

# **SESSION 6: HOW SERIOUS IS THE THREAT TO ME?**

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Participants will perceive the threat of HIV and AIDS as real.
2. Participants will confront the issue of death from AIDS.
3. The adolescents in the group will be encouraged to think of death in terms of what they want to accomplish in their lives before dying.
4. Participants will recognize that death is not to be equated with sex.

## **RATIONALE:**

Even with new drugs on the market and people with AIDS living longer, death is still the eventual outcome. Consequently death will be mentioned and should be addressed to help adolescents practice safer sex. On the one hand, by making death a taboo, it becomes more frightening. On the other hand, group leaders want to avoid traumatizing adolescents.

For these reasons it is important to allow adolescents to express fears and anxieties about death while concentrating on living a high quality, fulfilling life. This training encourages participants to think about death in terms of what they want to accomplish in life before they die and to examine what they are doing now to achieve their goals. Emphasis is placed on the potential adolescents have and on how to use that potential.

Furthermore it is important to confront the thinking that equates HIV with death and sex with HIV; so that death and sex become linked in an unwholesome manner. Also it is not appropriate to believe that scare tactics will increase condom use. This belief is a fallacy.

## **PROCEDURES:**

1. Introduce the group members and have each share one wish for the future. Then review homework and what happened between sessions, also taking a reading on the Feeling Thermometer.
2. Pretend that participants are at a party, selecting a sexual partner. The name tags used secretly indicate that two of the people are HIV positive. Explore the consequences of participants' selections and exposure to HIV.
3. Expose participants to death by writing their own obituaries which state what they achieved in their life-time and who they left.
4. Explore their deepest hopes for a happy future through a relaxation technique, and then examine what they are doing now to use their strengths and resources in moving toward their dreams.
5. Have two teams try to come up with sexual situations that were free of any concern about death or disease.
6. Build the group through tokens and appreciating each other.
7. Assign homework related to making a commitment to doing something in the next month that moves them toward their goals.

## **MATERIALS:**

Name tags with one female's and one male's tag having a tiny flower on it.  
Blank cards on which to write the obituaries.  
Marking pens and newsprint.

## **NOTE TO THE GROUP LEADER ABOUT ALTERNATIVE EXERCISES**

There are several exercises that also enable youths to explore how much they are at risk. Some of the exercises are described below so that you might substitute or add an alternative exercise, as you wish.

Alternative 1: Have a 3 x 5 card for each participant. One card has a "d" on it. Twenty per cent of the cards have a "c" on them. Twenty-five percent have a "o" on them, and twenty-five percent have an "s" on them. Pass out the cards, discretely giving the "d" card to someone with a strong sense of confidence, making sure the person does not think you have singled her or him out.

Ask the group to mingle and socialize for two minutes. Then have them to discuss in pairs "The effect of rock groups on how teenagers act sexually." For example, "Does Madonna influence teenage sexual attitudes?"

After two minutes, ask them to sign each other's cards, find a new partner and discuss: "How being pregnant affected someone you know." (No names used, please.)

After two minutes, ask them to sign each other's cards, find a new partner, and discuss: "What are the most important things they look for in a boyfriend or girl friend?"

After two minutes, ask them to sign each other's cards and return to their seats. Now ask the person who has the "d" card to stand. Indicate that this person is HIV positive. Ask that person to read the names of the people on his or her card. State that those people are now HIV positive. Ask them to read the name of the people on their cards. Have them stand up and state that they too are now HIV positive. Ask them to read the names on their cards and have the new people stand. They too are HIV positive. Keep going until everyone is standing. Everyone is infected.

BUT everyone with a "c" on their card can sit down because they used a condom or dental dam every time they had sex. AND people with an "o" on their cards can sit down because they had sex without vaginal or anal intercourse and without oral sex. They practiced "outcourse" which means their sexual acts did not include an exchange of body fluids. Finally, standing people with an "s" on their cards can sit down because they are "single" or by choice not in a relationship and enjoy being on their own.

Explain that just by talking about HIV, like the group did, HIV cannot be transmitted. Ask the group to discuss what happened and how they felt getting HIV. Also ask them to take readings on their "Feeling Thermometer."

Alternative 2: Ask the group who they knew who died from AIDS. Then have them describe these people and what these people meant to them.

Alternative 3: Pass out a card to each person. There are two copies of each card. The cards are as follows: 1) "You have never had intercourse. You do not have HIV." 2) "You once got semen or vaginal fluid in your mouth. You are HIV positive." 3) "You have had vaginal intercourse with a condom. You are not HIV positive." 4) "You have had vaginal intercourse without a condom. You are HIV positive." 5) You got drunk and can't remember what happened. Later you found out you had vaginal intercourse. You are HIV positive."

Explain to the group that their task is to find out who is HIV positive. But they can only ask each person three questions. And they cannot ask, "Are you HIV positive?" The questions must be stated so that the person can answer either "Yes" or "No"—nothing else.

