

CONDOM TALK: PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

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OBJECTIVES:

Participants will:

- overcome negative feelings about using condoms.
- increase their comfort in talking about condom use with a partner.
- practice negotiating skills for condom use.

RATIONALE:

There are numerous reasons why people do not use condoms: they may be unfamiliar with them, be embarrassed to talk with a partner about using them, or believe negative myths that convince them not to use condoms. This activity gives participants a chance to confront possible barriers to condom use and to respond to these barriers. After participants have had a chance to develop condom dialogue competence, they get to practice their skills and increase their condom efficacy. Finally, negative ideas about condoms are confronted by giving participants a chance to brainstorm all positive reasons to use them.

MATERIALS:

- Newsprint, masking tape
- Magic markers - enough for each participant

PROCEDURE:

1. Tape about 12 pieces of newsprint around the room. Brainstorm reasons why people don't use condoms, writing each reason on a separate piece of newsprint. Extra newsprint can be posted if there are more reasons generated by the group. Give one or two examples of how people could respond if a partner gave one of these reasons. Then ask participants to walk around the room writing down responses to each reason. Have volunteers read responses aloud when group has finished writing.

2. Participants now have an opportunity to utilize the responses they have written on the newsprint in role plays. Divide group into pairs. Ask pairs to decide who will be number 1 and who will be number 2. First, tell the people who are number “1” to convince number “2” to wear a condom. Person number 2 should use as many excuses as possible to resist having the condom put on. Person number 1 can use the responses from the brainstorm to overcome the partner’s resistance. When the first person in the couple has succeeded in convincing his/her partner to wear a condom, they switch roles.
3. When all have finished playing both roles, ask for volunteers to share their role plays with the whole group. When all who want to share their role plays have had a chance, process the activity using the following questions:

Discussion questions:

- a. How did it feel to try to talk your partner into using a condom?
 - b. What arguments worked? Did anyone find a special technique that worked?
 - c. Was anyone unable to convince a partner? What could a person do if the partner won’t comply? What would **you** do in real life if this happened?
 - d. Did this activity increase your comfort with condoms? Why or why not?
3. Sum up the lesson by pointing out that it is possible to overcome barriers to communicating about using condoms and also to overcome myths about how condoms spoil intercourse. Remind participants that effective communication goes beyond one-line catchy responses; this activity is meant to provide an opening for further dialogue. Ask group to brainstorm all the ways that condoms **improve** intercourse. (Accept all answers; possible responses include: take away anxiety; reduce fear of pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections; improve communication; can be part of foreplay; add variety; make intercourse last longer; “colorful”; help to relax, etc.)

Note:

If this lesson is the only condom lesson you will be using, be sure to demonstrate how to use one correctly.

Further Note:

This lesson could be titled “Let’s Talk...About Abstinence,” “Let’s Talk...About Safer Sex,” or “Let’s Talk About Outercourse.” Use the same procedure, substituting in number (1) the instruction to think about all of the arguments which people use to try to influence their partners to engage in intercourse before they are ready or when they don’t want to.