

WHAT'S A FRIEND TO DO? EXPLORING THE ROLE OF FRIENDS IN PROMOTING SAFER SEX

OBJECTIVES:

Participants will:

- explore the proposition that if a friend's behaviors puts him/her at risk, a real friend will try to prevent the danger.
- evaluate possible responses when a friend is at risk.
- rehearse taking action to reduce a friend's risk.

RATIONALE:

Most sexuality education focuses on the individual's responsibility for self and partner. However, by acknowledging the vital role of peers in determining a person's attitudes and behaviors, many educators now use peer education effectively. Yet, young people are seldom urged to be proactive regarding a friend's risky sexual behaviors as they are in safety campaigns, such as those regarding alcohol use, "Don't let a friend drive drunk." This lesson encourages young people to consider whether a true friend needs to take a role in discouraging risky sexual behavior that could lead to a sexually transmitted infection, or an unintended pregnancy.

MATERIALS:

None

PROCEDURE:

1. Put the following on the board/easel:

"A true friend will try to stop unsafe sexual behavior of a friend."

Ask participants to take a position regarding the above statement:

- a. Raise hand if they agree.
- b. Fold arms if they are NOT sure.
- c. Turn thumb down if they disagree.

2. Ask why people took the different positions. Write key reasons on the board/easel.

3. Explain they will have a chance to think about particular situations and decide what they might do if a friend were at risk. You will read a situation, give four alternative responses and point to a corner of the room representing each alternative.

Each participant is to select the response that feels best to them, move to the corner representing that alternative and discuss their choice with others who made the same choice.

Facilitator should:

- a. select three of the following situations that are most relevant to your group, or will represent each alternative.
- b. read the situation.
- c. identify the corner representing each alternative.
- d. give participants time to discuss their choice with others in their corner.
- e. let individuals from each corner share the reasons for their choice with the entire group.

The Situations:

- a. Your best friend is dating someone you know is infected with herpes. You know the partner has not told your friend and they are not using a condom or any other precautions.
You:
 1. Tell your friend about the partner having herpes.
 2. Give your friend condoms and tell your friend *everyone* should use them.
 3. Give your friend a pamphlet on herpes and say everyone needs to be careful these days.
 4. Do nothing.
- b. Your 14 year old friend is dating a 23 year old man who has a bad reputation and has fathered two children by other young girls.
You:
 1. Tell her parents and hope they'll do something.
 2. Report him to the authorities for "statutory rape."
 3. Tell your friend about her partner's history with other girls.
 4. Do nothing.
- c. Your friend has gonorrhea but has no symptoms. S/he is in a relationship and has not told the partner about the infection.
You:
 1. Tell your friend's partner; if s/he won't take the initiative to protect him/her, you will.
 2. Tell your friend both s/he and the partner must get treated even if there are no symptoms.
 3. Tell your friend s/he must tell her/his partner.
 4. Do nothing.

- d. Your friend who is a drug user has discovered she is pregnant, but she hasn't been to get prenatal care and hasn't been tested for HIV.
You: 1. Tell her to get an abortion because the baby may be at risk.
2. Urge her to go to a family planning agency or doctor.
3. Tell her about the risks that are involved for the baby.
4. Do nothing.
- e. Your friend is having sex with a lot of partners. If the partner doesn't want to use condoms, your friend doesn't push it.
You: 1. Tell your friend's partners about these promiscuous behaviors.
2. Explain to your friend the risks involved with this kind of behavior.
3. Give your friend some pamphlets about sexually transmitted infections and hope your friend will read them.
4. Do nothing.
- f. Your friend drinks a lot at parties. You've seen your friend leave with someone s/he hardly knows.
You: 1. Try to set up a buddy system, agreeing you'll leave parties together.
2. Talk to your friend when s/he is sober about risky behaviors.
3. Discuss the issue with other friends and decide together what to do.
4. Do nothing.

5. Ask participants to be seated.

Discussion Questions:

- a. How did examining specific situations affect your thinking about whether a friend needs to intervene?
 - b. What other situations can you think of where a person might help prevent a friend's unsafe sexual behavior? Write these on the board.
6. Note that often people don't act because they are afraid of being rejected by the friend. Or, the friend might attack them for some of their own unsafe behavior. You are going to give them a chance to try addressing several situations so they will be better prepared if they ever want to help a friend.
7. Depending on your group, you may give participants a situation particularly relevant, use one of the situations above, or, ask them to think of a situation that would be interesting to role play.
8. Set up the role play. (See HOW TO USE ROLE PLAY.) Ask for two volunteers. Ask which participant wants to role play the friend who wants to help. Who is the friend in danger?

a. Ask questions to help each player get into their roles:

1. Ask the friend at risk:

- What is your name?
- Are you worried you may be at risk for HIV or sexually transmitted infections?
- Tell me about your partners, etc.
- Are you using any precautions?

2. Ask the helping friend:

- What is your name?
- Exactly why are you concerned about your friend's behavior?
- What do you think you will do?

b. Let them begin their dialogue.

c. After 3 or 4 minutes, or when the scene seems finished, stop the role play.

d. While the actors stay in their roles, let group members ask their questions about the scene.

9. As time permits, repeat the role play with other situations.

10. Closure: Refer to the original statement on the board:

"A true friend will try to stop unsafe sexual behavior of a friend."

Ask how people have changed their thinking about the statement during the session.