to convince each other that they're right. The aim is to stimulate discussion.

Duration: 20-30 min

Necessary: Prepared statements.

STATEMENTS AND SCENARIOS

You see three boys that you know sneak into a bedroom. A girl is sleeping in that bedroom. She is very drunk and passed out. They start to undress the girl. How will you act?

- Leave.
- Deliberately try to stop them.
- Call the police.
- Another answer.

Some boys at school begin to brag that they have used a girl once. How will you act?

- Leave.
- Tell them that, if what they say is true, they acted like pigs.
- Call the police.
- Another answer.

You overhear your girl classmates talking about a new girl in class behind her back. They are planning to ruin her day somehow. You:

- Join them to make sure you don't find yourself as the victim of a similar scheme someday.
- Tell them you think what they are planning is stupid and never talk to them again.
- Try to make friends with the new girl.
- Another answer.

As you walk home from a party, you see three boys attacking another boy. They're beating him and trying to take his backpack. How will you act?

- Walk up to them and intervene.
- Call for help.
- Turn around and walk away.
- Another answer

You receive a photo from your friend, where another schoolmate of yours is naked.

What do you do?

- Delete the picture and stay silent.
- Resend it in a group chat
- Call your friend (the one who sent the picture) and tell your opinion about this situation (what is your opinion?)
- Another answer

Reflection questions:

- Is it easier or harder to address situations where your friends are part of (being bullied or are the bullies)? Why it is so?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to act when you see someone else under pressure?
- How can we help others without putting ourselves in danger?
- What are some scenarios where helping others would be relatively easier? Why? What scenarios would be the hard ones? Why?

Activity #3: Bullied burger

The aim: Through situational analysis, rise understanding of the bystander effect.

Duration: 20-30 min

Necessary: Before the activity, group leader should watch the video and reflect on their answers to the given questions.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnKPEsbTo9s>

Procedure:

Invite participants to watch the video.

Then ask each person to answer at least three of the given questions individually (questions can be prepared and projected on screen) and write down the answers. From the perspective of the situation, it is also possible to read the questions out loud and discuss them together.

Reflection questions:W

- What were your initial thoughts and impressions about the video?
- What are your thoughts on the mobsters, victims and eyewitnesses in the video?
- Why do you think people around you complained so quickly about their “bully burger” but not about the teenager they bully?
- Did it surprise you how few adults stood up to help a mock teenager? Why?
- Why do you think teenagers don’t get involved when one student harasses another student?
- If you decide to intervene, what exactly would you say or do?
- How could our school change if more people got involved and were not indifferent to situations where someone was mocked or belittled?

Important first steps to take when someone discloses an experience of violence or abuse: ⁹⁹

- Believe the person
- Make sure they understand it's not their fault
- Listen without judging the person
- Be supportive, encouraging, open and honest
- Ask if they need help from a support service and discuss their options
- Help them get advice and support
- Offer to go with the person if they meet with a support service
- Keep in touch with the person to see how they are going

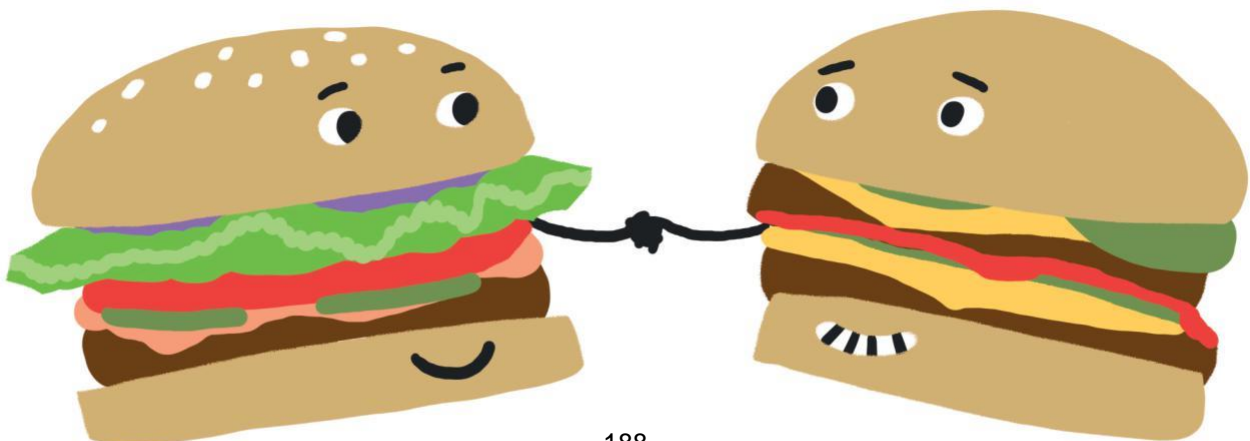
Concluding comments:

