



SEXUAL HEALTH GROUP WORK

Providing sexual health information to young people in groups helps create positive attitudes toward prevention, testing and treatment.

This approach can counter negative messages. It invites young people to take responsibility for providing their peers with positive messages and strategies for sexual health and wellbeing.

Group work uses proven, creative tools to encourage young people to canvass options, practise skills and explore values.

The resource kit includes a range of activities that use group dynamics to explore an issue or generate ideas. The quality of these activities often depends on questioning, debriefing and reporting during and after the activity. You are encouraged to practise group work skills and obtain training in this if possible.

Planning your sessions

It's important to plan for group work, including worker roles, materials needed and writing questions that explore the desired learning outcome. You will need to establish how the learning outcome will be measured or observed. Do a risk assessment to ensure participants are safe, that the activities do not trigger negative behaviour, and that facilitators are able to deliver key messages.

Brainstorming

Use simple questions to develop lists of relevant words, ideas or strategies. Brainstorms invite a spontaneous response and can generate plenty of ideas. These can be prioritised, discussed or used in further activities. They are excellent for generating new ideas and allowing young people to be heard.

Grouping and voting

Once a list has been brainstormed it may be useful to prioritise these ideas into groups according to importance, accuracy or theme. You can do this by discussion or voting processes such as providing post-it notes to each participant and inviting them to stick them next to their chosen items.

Warm-ups and icebreakers

Warm-ups can be important for establishing group norms and opening sexual health concepts and conversations. Make warm-up activities light hearted, relevant to sexual health and connected to participant's lives. They are about opening up a safe space for sexual health discussions. Some of the simpler games from the resource kit such as alphabet soup are ideal warm-up activities.

Group agreements

It is important to engage young people in setting the group norms, making them responsible for their own behaviour and ensuring the group is safe for everyone. You can appeal to young people's sense of social justice to establish appropriate 'rules'. These should include non-judgement and respect for diversity.

Questioning and reframing

You may choose to develop additional questions to those in the resource kit to respond to local needs or specific issues. Try to anticipate participant responses so you can develop follow-up questions or provide timely information.

Reframing questions invites participants to explore ideas from a different perspective. This may involve shifting from negative to positive language, envisioning a different future or asking participants to more fully describe the concept. This can be as simple as asking participants: "What does that look like?"

Small groups and pairs

It can be helpful to break young people into small groups or pairs to work through a wider range of ideas, respond to different learning styles and give each participant more of a voice than in the group work session. Small groups generate diverse solutions to the same problem and provide the opportunity for participants to practice peer-to-peer learning by reporting back to the larger group.

Values continuums

Values continuums engage young people's sense of justice by asking them to respond to statements by agreeing, disagreeing or placing themselves somewhere along the continuum between those two positions. It is vital that any statements used in this activity have reasonable points to be made about all positions on the continuum – it is not a useful tool for exploring factual information or specific behaviour.

Skills practice

Providing young people with scenarios or role-plays and inviting responses can help them develop and practice new strategies to negotiate safer sex and consent, make decisions about their values, and determine what they expect in a healthy sexual relationship. If young people are reluctant to role-play, their responses could be recorded using cartoons, stories or pictures.