

CONSENT AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS



LESSON INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this lesson is to practice asking for and giving consent and avoiding bullying behaviors. Students will also practice upstander behavior in situations that could lead to sexual assault as well as learn reasons why someone would be placed on the sex offender registry.



OBJECTIVES:

By the end of 8th grade Students will be able to...

- Demonstrate clear communication techniques in relationship to seeking and giving consent.
- Identify reasons why someone may be placed on the sex offender registry.
- Demonstrate upstander behavior that can help prevent sexual harassment.



VOCABULARY

- Age of consent
- Consent
- 'I' statement
- Mandatory reporter
- Sexual assault
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual offense
- Sex Offender Registry
- Upstander



STANDARDS:

Wisconsin Standard for Health Education

- Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

National Sexuality Education Standards

- **PS.8.CC.1** Describe situations and behaviors that constitute bullying, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sexual assault, incest, rape and dating violence.
- **PS.8.CC.3** Explain that no one has the right to touch anyone else in a sexual manner if they do not want to be touched.
- **PS.8.SM.2** Demonstrate ways they can respond when someone is being bullied or harassed.

GRADE: Middle School

LENGTH OF LESSON: 60 min

SEQUENCE: 10



ACTIVITIES:

- 10.1** Asking permission and giving permission – an activity in two steps
- 10.2** Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, and the Sex Offender Registry
- 10.3** Being an Upstander
- 10.4** Homework



MATERIALS/TECHNOLOGY:

- Tokens (small prizes, healthy snacks, extra credit points)
- Interpersonal communication skill cues I TELL YOU and FACE
- Being an Upstander to Stop Sexual Harassment worksheet
- Assessment rubric



Revisit classroom ground rules and the Anonymous Question Box

(5 minutes)

Take a moment to check in on the ground rules. Ask if there are any questions or observations from **Lesson 1**. Remind students of the anonymous question box. If there were questions in the box, answer them. Remind students that the box will be available throughout the entire Human Growth and Development unit.



Activity 10.1: Asking Permission and Giving Permission – an activity in two steps (25 minutes)

Remind the group of the ground rules you have set together. Let students know that in this part of the lesson, you're going to focus on interpersonal communication. Explain to the group there are effective verbal and nonverbal ways to communicate to another person. These are:

Effective Verbal Communication: I TELL YOU ¹	
I	Identify feelings (thoughts, ideas)
T	Tell feelings (thoughts, ideas)
E	Express using I-statements
L	Look at the person you're speaking to
L	Listen to the response
Y	Your body language is appropriate
O	Open mind
U	Use assertive communication style

Effective Nonverbal Communication: FACE ²	
F	Facial expressions and body language
A	Attentive
C	Comfortable and confident
E	Eyes on speaker

Let the class know that now you're going to do an activity to practice effective verbal and nonverbal communication. Begin this activity by asking half of your students to turn to a neighbor and borrow a piece of paper. Likely, some students will not have

¹ Benes, S. & Alperin, H. (2016). The essentials of teaching health education: Curriculum, Instruction, and assessment. Human Kinetics: Champaign, IL.

² Ibid.

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paper to lend, other will happily provide paper, and some might not want to share paper.

Once they've completed that task, ask the students who asked for the paper: How did you ask for paper? Take notice of some of the following scenarios and, if not brought up, use the below questions as prompts.

- Did they say please? Thank you?
- Did they use hand gestures or just words?
- Did they just take it?
- Which method of asking was most successful?
- What did it feel like to ask for the paper using the **ITELLYOU** and **FACE** verbal and nonverbal skills?

Now, invite the students who were asked for paper to talk about their experience. How did they respond to the request?

- Did they say yes?
- Did they just hand over a piece of paper?
- Did anyone say yes because they felt like they were expected to say yes (after all, the teacher told half the class to ask the other half for paper)?
- What did it feel like to give the paper using the **ITELLYOU** and **FACE** verbal and nonverbal skills?

Let students know that this has been in exercise in **consent**. Consent is a voluntary, positive agreement between people to participate in some activity. Consent can be expressed by words or actions but should always be clear and freely given. It is the responsibility of the person asking the question to make sure they have consent before moving forward.

Explain that getting consent is an important part of being in a relationship with others, especially a sexual relationship. Although this is a skill they can use as they get older, there are also things that happen every day where they can practice communicating consent. Ask the class if they have any example of where consent might be needed in their daily lives. Some examples are:

- Holding hands
- Hugging
- Kissing
- Sharing phone number
- Publicly sharing pictures of each other

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No matter what consent is being sought for, respecting the answer someone gives, no matter the reason, is one way to make sure we're treating everyone with dignity and respect.

Now, separate students into two even groups and have them stand in two concentric circles, one inner circle – facing out, and one outer circle – facing in. Each person should be lined up directly across from someone else. Hand out tokens to the people in the inner circle (these could be extra credit points, stickers, small bags of healthy snacks, etc.).