- If abuse does ever occur in a relationship and is not discussed and revealed, it will continue and grow even if your other half seems like a perfect angel;
- It is not normal for a person to behave violently in his or her relationships;
- The perpetrator usually denies the fact of violence or describes it as nothing special.
- The perpetrator usually blames the victim, other people and his or her surrounding environment;
- Violent or abusive behavior doesn't occur because the perpetrator failed to control him or herself. It is his or her own choice – to act violently.
- People can sometimes appear very pleasant and attractive, and it can be nearly impossible to tell from the outside that their behavior is actually violent;
- Keeping silent about an occurrence of violent behavior that you've witnessed can strengthen the perpetrator's sense of dominance and encourage him or her to continue with this type of behavior. ¹⁰⁰

No one deserves to be hurt and should not be neglected!

***Closing evaluation remarks on the session.**

[What to do when someone tells you they have experienced violence or abuse](#)
[National Police](#)



Additional resources:

[National Police](#)

[Bystander effect \(video\)](#)

[The Municipal Police of Riga appeals to the public: Don't be indifferent! \(video\)](#)

[Description of the social experiment and its definition. Bystander effect \(video\)](#)

[The Psychology of victim blaming](#)

[Why Do People Blame the Victim?](#)

[5 Myths Surrounding Workplace Bullying](#)

[10 Common Myths and Misconceptions About Bullying](#)

[Do Girls and Boys Bully Differently?](#)

[Girls more likely to be bullied than boys, English schools survey finds](#)

[Cognitive biases in blaming the victim](#)

[What Is Revenge Porn?](#)

[Revenge Porn. What to do?](#)

[Who is involved? Bullying Roles](#)

[How to Talk About Bullying So Teens Will Listen](#)

[Victim blaming](#)

Resource sheet. Scenarios. Session #16, activity #1

<p>You have some plans with your partner, but he/she cancels them at the last moment because he/she thinks what you have planned will not be fun.</p>	<p>During a dispute, you call your partner stupid.</p>	<p>You try to decide on a television show to watch or a band to listen to.</p>	<p>Your partner criticizes your friends and ignores you after every time you go out with them.</p>
<p>During a dispute, your partner grabs your arm.</p>	<p>He is driving very fast, and she says she doesn't feel safe. He slows down and apologizes for making her feel that way.</p>	<p>He tells his friends that he slept with her last night, even though they spent the night just talking.</p>	<p>A person you are dating tries to force you to have sex.</p>
<p>During a dispute, you slap your partner.</p>	<p>Even if you have different opinions and points of view, you still respect each other.</p>	<p>Your partner thinks you want to have sex tonight because you are wearing a tight T-shirt and a miniskirt.</p>	<p>Whenever either of you receives good news, the both of you celebrate.</p>
<p>Your partner doesn't want you to go outside to spend time with your friends. You say that you can't trust your partner.</p>	<p>You go see a movie and have dinner and split the bill.</p>	<p>When they go out together, he always looks at other people and tends to comment on how sexy they are.</p>	<p>You get angry, but you always talk about it and hear each other out.</p>
<p>Whenever she has trouble reading a map, he rolls his eyes and says, "It's probably innate that girls have no sense of space."</p>	<p>Your date calls you the day after you met to tell you s/he had a good time and hopes you slept well.</p>	<p>You decide to cheat on your partner to make them jealous.</p>	<p>You cheat on your partner. Your partner gives you a black eye.</p>
<p>They go hiking, but before they go, they make a list of what they should bring and share the expenses.</p>	<p>Your partner tells you that you should dress differently. Also, that you should kiss better.</p>	<p>When you learn that your partner cheated on you, your partner claims that they were drunk and that it was not their fault.</p>	<p>Your partner tries to take a picture of you naked, to be put on the Internet, saying: "You're so sexy, I want the world to see it."</p>
<p>The night before a deadline, your date demands that you write the essay for them, saying that they did not have the time to do it themselves.</p>	<p>They tell each other when they have a hard time at school or work.</p>	<p>Your partner feels the need to always appear strong in your presence.</p>	<p>When you get angry, your partner listens carefully to what you have to say.</p>

← CONCLUSION

The aim: To evaluate and conclude the group lesson process by thanking each other for everyone's presence and contribution.

Every process in our lives, whether big or small, has a beginning and an end. The same is true for these group activities. Together, you have spent time filled with emotions and events that will undoubtedly leave an effect on the way you perceive your experiences and the manner of how you look at what is happening around you and inside you. These group sessions have resembled life in a lot of ways – with all its ups and downs, laughter, joy, disagreements, conflicts, and reconciliations. The end of this whole process is worth celebrating because the end of this process opens the way for something new to begin – new friendships, relationships, experiences, and personal growth! ¹⁰¹

Openings and Closings are bookends that hold both ends of the time shared together.

They open and close, respectively, the containers of time and space set aside for the event.

