

HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT INTRODUCTION: COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY BY BEING RESPECTFUL AND INCLUSIVE



LESSON INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the unit and discuss why human sexuality can be a challenging subject to learn and discuss in class. The class will set ground rules for being respectful and inclusive, for treating others with dignity, and for the effective use of interpersonal communication skills.



OBJECTIVES:

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

- Identify ways to be respectful and inclusive



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.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to use health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.

National Sexuality Education Standards

- **ID.8.IC.1** Communicate respectfully with and about people of all gender identities, gender expressions and sexual orientations.
- **PS.8.ADV.1** Advocate for safe environments that encourage dignified and respectful treatment of everyone.
- **PS.8.SM.1** Describe ways to treat others with dignity and respect.

GRADE: Middle School

LENGTH OF LESSON: 45-60 min

SEQUENCE: 1



ACTIVITIES:

- 1.1** Introduction of the Unit
Identify Challenges and Create
- 1.2** Human Growth and Development
Classroom Ground Rules/
Expectations
- 1.3** Anonymous Question Box



MATERIALS/TECHNOLOGY:

- White board/Smart Board
- Large paper
- Markers
- Quarter sheets of blank paper



Activity 1.1: Introduction of the Unit (20 minutes)

Tell the class they will learn about human sexuality for the next couple of weeks. Explain the task today is to identify ways to be respectful and inclusive with the goal of agreeing upon ground rules that will allow students to feel comfortable and safe and encourage everyone to participate freely while treating others with dignity. Overall, the goal is to practice effective interpersonal communication skills, and encourage students to stand up for the respect, inclusion and dignity of their peers, while generating a list of rules for the human growth and development unit.

Define the following terms for the class: inclusive, respectful and dignity; answer any questions that come up about the definitions.

Inclusive: accepting all ways of being, not assuming everyone is like you

Respectful: showing deference to others, honoring their perspective

Dignity: treating others as if they are worthy, honored, or esteemed

Explain to the class that being inclusive, respectful and treating others with dignity is relevant to individual health as well as the health of others because we're all here to learn together about important topics relating to human growth and development, and all students have a right to learn about these things in a judgement-free space. Let students know the goal of this first lesson is for the class to:

- work together to establish the ground rules that all can agree upon that will enable everyone to feel free to learn in a judgement-free environment, and
- to encourage students to take leadership in advocating for those ground rules to be upheld.

Divide the class into small groups establishing one person to record group responses. Pose the question to the class: *Why is it hard to talk about sex and sexuality in school?*

Ask each group to generate a list of reasons why it can be challenging for young people to talk seriously about sex and human sexuality, remembering to consider what they just learned about treating others with dignity, respect and being inclusive.

Reconvene the class and have the recorders read the lists aloud, describing the challenges and overcome them by being inclusive and treating others with dignity and respect.



Activity 1.2: Identify Challenges and Create Human Growth and Development Classroom Ground Rules/Expectations

(15 minutes)

Note: You may already have classroom ground rules/norms/expectations. If so, refer to them here, and give students the opportunity to make additions given the topic of human growth and development.

Beginning with the lists of challenges, have each of the groups generate a set of four or five ground rules that will help to overcome these challenges. Remind students to state their rules positively, e.g. “Please walk” vs. “Don’t run”. Have each group read their rules out loud. List the responses on the board (with duplicates checked so that class can see that they were suggested by more than one group.)

Identify the rules mentioned most often. If class rules exist, compare those to the list of expectations already in place. Provide a general overview of the topics that will be covered throughout the unit (referring to the scope and sequence table). Have students think about how these ground rules will guide their behavior and participation throughout the unit.

Ask a student volunteer to write the rules on large paper for permanent display in the classroom.

Some sample rules: (Do not read this entire list to class before they do the activity!)

- Agree to disagree
- Listen, instead of waiting for your turn to speak
- Use respectful, courteous language and medically accurate terminology
- Respect others’ opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and cultures
- Respect privacy: keep personal, private business of self and others confidential
- Treat others’ comments/questions seriously
- Get the facts straight
- Show interest in others’ ideas through supportive words and body language
- Protect the space by encouraging your peers to follow these guidelines

Once the list has been generated, have the class read it out loud together or ask a volunteer to read it out loud. Ask the group if they can agree to uphold these guidelines while communicating with one another, and if they will stand up for their peers in this space, persuading their peers to avoid bullying or stigmatizing others based on personal characteristics, opinions, or aspects of sexuality. Once a level of consensus is reached, thank students for agreeing to practice healthy communication and support one another.



Activity 1.3: Anonymous Question Box (10 minutes)

Setting up a box where students can deposit questions anonymously is a good idea. It enables students to ask their sensitive questions without fear of judgment and enables other students to also learn the answer. If you are setting up an anonymous question box, let students know where it is and how to access it.

To reinforce the question box, pass out quarter sheets of paper and have all students write a question or write “I have no questions” so that ALL students have a slip to put in the box. Collect everyone’s papers. Every couple of days check the box and answer questions at the beginning or end of class. If you are unsure or uncomfortable yourself, read the questions and do some research BEFORE you answer them in front of the class.

Homework

Let students know you hope as you go through the unit together, there will be things they want to go home and talk over with a trusted adult in their lives. Suggest that to begin this process they go home and discuss with a trusted adult the topic from activity one: why it can be difficult for young people to talk about sex and human sexuality. Encourage students to speak with their trusted adult about what ideas they have for overcoming the challenges, communicating effectively about sexuality, and advocating for the dignity and respect of all people.