

HOW TO TALK ABOUT STDs

Using STD Videos to Model Communication

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

1. Demonstrate 2 ways to talk about safer sex with a partner.
2. Demonstrate 2 ways to talk about STD testing with a partner.
3. Demonstrate 2 ways to talk with a partner about having an STD.

Audience

Late high school or college-aged youth (ages 16-22) who have already been exposed to the basics of STDs.

Time

1 hour

Rationale

Teaching sexual communication skills is an important component of sex education. Without the ability to communicate about sexual health, young people are not able to make and follow through on healthy decisions and may be put at risk of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Classroom settings are limited in their ability to illustrate what healthy communication between partners looks like in real-life situations. Videos modeling conversations about STDs offer new and compelling ways to show teens what healthy and respectful communication looks like when young people are in sexual situations. The videos on which this lesson is based were designed to help young people feel more comfortable and confident in their ability to talk about STD prevention and management with a sexual partner. These videos can be used to supplement other programming on STDs.

Materials

- Flip chart paper or board, markers, tape
- One flip chart paper with the following pre-written on it:
 - STD Prevention Tools
 - ✓ Abstinence from all sexual activity
 - ✓ Abstinence from the most high-risk activities (i.e. anal and vaginal sex)
 - ✓ Condoms
 - ✓ Dental dams
 - ✓ Lube
 - ✓ Regular testing - both you and your partner
 - ✓ Being honest about your status - both you and your partner

- A computer with Internet access, projector, and speakers to show the videos:
 - Playlist of all 3 videos: p.ppfa.org/TalkingSTDs
- Educator Resource: STD Role-Play: Scenarios
- Optional: Extra pens or pencils for participants to fill out handouts.

Introduction (2 minutes)

- Tell the group that today's lesson is about talking with a partner about STDs, including how to prevent spreading them, getting tested, and how to tell someone you have an STD. Talking about these topics might seem scary or unnecessary, but being able to have these conversations with a sexual partner is an important part of a healthy sex life.

Preventing and Managing STDs: The Basics (10 min)

1. Tell participants: "Let's talk about the things that are involved in preventing the spread of STDs. What are some of things you need to use/do to help prevent spreading STDs?" Allow participants to respond and write down their responses on the board/flip chart.

Show flip chart/white board with the following pre-written on it, and ask the group if there are any things on this list missing from the one they came up with.

STD Prevention Tools

- ✓ Abstinence from all sexual activity
 - ✓ Abstinence from the most high-risk activities (i.e. anal and vaginal sex)
 - ✓ Condoms
 - ✓ Dental dams
 - ✓ Gloves
 - ✓ Lube
 - ✓ Regular testing - both you and your partner
 - ✓ Being honest about your status - both you and your partner
2. Tell participants: "A lot of people think preventing STDs is only about using condoms, but it's just as important to get tested (and treated if you have an STD), and to be honest about any STDs you have."
 3. Ask participants: "Why do you think communication is important to stay healthy when it comes to STDs?" (*Could include things like feeling safe, you're more likely to use condoms/get tested if you talk about it, telling someone you have an STD will help you both decide to prevent passing it with safer sex, etc.*)

4. Tell participants: “Since communication about STDs is really important to being healthy, we’re going to spend our time today focusing on talking about this stuff.”

Talking About Safer Sex (8 minutes)

1. Tell the group that now we’re going to watch a video that shows what it looks like to talk to a partner about safer sex.
2. Show “How to Talk About Safer Sex” video at this link: p.ppfa.org/SaferSexTalk, or via the playlist.
3. Discussion questions:
 - a. What are some phrases people used to bring up safer sex with their partner?
Make sure at least one example is given from each scene.
 - b. What were some reasons why people didn’t want to have safer sex? What are some other reasons you think people you know would resist having safer sex?
 - c. When their partner was resistant, what are “comebacks” people used to make it clear why safer sex was important or non-negotiable?
Make sure at least one example is given from each scene.
 - d. How did each pair come to agreement?
Make sure at least one example is given from each scene.

Talking About STD Testing (8 minutes)

1. Tell the group that now we’re going to watch a video that shows how to talk to a partner about STD testing.
2. Show “How to Talk About STD Testing” video at this link: p.ppfa.org/TestingTalk, or via the playlist.
3. Discussion questions:
 - a. What are some phrases people used to bring up STD testing with their partner?
Make sure at least one example is given from each scene.

- b. What were some reasons why people didn't want to get tested? What are some other reasons you think people you know would resist getting tested?
- c. When their partner wasn't sure about it, what are "comebacks" people used to make it clear why safer sex was important or non-negotiable?
Make sure at least one example is given from each scene.
- d. How did each pair come to agreement?
Make sure at least one example is given from each scene.