For events that are not limited to one physical space or set time period, there are “big” openings and “big” closings that bookend large group process arcs - often of the multi-year or multi-month variety.

Energetically a good closing has space for connecting in some way to what has unfolded in the group time since the opening, and space to ground the group in the now of the moment and then look forward to the time that will be coming next. It creates an opportunity for conscious shift from one space/time to another.

And every closing is an opening to something else.

Closings are often marked by a “letting go” ritual, a construction to help participants transition out to whatever comes next. Time markers, clocks, bells, gongs, breathing exercises and other oral or visual markers can be used to announce and recognize a closing. They must provide space, breathing room, before moving on to what's next. Space at the closing should be held for songs, appreciations, cheers and tears as may be appropriate.

Closings should provide time for (either as part of the closing or afterwards) personal farewells, acknowledgements of the importance of relationships that have been made, and that there may be a sense of loss at parting, or a sense of mystery about what comes next. People often remember the closing of a session more than any other part, so it is essential that it be handled well. Well-constructed and implemented closings lead to a feeling of successful convergence, satisfaction and fulfillment at the end of events. ¹⁰²

So be sure to find a way, time and space to eat a piece of cake, go for a small hike, bike ride, watch a movie together, or do anything else that might give the participants and you as a leader a feeling of celebration!

[Benson, J. \(2001\) 'Work at the ending stage of the group: separation issues', chapter 7 in Benson, J., \(2001\) Working more creatively in groups, pp. 145–54, Abingdon, Routledge.](#)
[Closing](#)

Activity #1: Evaluation of the time spent working in the group and the conclusion. “Shield”

The aim: to better identify the values which were realized and gained during the group activities.

Duration: 45-50 minutes (30 minutes for making shields, followed by a presentation of the shields, if the group agrees to do so).

Necessary: A3 sheets of paper, color crayons/pencils/felt-tipped-pens. You can also use the technique of collage (in this case, you’ll need newspapers, magazines, glue, and scissors)

Procedure: As this is the final session, it is important that we use what we have learned and experienced here in our daily lives to build and develop healthy relationships with ourselves and with our peers.

Explain to the participants that you are going to make shields during this session. The function of a shields is to protect and “spot a friend in the crowd” – someone likeminded. What can we use to protect ourselves?

The participants draw their shields and split them into four sections. They should write/draw/ create their thoughts/achievements/resources in these sections, as suggested below. Variations of the questions regarding the shield (selected by the group leader after deciding what the group might need the most).

Me a year ago. Me today. Me in a year. Me in 5 years (let them compare themselves to themselves at different points in time by reflecting on the skills, knowledge, attitudes, friendships and other values etc. gained during these sessions)

5 things that I like. 5 things that I’m good at. 5 things that I’d like to learn to do better. 5 things about the future that I am already happy for.

My resources, strengths – my character/temperament; in my family; at school; out of school

Collage of what this group process has meant for me and what kind of impact it has left on my personality and everyday life.

Option X

When everyone has finished their shields, ask them to share with the group.

Activity #2: “Farewell words”

The aim: thank each other for the journey together – the time you spent and the energy you invested in the group. This activity can serve as a form of ritual that concludes the collective time and space by completing the cycle of a group process. Include everyone, acknowledge the end of the time together and mark the transition point, ushering in a shift to what follows.

Duration: 20-30 min

Necessary: A4 sheets, scotch tape to attach these sheets on the backs of the participants, writing utensils.

Procedure: Attach a sheet of paper to each participant’s back. The participants are invited to write “a few words for the road” on each other’s backs: compliments, gratitude, mention what they’ve learned from one another, and so on.

It is not mandatory that everyone write everyone a message, but it is important that no page is left blank.

Concluding comments:

Although the work with the group has come to an end and will not continue in this format, you can agree on a different way you could spend time together. These can be local events that you meet or co-organize. A “group gathering” that you organize once every six months or once a year. And it may be the case that some participants are more eager to meet than others and decide to do so, meeting every month in a smaller group. Or you may even decide that you will no longer invest resources to get everyone together. Any of these (and other) options are valuable, as long as they are a group decision, and everyone is aware of it. It is also important to decide who will be responsible for informing others about the dates you decide to meet (if you decide to do so). And here’s a recommendation for the group leader – make the group in charge of themselves from now on. Good luck!

***Closing evaluation remarks on the session.**

Additional resources:

[12 Group Games for Teenagers](#)

[Group works. A Pattern Language for Bringing Life to Meetings and Other Gatherings](#)

[Jarlath Benson. Work at the ending stage of the group: separation issues](#)

[Chris Taylor. A Practical Guide to Caring for Children and Teens with Attachment Difficulties](#)

[Secure and Insecure Attachment in Teenagers](#)

**THANK YOU FOR THE TIME YOU DEVOTED TO THIS GROUP
PROCESS AND FOR YOUR EXCELLENT WORK!**

