

Weiler Health Education Center

Big Changes, Big Choices
Growth and Development
Grades 6-8

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Program Objectives

Program Description:

Learn to protect reproductive health, review the physical, emotional and social changes during puberty and explore consequences of intimate contact.

Standards:

PA 10.1.6ade; 10.2.6a; 10.1.6be; 10.1.9ae; 10.2.6/9ad

NJ 2.1.6abd; 2.1.8abd; 2.2.6b; 2.2.8b; 2.4.6ab; 2.4.8ab

Objectives:

Upon completion of this program, the student will:

1. Name 3 physical, emotional and/or social changes that occur during and after puberty
2. List 2 reasons to support the importance of taking care of reproductive health
3. Identify 3 physical, social and/or emotional consequences associated with early sexual contact

Terms:

cancer – a disease of unhealthy cell growth

cervix – the lower end of the uterus

egg cell - female sex cell; it contains $\frac{1}{2}$ of the genetic information for a human life.

fallopian tube - the tube which conducts the egg cells from the ovary to the uterus. It is the area in which conception is most likely to occur.

gynecologist – doctor who takes care of a woman’s reproductive health

herpes – a viral infection causing blisters

HIV - acronym for Human Immunodeficiency Virus

hormones - chemical messengers that influence changes in the body.

hygiene – practicing cleanliness

menstruation - the shedding of the soft, nest-like blood filled lining of the uterus

mood swing - quick change of a person’s feelings from one extreme to another, e.g. happy to sad

nocturnal emission - the male body’s natural process for the elimination of extra amounts of semen that the body cannot store



Relationship Journal

Objective:

To define and integrate the desirable characteristics of a healthy relationship into your daily lives through a daily reflection in a relationship journal.

Directions:

1. Create a notebook to be brought to class everyday and handed in periodically for a grade.
2. Put name, class number and instructors name on front cover.
3. Every day, for the first ten minutes of class, there will be a reflection topic on the board for you to journal about.
4. Every journal entry should be at least one page long and describe the following:
 - i. Give your definition of that characteristic
 - ii. Describe a past experience with that characteristic
 - iii. Outline a plan to further integrate that characteristic into your life
5. Journals will be collected periodically and checked for completeness.

Sample Topics:

Dating

Hooking Up

Intimacy

Love

Respect/Disrespect

Honesty

Tension

Conflict

Inexperience



Who's Infected?

Objective:

The spread of sexually transmitted diseases among teens is growing very rapidly and yet, irresponsible behavior continues. In this assignment, students will research the prevalence of certain STIs within their demographic and analyze that information in the context of the world they live in.

Directions:

1. This assignment can be done as individuals or as a group.
2. Have the student identify their demographic. (ex: Age, Sex, Ethnicity, Location)
3. Research to prevalence of the following STIs among their demographic:
 - a. HIV/AIDS
 - b. Genital Herpes
 - c. Chlamydia
 - d. Gonorrhea
 - e. HPV

If they cannot find their specific demographic, then have them use the closest one to them.

4. Graph out the results using the most appropriate graphing technique.
5. Present findings to the class.
6. **For added difficulty, have the students compare their numbers to nationalized statistics.

Discussion Questions:

1. Were you surprised by the results?
2. Were there any results that you had difficulty locating? Why do you think statistics are hard to find for this disease?
3. Are there any STIs that are more prevalent in your age group than another? Why do you think this is?
4. After completing this research, do you think you will take more, less, or equal precautions to protect yourself? Why?



Communication Within Relationships

We talk a lot about using something other than our voice to help us when we communicate. This activity will require the group to think about alternatives to talking when they communicate.

Activity:

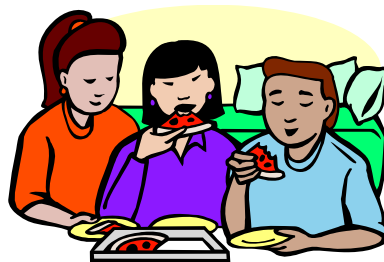
Tell the group that the object of this activity is to form a single line with the person whose birthday is closest to January 1st in the front and the person closest to December 31st in the back and everyone else in birthday order in between. No one however is allowed to talk during this activity. They may use any method of communicating except for the mouthing of words. Give the group 1 minute to discuss various means of communicating without using their mouths before calling for silence. Allow no more than 5 minutes for them to put themselves into birthday order.

Discussion:

What made the activity difficult?
What were some of the ways you used to communicate?
What were some of the problems?
What can this activity teach us about communication?
Are some methods more effective than others?
Did any leaders emerge during the activity?

Wrap-up:

Establishing boundaries within relationships is sometimes difficult because sometimes neither partner is willing or able to speak up. This activity shows there are other ways to communicate and set boundaries but will also show that verbal communication is usually the most effective.



Note to teacher- the following letter is intended for your students to take home as a follow-up for the days program. Please copy and distribute as you see fit in order to enable caregivers of students to reinforce the lesson of this program effectively.



Weller Health Education Center

Dear Caregiver,

Your child has participated in a program called “Big Changes, Big Choices” presented by the Weller Health Education Center. This program talked about the changes (chemically, physically, emotionally, mentally, intellectually, and socially) that coincide with puberty. The educators reviewed reproductive health and the daily health habits that the students should engage in to maintain reproductive and overall health. The educators introduced the topic of intimate contact as a continuum, encompassing varying degrees of behaviors, and that all intimate contact carries the risk of consequences be it social, emotional or physical and each is explored with students. The Weller Health Education Center encourages students to practice strategies for establishing personal boundaries in relationships and making safe choices with respect to personal health.

As parents, it is difficult to watch our children grow up and see them as anything but children. But teens today are growing up faster than before. Each day teens learn about violence and sex through the media and their peers. However, their sources don’t always have the correct facts. Thus, it is important that parents talk to their students about sex, especially Sexually Transmitted Infections. One out of every four teenagers will get an STD, even though they think they know how to protect themselves. Studies found that adolescents (10- to 19-year-olds) are at higher risk for acquiring STDs for a number of reasons, including limited access to preventive and regular health care and physiologically increased susceptibility to infection. Fortunately, data has shown that over the years there has been a decrease in risky sexual behavior among US teens. You can help your kids stay safe just by talking to them and sharing some important information about STDs and prevention.

Below you will find some sample activities to guide you in taking steps to improve your family’s health. These activities can help to continue the message started today in our program. For additional resources you are welcome to utilize the parent, teacher and student resource links found on our website at

www.wellercenter.org

Sample Activities:

1. Encourage your children to come to you with any questions they may have. Don’t be shocked or angry with what they may ask - that may lead to embarrassment or fear. To further educate yourself you can refer to www.kidshealth.org.
2. Rumors and reputations can be a scary consequence for students. Don’t neglect these social consequences in your discussions at home.
3. Explain that the only sure way to remain STD-free is to not have sex or intimate contact with anyone outside of a committed, monogamous relationship like marriage.
4. Make your kids feel that they’re in charge of this talk, not you, by getting their opinions on whatever you discuss.

Yours in good health
Weller Health Education Center