Pull the group of students from the outside circle together, out of earshot from the other students. Explain that they are going to have three different rounds and will need to come back to you each round for instructions. Each time you talk, give them one of the three prompts listed below. When they return to the circle, they should move one person to the right so that they have a new partner for each of the three prompts.

Between prompts, allow some time to see how the inner circle responds.

- Prompt 1: Tell your partner how much you like the token they have. But do not ask for it.
- Prompt 2: Gently reach for what your partner has (no grabbing though)
- Prompt 3: Ask nicely to have what your partner is holding using an “I” statement.

Once all three prompts have been done, thank students for participating and ask everyone to sit down. With each class you can distribute the treats/stickers/points tokens evenly after this exercise. As a group, process the activity:

- What did you notice about the activity in relation to giving and getting consent?
- Did some of the directions take longer to do once you were back in the circle? Which ones? (Point out here that asking directly for what you want is clearer and often takes less time than expecting someone else to guess what you are thinking or feeling).
- For students on the outside circle, which of the three was the easiest?
- For students on the inside of the circle, which of the three was the easiest?
- How does this relate to asking to hold hands with someone you are interested in romantically?

Discuss why it is important to ask permission before touching other people. Be sure to emphasize that forgetting to ask permission, or not asking for permission at all, may be a violation of the other person if they are not in the mood to be hugged,

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touched, kissed, etc. You could get in trouble with the law if you touch someone sexually when it is unwanted. Later in this lesson you'll cover consent laws and the sex offender registry.

It's also important to remember that just because someone might have given consent to be touched one day, does not mean it is okay to do it every day – so asking for consent is a continuous process, not a “one and done.”

There are also times when people are unable to give consent or permission, even if it may seem like they are giving permission. Ask students to think about what types of situations might lead someone to be unable to consent? Potential answers include:

- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Being under the legal age of consent
- Having a cognitive disability that may make someone unable to consent

Talk about drugs and alcohol first and discuss the impact substances have on giving consent. Remind students that when a person is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, consent cannot be given. No one has the right to take advantage of someone who is intoxicated and should not assume consent has been given.

Briefly discuss the **age of consent** laws, explaining that the government has decided that a young person is unable to make their own decisions until a certain age. In Wisconsin, the legal age of consent is 18. Sexual contact or sexual intercourse with a person under the age of 18 years is considered a crime and such activity may result in prosecution for statutory rape, regardless of whether the people involved say the sexual activity was consensual (*Wis. Stat. sec. 948.02(1) and (2)*). It is possible for two individuals both under the age of 18 who willingly engage in intercourse to both be prosecuted for statutory rape, although this is rare.³

³ Age of Consent website. <https://www.ageofconsent.net/states/wisconsin>.



Activity 10.1: Interpersonal Communication Skill Cues I TELL YOU and FACE

Effective Verbal Communication: I TELL YOU ⁴	
I	Identify feelings (thoughts, ideas)
T	Tell feelings (thoughts, ideas)
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L	Look at the person you're speaking to
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⁴ Benes, S. & Alperin, H. (2016). The essentials of teaching health education: Curriculum, Instruction, and assessment. Human Kinetics: Champaign, IL.

⁵ Ibid.



Activity 10.2: Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, and the Sex Offender Registry (10 minutes)

Explain to students that making sexual comments or touching someone sexually without consent is called **sexual harassment** or **sexual assault**. Sexual harassment typically involves unwanted comments, gestures or attention that is intended to hurt, offend, or intimidate another person. Sexual assault is typically defined as unwanted physical sexual contact of any kind. Sexual harassment and sexual assault can be avoided if we remember that we never have permission to touch someone else or regard them in a sexual manner unless they have told us it is okay in that moment. In other words, consent must be sought and received each time.

Sexual harassment and sexual assault can often include conduct that is criminal in nature, such as rape, dating or domestic violence, and sexually motivated stalking.

When someone is convicted of a **sexual offense**, or an act of sexual harassment or assault that is illegal, they are typically added to the **Sex Offender Registry**. The sex offender registry represents many different violations related to sexual harassment and assault.

Each state has a sex offender registry. Someone who is on a sex offender registry is not legally allowed to work with children. There are strict laws about where sex offenders can live in any city. If the sexual offense for which they are convicted is a felony, they are unable to get financial aid for school, government loans, or even government housing. Being on the sex offender registry can impact someone's future and it follows the person for the rest of their life.

Let students know that the sex offender registry and age of consent laws are important for them to know about now. Remember, youth under 18 are unable to consent under the Wisconsin law, so youth under 18 who are sexually active, or who create or distribute sexually explicit photos of themselves or others, can legally be convicted of a sexual offense and placed on the sex offender registry. Let students know that this information is not intended to scare them, but that these laws exist to help protect young people. The sex offender registry also exists to help protect people from future harm.

It is important to know that nearly all adults that work in a school are required to report any sexual activity between students that are under the age of 18. Adults that are required to report sexual activity between students is called a **mandatory**

My Sexual Health: My Future

reporter. Mandatory reporters must also report emotional and physical abuse as well as emotional and physical neglect.

