

Dear Expert

Objective: Participants will identify sexual decision-making issues.

Structure: Small group.

Time: 30 minutes.

Materials: “Dear Expert” handout.

Procedure

1. **Introduce** the activity by pointing out how difficult and important a decision it is to determine whether or not to start, or continue, a sexual relationship.
2. **Divide** participants into seven groups.
3. **Assign** each small group one of the “Dear Expert” letters from the handout.
4. **Give** participants enough time to formulate a response.
5. Bring the group back together, and **ask** one volunteer from each small group to read the letter and another volunteer to read the response. Do this with each of the seven groups. Use the answer key to add to the discussion or to correct any misconceptions.
6. As a group, **discuss**:
 - What are the best reasons not to have sex?
 - Reasons to have sex?
7. **Conclude** by pointing out how important it is to consider our personal beliefs and values as well as our relationships when making sexual decisions.

(Adapted with permission from: Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada (2001) *Beyond the Basics: A Sourcebook on Sexual and Reproductive Health Education*. Ottawa: Author.)

Answer Key

Dear Expert

1. Dear Expert:

Pat and I have been dating for four months. Pat is really wonderful and really wants to have sex with me, but I'm just not sure. How do I know if I'm ready?

Feelings for Pat

Personal values (e.g. cultural, religious)

Alternatives to intercourse

Looking back: will you feel good about decision?

Prepared to take responsibility with birth control and STI prevention?

2. Dear Expert:

I just had sex for the first time last weekend. Sam is really wonderful, but I kind of regret having sex. I don't know if I want to continue a sexual relationship. But now that I've "done it," I guess there is no going back. What should I do?

Just because you said yes once does not mean you have to say yes again

Freedom to say yes or no

Important to communicate concerns to Sam

Alternatives to intercourse

3. Dear Expert:

My boyfriend and I started going out a few months ago. Our relationship is great, but he always wants to hold my hand and kiss me when we're in public, and I don't feel comfortable with that. What should I do?

Important to do what's right for you

Important to talk to each other

4. Dear Expert:

I've been going out with Sue for ten months. She always threatens to break up with me if I don't have sex with her. Sometimes I don't feel like it. I tried to talk to her about it, but she just won't listen. I'm worried she'll spread nasty rumours about me. What should I do?

Abuse issues

Freedom to say yes or no

Important to get support from trusted friend/adult

May need to end relationship

5. Dear Expert:

Robin and I have been together for over a year. We really care about each other and enjoy spending time together. We haven't had sex, and we both feel good about that decision. But everyone assumes that we've had sex and even make jokes and comments about it. There's just so much pressure—it seems like everyone is doing it, so maybe we should, too. What should I do?

Freedom to say yes or no

Not everyone is having sex, although it may seem like it

Don't feel you have to do something just because everyone else seems to be

6. Dear Expert:

Chris and I have been going out for over six months. I really care about and want to be close to Chris. But there are parts of my body that I really hate, and I'm afraid that once he sees me naked, he won't want me. What should I do?

Self esteem and body image issues

Try talking to Chris or someone else you trust about concerns

Take things slowly

7. Dear Expert:

My boyfriend and I really care about each other, and we're getting really serious. We both want to have sex and want to be safe, but we're too embarrassed to buy condoms. What should we do?

Buy them together

Go to a sexual health clinic/youth centre (youth friendly) to get them for free

Ask someone else to buy them for you

Reconsider having sex

Handout

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6. Dear Expert:

Chris and I have been going out for over six months. We've been talking lately about having sex and I think I'm ready. I really care about and want to be close to Chris. But there are parts of my body that I really hate and I'm afraid that once he sees me naked, he won't want me. What should I do?

7. Dear Expert:

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