Disclosing You Have An STD (10 minutes)

- 4. Tell the group that now we're going to watch a video that shows how to tell someone you have an STD.
- 5. Show "How to Tell Someone You Have an STD" video at this link: p.pfpa.org/HaveSTDTalk, or via the playlist.
- 6. Discussion questions:
 - e. What are some things people did to tell their partner they had an STD? What made those conversations a little easier for them?
Make sure at least one example is given from each scene.
 - f. What were some reasons why people might be scared to tell someone they have an STD - what kinds of reactions are they worried about?
 - g. What kinds of reactions did people have in this video? What other reactions might people you know have to these particular conversations, if worded the way they were in this video?
Make sure at least one example is given from each scene.
 - h. What are some of the positives that came out of these conversations? Where did each pair end up in terms of their relationship to each other?
Make sure at least one example is given from each scene.

Scenarios Practice (20 minutes)

1. Tell the group that now we're going to get into pairs and practice conversation skills. Arrange the group into pairs. Once they're in their pairs, explain that they'll each get 2 scenarios, and will each have a chance to practice while their partner listens.
2. Give each pair two cards from the **STD Role-Play: Scenarios** and ask the pairs to work together for 2 minutes to practice the conversations on the card. Each person in the pair will have a chance to go.
3. After 2 minutes, tell them to switch to the second card and have the other person in the pair start the conversation on the card.
4. Ask for 1 or 2 volunteers to role-play in front of the large group one of the conversations they had as a pair, and ask the following process questions after each role-play.
 - a. What went well in this role-play?
 - b. What would you have done differently?
5. Thank participants who modeled their role-plays for the group.

Process the role-plays using the following discussion questions:

- a. How did it feel to practice these conversations?
- b. How did it feel to get a negative or resistant reaction?
- c. What could happen if you don't bring up these topics with your partner?
(Answers may include: you could get or give someone an STD that might not get tested/treated leading to health problems down the road)
- d. What are the benefits of having these conversations?
(Answers may include: you can get what you want; your partner can also get what they want; you can have a healthier and safer time together; it's the right thing to do, etc.)
- e. What could make it difficult to talk about safer sex/STDs in certain situations?
- f. What could you do to make it easier?
- g. What will you do differently now that you've seen the videos and practiced the role-plays?
- h. How confident do you feel about talking about STDs in your life?

Summary and Conclusion (2 minutes)

Thank the participants for their efforts and emphasize the following key messages:

- Safer sex is about more than just condoms. There are lots of safer sex tools for different kinds of sex, including condoms (both internal/male and external/female), dental dams, gloves, lube, as well as abstinence and avoiding the kinds of sex that are most likely to pass STDs (like anal/vaginal sex).
- Talking to your partner about how you're going to protect against STDs and making a plan will make you both more likely to do it.
- Preventing the spread of STDs is about more than safer sex - you've gotta get tested too. Talk to your doctor or nurse, like the staff at your local Planned Parenthood health center, about how often you should get tested and for which STDs.
- It's not enough for you to get tested - you need to talk to your partner about whether or not they've been tested, too. Talking openly and honestly with your partner about testing will make you both more likely to do it.
- STDs are super common - half of people in the U.S. will get an STD at some point in their life. And having an STD doesn't make you dirty or a bad person. Infections happen, so let's all get used to talking about them with a partner.
- Telling someone you have an STD can be hard, but it's important that you do. It's the only way they can get tested/treated and stay healthy. It can even strengthen your relationship to be open and honest about having an STD.

STD Role-Play: Scenarios

Copy and cut this page into cards. Each pair will share two cards. You may need to make multiple copies if you are working with a larger group. It's okay for multiple groups to get the same card.

<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>You're at your partner's place and both decide you want to have sex. You ask if they have any condoms/dental dams, and they say no.</i></p> <p>What do you say next?</p>		<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>You're hooking up with someone and think you might be about to have some kind of sex soon. They don't say anything about safer sex or having been tested.</i></p> <p>How do you bring it up?</p>
<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>You just found out you have gonorrhea (curable with antibiotics), when you have a steady partner.</i></p> <p>How do you bring it up with them?</p>		<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>Your partner says you two don't need to use protection because you've never had sex and they've only had sex with one other person.</i></p> <p>What do you say next?</p>

<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>You ask if your partner has been tested for STDs, and they say no - they're not a slut and testing is for people who are dirty.</i></p> <p>What do you say next?</p>	<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>You just found out that you have genital warts, which you had removed but your doctor suggested you take a break from sex for a week. Your partner asks if you want to have sex.</i></p> <p>What do you say next?</p>
<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>Your partner mentions that they've been having a burning feeling when they pee in passing conversation about feeling a little under the weather.</i></p> <p>What do you say to them about it?</p>	<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>You just got on birth control. Your partner says that it's great you don't have to use condoms anymore.</i></p> <p>How do you respond?</p>