However, nurses (including school nurses) and doctors do not have this requirement; if they feel that the sexual contact was consensual between the students that were under age 18, they are not mandated to report it to the authorities. If you are sexually active and under 18, this is important for you. It is important so that you know you can access confidential sexual and reproductive health care without sexual activity being reported.



Activity 10.3: Being an Upstander (15 minutes)

Let the class know that they have the power to intervene if they see sexual harassment taking place, by being an **upstander**. An upstander is an individual who sees wrong and acts. Identifying, responding to and preventing sexual harassment is not always easy, but not impossible. Interrupting harassing behavior before it gets worse is part of being an upstander.

An upstander is a person that is not directly involved in a situation but recognizes when something is wrong and acts to make it right. When someone interrupts negative behavior, such as sexual harassment, sexual assault or bullying, they are called an upstander. Being an upstander does not mean risking your own health and safety. So, if you can't handle it alone, it's always okay to ask for help from someone else in the school.

Let students know that sexual harassment and assault is not the fault of the person on the receiving end. By being an upstander, there are actions that folks on the outside of a situation can take to stand up to sexual harassment or assault. Being an upstander helps the person who is experiencing sexual harassment or assault.

On the board, share ways to be an upstander, and ask the class to brainstorm other ways:

- Directly confronting the sexual harassment with assertive words.
- Tell the person committing the harassment to stop. Provide a reason why.
- Physically helping the person being sexually harassed to leave the situation in the moment (if you are not putting yourself in harm's way by doing so).
- Tell a trusted adult about the situation.
- What else?

Remind the class to use effective interpersonal communication such as **I TELL YOU** and **FACE** to support upstander behaviors.

Now to practice identifying sexual harassment and being an upstander, let the class know that together you will address scenarios to combat sexual harassment by using upstander behavior. Using the examples below, practice identifying sexual harassment and sexual assault and talk about whether or how to be an upstander in the situation. You can do this out loud as a whole group or have small groups discuss the concepts before coming back together to discuss as a class.

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Examples

- A. Throughout the school year, Student A repeatedly passes sexually explicit photographs to Student B during class. The photographs are offensive to Student B, and, consequently, Student B is unable to concentrate during class or focus on the subject.
- B. Two students who are dating walk down the hall smiling and holding hands.
- C. Students heckle another student with comments that are based on the student's sexual orientation (e.g., "gay students are not welcome at this table in the lunch room").
- D. Jay willingly kisses Jess on one occasion. When Jess subsequently attempts to kiss Jay again, Jay objects, but Jess proceeds to kiss Jay anyway.

Answers

- A. Sexual harassment
- B. Not sexual harassment
- C. Sexual harassment
- D. Sexual assault



Activity 10.4: Homework (5 minutes)

For homework, distribute the **Being an Upstander to Stop Sexual Harassment Worksheet** and ask students to hand it in during your next class. Use the accompanying teacher assessment rubric to assess learning.



Activity 10.4: Being an Upstander to Stop Sexual Harassment

Instructions: Read the scene below about sexual harassment and fill in the blanks. Please write clearly, as you will hand this in when you are done.

Scene: Sam has had a thing for Max for the last couple of weeks. When teachers are around, Sam leaves Max alone, but the minute teachers aren't looking Sam tells Max how hot she is and comments on her body. At first Max was flattered, but lately she has just tried to ignore him. One day, Sam tells Max to go home tonight and text him a sexy picture of herself. Max says she doesn't want to, but Sam keeps asking, saying that Max is a prude if she doesn't do it. Other students overhear, and one student shoots Max a sympathetic look and tells Sam, "Will you knock it off? Max said she doesn't want to do it."

1. Who is the upstander in this scene?

2. Who is the student who is being bullied?

3. How does Sam bully that student?

4. What does the upstander do to make the harassment stop?

My Sexual Health: My Future

5. What other upstander skills could an upstander have used to help stop the harassment?

6. If you were watching this scenario unfold, how could you have used upstander skills, and communication skills like I TELL YOU and FACE to intervene?

7. If Sam had continued to harass Max, the situation was reported, and Sam was convicted of a sexual offense, what could be some of the consequences?



Activity 10.4: Being an Upstander to Stop Sexual Harassment: Teacher Assessment

Student name:			
Learning Outcome	Not Present	Developing	On Target
Demonstrate clear communication techniques in relationship to seeking and giving consent.	Student participation and work reflects minimal to no understanding of the objective.	Student participation and work reflects some understanding of the objective.	Student participation and work reflects thorough understanding of the objective.
Identify reasons why someone may be placed on the sex offender registry.	Student participation and work reflects minimal to no understanding of the objective.	Student participation and work reflects some understanding of the objective.	Student participation and work reflects thorough understanding of the objective.
Demonstrate upstander behavior that can help prevent sexual harassment.	Student participation and work reflects minimal to no understanding of the objective.	Student participation and work reflects some understanding of the objective.	Student participation and work reflects thorough understanding of the objective.
Teacher comments:			