

Group Discussion – Postponing Intercourse vs. Having Intercourse

Objective:	Participants will list reasons why young people choose to postpone intercourse or have intercourse.
Structure:	Large group.
Time:	20 minutes.
Materials:	Flipchart or blackboard.

Note: Presenting the issues in this way helps facilitators avoid preaching about the values of abstinence and offers participants an opportunity to clarify their own values towards such topics. Asking participants to consider why **young people in general** would choose one course of action over another puts them in the position of “objective observer,” so that they do not feel obliged to share their personal beliefs or opinions.

This activity can be completed as a large group, or divide the class into smaller groups for discussion. The smaller groups will need someone to record their responses, and someone to report when the large group reconvenes. You can discuss each response as it is raised, and extend the activity by getting participants to decide for themselves, which reasons for having intercourse are “good enough” reasons.

Procedure

1. On the board or flipchart paper, make a simple chart, as illustrated below. Have participants **brainstorm** about the reasons why young people would choose to postpone having intercourse, and then about why youth would choose to have intercourse. Sample responses are included:

Reasons why young people choose to postpone having intercourse...	Reasons why young people choose to have intercourse...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious/cultural beliefs • Not ready • Not wanting to hide something from parents • Avoid guilt, fear, and disappointment • No worries about STIs or pregnancy (because abstinence is the only method that is 100% effective in preventing STIs and pregnancy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Hormones”/desire/curiosity • To demonstrate love for partner • Feeling pressured by your partner/or others • “social” pressure, feeling that everyone is doing it, and you’re not quite normal if you’re not • Wanting to feel loved/wanted • Feels good • To get someone to love you, to prevent the relationship from ending

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More time for friends and other activities • More time for the relationship to develop • Concern about reputation • Personal belief that sex belongs only in a certain kind of relationship • Belief that sex too soon can hurt a relationship (with a partner, friends, or parents) • Had sex once before and decided s/he is not ready for a sexual relationship (for any of the above reasons: just because someone says “yes” to sex once does not mean s/he has to say “yes” again) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of alcohol and/or drugs • Not knowing how to say “no”, just “going along” • Both partners really love each other, and want to express it this way • Those questioning their sexual orientation may have sex in an attempt to “figure out” if they are attracted to opposite or same sex partners
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2. Remind participants that MOST young people their age are NOT having intercourse! According to the Canada Youth and AIDS Study (1988), only 12% of Grade 7 boys and 8% of Grade 7 girls have had intercourse at least once.

(Adapted with permission from: Region of Ottawa-Carleton (2000) *Ottawa-Carleton School-Based Sexual Health Program*. Ottawa: Author.)