

GROUP ACTIVITY

Gender Role Play: What 's Going On?

*Adapted from Exercise 11 in Gender or Sex: Who Cares?
Skills-building Resource Pack on Gender and Reproductive Health
for Adolescents and Youth Workers (de Bruyn, 2001).*

Objective

To guide participants through an analysis of situations involving gender norms, relationships, and sex, and to encourage them to think of ways to reduce possible risks.

Minimum Time

30 minutes

Materials Needed

Paper and pens

Instructions

- Ask the group to choose a situation from the following list or to suggest situations that are relevant in their community:
 - Young man who is pressured to have sex by his friends even though he wants to postpone this experience**
 - Young woman who has been sexually abused as a child; an older man who offers her money or gifts**
 - Man approached in a bar by a woman who wants to have sex with him; he is willing but does not have any condoms**
 - Sex worker who wants to use the female condom with her client but he refuses**
 - Man who wants to use a condom but fears loss of trust within the relationship if he suggests it**
 - Wife who wants a child; her husband frequently visits sex workers and she is afraid of getting an STI**
 - Wife who wants to postpone pregnancy but whose husband does not like contraceptives that interrupt "the moment"**
- Ask them to design a 3-minute role-play using words, song, dance or just body movement, that describes what words or actions could lead up to sex occurring in their scene.
- Tell the group members that they should each take roles – the main character, the person(s) she/he must deal with, friends, family, etc.
- Ask the group to act out their scene and then answer the following questions for presentation to the other participants:
 - 1. What elements in the scene posed risks to the main characters' sexual and reproductive health?**
 - 2. Why did the characters have sex or not? What were the positive and negative things (if any) about them having sex?**
 - 3. Did the scene illustrate a circumstance in which pregnancy or HIV/STI infection could be prevented? Why or why not?**
 - 4. What factors influenced the main character's control or lack of control over the situation?**
 - 5. What could the main characters or persons around them have done to reduce sexual and reproductive health risks?**
- After the small group presents their role-play and answers to the questions, ask the other participants if they can suggest any actions the main character could have taken to ensure that s/he did not do something s/he did not want to do.

Summary

- Emphasize that women often have less decision-making power regarding sexual activity than their partners – even when they are married and considered adults.
- Point out that many factors can influence people’s decisions about complying with gender-based expectations and about when and how to have sex, not the least of which are pressures and reactions from other people around them. This is especially the case for adolescents who often respond to adult or peer pressures regarding their decisions. It is important for young people to be clear about what they want and don’t want and that they find friends and adults who will support them in their decisions.

Possible Adaptation to the Activity

- Instead of presenting the participants with possible characters and scenes, ask them to think of situations in their community that lead to sexual and reproductive health risks.
- Next ask them to design a role-play about one situation, explaining why they chose that scene (for example, it happens often in the community, it is the most frequent situation faced by young women or young men, it is a situation that concerns the community most).
- Then ask them to answer the following questions:
 - 1. What elements in the scene posed risks to the main characters’ sexual and reproductive health?**
 - 2. Why did the characters have sex or not? What were the positive and negative things (if any) about them having sex?**
 - 3. Did the scene illustrate a circumstance in which pregnancy or HIV/STI infection could be prevented? Why or why not?**
 - 4. What factors influenced the main character’s control or lack of control over the situation?**
 - 5. What could the main characters or persons around them have done to reduce sexual and reproductive health risks?**