



Creating Relationships

by Paul Kivel

Objectives

This session will enable young women to:

- identify what brings them pleasure
- recognize their right to intimacy
- understand their personal conditions for intimacy
- discuss aspects of women's sexuality and how it is socially constructed
- design healthy conditions for being intimate with another person

Agenda

1. Check-in
2. Positive Sexuality
3. Conditions for Intimacy
4. Checkout

Session Outline

1. Check-in

Ask group members to talk about what people, things, or situations in their lives make them happy or give them pleasure.

2. Positive Sexuality

Explain:

Part of creating our future is creating the kinds of relationships we want to have with other people. The next two sessions are going to look at relationships. To have good relationships we have to know what we want and what we won't put up with-what gives us pleasure and what hurts us. We'll look at sexual feelings, at relationships with men, then at relationships with women. Finally, we'll look at creating family for ourselves.

When so much of the talk we hear about sex concerns unwanted babies, birth control, and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases-all of the potentially negative aspects of sexual activity-it can be hard to value one's own sexual feelings. Being told all the



time to just say no to sex can make it hard to figure out when to say yes. It can be particularly difficult when people have different religious or cultural beliefs about what is appropriate sexual activity and what is not.

Everyone is different. We have different bodies, different feelings, different experiences, and different beliefs. All of these factors contribute to our sexuality. What brings pleasure to one person might be a turnoff to another. Consenting adults have the right to experience sexual pleasure.

Ask:

What are some positive aspects of sexual activity?

Encourage group members to share openly as much as they are willing-their feelings about situations, circumstances, or other aspects of sexual expression. Be sensitive to cultural differences among group members and to differences in sexual experience and age. By this time, group members should be able to listen to one another's words without judgment or overt criticism. You might need to remind them of the agreements to reinforce this.

Younger women may not have had much, or any, sexual experience but probably have lots of thoughts and feelings about it. It is important for group members to think about their feelings and to hear others talk about theirs.

If no discussion is forthcoming, ask them why it is difficult to talk about these issues in the group.

3. Conditions for Intimacy

Explain:

Every adult has the right to decide for herself, without pressure from anyone else, whether she wants an intimate relationship and what she wants from an intimate relationship-what her conditions are for closeness with another person.

If someone loves and respects you, he or she will let you decide-without pressure-how intimate you want to be with him or her and whether, when, and how you want to be sexual with him or her.

Tell group members to turn to, "Conditions for Sexual Intimacy." Give group members a few minutes to write or think about the statements.

Discuss the following questions. If the group is large enough, split it up into groups of three or four so that each person has a chance to speak and be heard. Then bring the group back together to talk about what conditions members need for intimacy.



Ask:

- What are your conditions for intimacy?
- What do you need to feel?
- What do you need from your partner?
- What needs to be in place for you to decide to be intimate with another person?

Explain:

Women continue to assert their right to sexual pleasure, for control over their bodies, and for the right to decide what kinds of relationships they want to create. Sexual harassment, sexual assault, and partner violence, as well as poverty and lack of health care and educational opportunities, often make it difficult for women to achieve those goals. Educational opportunities, good-paying jobs in safe environments, female and male allies, safety from

assault, information about sexuality and birth control, resources, and strong networks of women help to make the goals achievable.

4. Checkout

Ask group members to talk about how it felt to discuss sexuality and intimacy during this session.

Please send comments, feedback, resources, and suggestions for distribution to paul@paulkivel.com. Further resources are available at www.paulkivel.com.



Conditions for Sexual Intimacy

These are my conditions for intimacy. I will respect myself and my partner by trying to make sure I am comfortable and ready to be close to another person.

(Add any conditions that are important for you. Cross out any that don't apply.)

I need to feel good about myself.

I need to feel good about my partner.

I need to have reliable information about sex and birth control.

We will have talked about birth control and safe sex.

We will have agreed to use birth control and practice safe sex.

There will be no pressure to do anything I am uncomfortable doing.

I know my partner respects my feelings, my body, and my limits.

I have the right to say no whenever I am uncomfortable-without retaliation. My partner also has this right.

Neither of us will gossip to others about what is personal or intimate between us.

If I am disrespected, put down, threatened, hit, or forced to have sex I will leave or get help.

I will not disrespect, put down, threaten, hit, or force my partner to have sex.
