

Lesson Ten: Abstinence

Student Learning Objectives:

The students will be able to...

1. List behaviors that help a person succeed at abstaining from all forms of sex.
2. Articulate to a partner the decision to not have sex.
3. Practice using assertive decision-making techniques with a partner.

Agenda:

1. Explain the focus of today's lesson.
2. Define terms abstinence, sex, celibacy, and virginity.
3. Use the Expressing Limits Activity Cards to conduct a large group activity.
4. Use Abstinence Worksheet and Visual 2 to brainstorm, in pairs, challenges that keep people from abstaining.
5. Discuss assertiveness skills.
6. Direct students to work in pairs on "Real People" YouTube Video Worksheets.
7. Debrief and summarize the learning activities.

1. Today's Lesson

What percent of high school students do you think have had sex in the U.S.? (46%)

So what percent of students are being abstinent? (54%)

Why do people choose to have sex?

Possible Answers...

- procreation
- to show love
- consummate marriage or long-term partnership
- attempt to prove that they are not gay, lesbian, or bisexual
- to help figure out if they might be gay, lesbian, or bisexual
- pleasure
- curiosity
- attempt to prove adulthood
- a way to relieve stress

Why do people choose to abstain from sex?

Possible Answers...

- personal beliefs and values
- religious beliefs and values
- protect their health
- not interested
- haven't found the "right" partner
- not in love
- in recovery from addiction
- avoid pregnancy
- avoid STDs and HIV
- don't want to jeopardize future goals
- not ready
- focusing on something else right now: school, sports, friends
- under stress
- don't want to upset family
- encourages people to build relationships based on things other than sex

Like any choice in life, it is important to understand your values and beliefs as well as the consequences, both positive and negative, of

choosing to do certain things. It is also helpful to learn skills to help you talk about the choices that you do make. We will focus on those skills today.

2. Definition of Terms:

Abstinence means choosing not to do something. For instance, you choose abstinence, or “choose to abstain” if you try not watching TV on school nights, to see if you study more. People decide to abstain from all sorts of things. People with diabetes may abstain from sugary foods. Recovering alcoholics abstain from alcohol. Vegetarians abstain from eating meat. And in this lesson, we will talk about people abstaining from sex.

When people decide to abstain from something, it may be a temporary or longer-term decision. Most people decide they will abstain from cigarettes forever. In some faiths, people temporarily abstain from eating such as Muslims during Ramadan or Jews on Yom Kippur or Catholics not eating meat on Fridays during Lent.

People can choose to abstain at any point in their lives, even if they haven’t abstained in the past.

Different people have different definitions of abstinence. Some define abstinence as not engaging in any sexual behavior, including masturbation. Some define it as avoiding sexual behavior involving touching of the genitals or genital contact between two people. Others include oral sex (mouth and genital contact), anal sex (penis and anus contact) and vaginal sex (penis and vagina contact). For today’s lesson and this entire unit, **abstinence will mean choosing not to have oral, anal or vaginal sex.**

Sex is another word with many meanings. It can mean the gender of a person, animal, or flower; sexual intercourse, genital contact or penetration; or exchange of body fluids. For our purposes today, we'll define sex as "when a person's genitals touch another person's genitals, mouth or anus" even though there are lots of other ways

people might be sexual. Consensual sex means all people involved agree to the behavior.

Many people use the term intercourse or sexual intercourse. This typically only refers to vaginal sex or penis - vagina contact.

Celibacy is a long-term or lifetime commitment not to have sex, often for religious or moral reasons.

Virginity is a concept, and cultures define it differently and have a range of values about it. Each culture and generation has different beliefs about what it is and whether it is important.

When people talk about a "virgin," they're usually talking about someone who hasn't had penis-in-vagina intercourse. This leaves out people whose first sexual experience is with someone of the same gender. This also does not define anal and oral sex as sex. People who have been sexually assaulted are often thought to have "lost their virginity", but this ignores the fact they did not consent and were the victims of violence. What it means to be a virgin can only be defined by the person, not someone else.

Is abstinence from sex the only certain way to avoid pregnancy and to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV?

Yes!

However, it depends on how a person defines abstinence for this to be true. It is possible to spread sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) through oral and anal sex. Some STDs, like herpes and genital warts, can also be spread through genital contact or rubbing. Pregnancy can happen if a man's semen gets on a woman's genitals, even without penetration. Later, we will talk about birth control and STD prevention methods if people do have sex.

3. Large Group Activity: Expressing Limits Activity Cards (See attached PDF)

It is often hard to refuse doing something because of peer pressure or pressure from a person who wants to have sex with you. In high-pressure situations, it can be hard to know what to say if you haven't practiced doing it before.

Each student will receive a card with a concrete reason for refusing to have sex on it so you can practice refusal skills. They are examples of things people can say if they are asked to have sex but do not want to. This is an activity to practice communicating a decision to be abstinent, and does not mean an actual request to have sex. In some cases, you may be assuming the role of a person different than yourself. This is only an exercise and remember the class ground rules. Everyone stand up, find a person in the room, and imagine their partner just asked, "Will you have sex with me?" Each person then refuses using the sentences on their cards. After each person has read their card, they trade cards and find a new partner. Practice with five partners, and five different refusals, then sit down to show you are finished.

4. People have many reasons for not having sex, but sometimes they do it anyway. They want to abstain but a challenge or barrier gets in the way.

What makes it difficult to abstain from sex?

5. Assertiveness skills involve speaking and acting with power while maintaining respect for others. Instead of passively giving up control or aggressively demanding it, assertiveness tells others what you want without lying, evading, or hurting. These skills are particularly helpful when you are faced with situations of potential conflict. It is important to note that individuals and cultures may express assertiveness in different ways – be aware of this when talking with you current or future partners.

Four types of communication styles:

1. **Aggressive:** taking what you want, threatening or forcing a person to give you something, or saying "no" in a way that puts the other person down or violates his or her rights.

2. **Passive:** not speaking up when you'd like something or giving in and saying "yes" when you don't really want to, in order to be liked or not hurt the other person's feelings.

3. **Manipulative:** getting what you want or turning someone down in a dishonest way, or doing something for somebody only so they will give you what you want.

4. **Assertive:** asking for what you want or giving people an honest "no" to things you don't want; not using people and not letting yourself be used by others.

Important assertive skills include

- Making "I" statements ("I think ...", "I want ...")
- Expressing opinions ("I believe ...")
- Saying "No" firmly but respectfully
- Asking for what you want
- Initiating conversations
- Expressing positive feelings
- Expressing appreciation
- Stating your strengths and abilities ("I can ...")
- Making statements that express one's identity, culture, sexual orientation, etc. when one chooses to do so
- Pay attention to word choice, tone of voice, and body language

Examples of some "I" statements

- I don't like the way you are talking to me.
- I really appreciate that you care enough to stay with me even though I am not ready to have sex yet.

6. Small Groups/Pairs "Real People" Video Worksheets (See attached PDF)

Each small group/pair will get one of the seven scenes from "Real People" Video Worksheet. You are writers and producers for a YouTube video that is trying to reach audiences with positive messages about relationships, safe sex, and sexual choices. One of the characters in the dialogue has made the choice to be abstinent. Your job is to write the remaining part of the scene, making use of at least three concepts studied this period, including our definitions, refusal skills, and assertiveness skills. Ask them to be as creative as they can.