Have the group try to find out who is HIV positive. After three questions have been asked of each person, ask each participant to guess who is HIV positive. Then reveal the status of each person. Discuss how people felt being HIV positive and what happened during the questioning. Ask for "Feeling Thermometer" readings.

Alternative 4: This alternative relates to dealing with death. Ask the group members to imagine that they had a year to live. What would make the last year of their life pleasant and rewarding? Have them think of three things. Go

around and have each person describe those three things. Then discuss what was important to them and how they felt imagining that they had one year to live. Get "Feeling Thermometer readings.

### **Exercise 1: Introducing and Reviewing**

GROUP LEADER SAYS

Today we are going to look at how much of a threat HIV and its consequences are to you personally.

First, however, I would like you to introduce yourself by telling us your name and tell us what your one wish would be for the future.

In other words if you could have one good thing happen to you in the future, what would it be?

I'll start.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I would like \_\_\_\_\_ (MAKE IT REAL).

HAVE THE GROUP INTRODUCE THEMSELVES AND TELL THEIR WISH.

What did you do between the last session and today that helped keep you safe from HIV?

You could also mention something you did that makes you pleased.

Here are tokens for everyone.

ENCOURAGE REPORTING AND GIVE TOKENS: CATCH SOMEONE DOING SOMETHING GOOD.

At the end of the last session on feelings I gave you a homework assignment: to take a situation that you went through, put it on the Feeling Thermometer, figure out how your body felt, and say what emotion you felt.

Also you were to figure out what you would do and rate that in terms of practicing safer sex.

And then there were some situations on the Homework Form to rate for feelings and actions.

Can you tell me how that worked and what you came up with?

ENCOURAGE RESPONSES AND GIVE OUT TOKENS FOR REPORTING, LISTENING, AND SUPPORTING EACH OTHER.

Thanks for those good ideas.

How do you feel now according to the Feeling Thermometer?

Remember that 100 is highly uncomfortable and 0 is completely comfortable.

HAVE EACH PERSON INDICATE WHERE THEY ARE NOW AND GIVE OUT TOKENS.

That was great!

### **Exercise 2: How Much of a Threat Is HIV?**

Let's pretend that you are at a party.

Each of you has a name tag to help you know who the others are.

PASS OUT THE NAME TAGS. ONE FEMALE'S NAME TAG AND ONE MALE'S NAME TAG HAS A SMALL FLOWER ON IT. DON'T MENTION THE FLOWERS OR ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT THEM IF THEY ARE NOTICED.

Go around and meet each other.

While you are meeting people, decide who you want to have sex with after the party is over.

Tonight is going to be a big night; so pick your partner.

ALLOW ABOUT FIVE MINUTES FOR MINGLING AND DECIDING.

Did you decide who you wanted to have sex with after the party?

Two people here have a little flower on their name tag.

Those people are HIV positive.

They didn't know it, but they are.

ALLOW TIME FOR PARTICIPANTS TO DISCOVER WHO HAS THE FLOWER ON THEIR NAME TAGS.

If you had sex with them, you may have the HIV.

How do you feel now?

GO AROUND ENCOURAGING REPORTS OF FEELINGS AND COMMENTS.

### **Exercise 3: Death and AIDS**

I want to start with a little scene to introduce this next topic.

Who will play Curly and who will play Jud?

SELECT VOLUNTEERS AND GIVE THEM THE SCRIPTS.

Why don't you start reading.

#### Jud and Curly

JUD: Curly, did you hear about Frank?

CURLY: What's that?

JUD: He just found out that he's HIV positive.

CURLY: Oh, man! That's terrible! He's our best friend. How does he feel?

JUD: He's worried all the time.

CURLY: I would be too. I'd be scared to death.

JUD: You don't understand what he means. Every time he gets a cold or feels an ache somewhere he thinks it's the beginning of AIDS. He never used to pay attention to stuff like that. Now every little pain is a big deal.

CURLY: Man, I'm so sorry. There's got to be something we can do. What can we do to help him, Jud?

JUD: I don't know. I keep worrying about myself.

CURLY: What do you mean?

JUD: I keep thinking that I'm next.

THE END

That was great!

Thanks a lot.

GIVE OUT TOKENS. ASK THE ACTORS HOW THEY FELT.

How did you feel in that scene?

GET FEELING THERMOMETER READINGS.

What about the rest of you—how did you feel?

GET FEELING THERMOMETER READINGS.

What were your feelings about—what were they in reaction to?

DISCUSS.

Getting HIV can become a very personal thing for you and your friends.

If a person gets HIV, the virus may weaken their immune system—that's the system within the body which fights off infections.

If the virus seriously weakens the immune system, the person may get one of the infections that makes up AIDS.

Right now there is no cure for AIDS.

People live longer with some of the new drugs, but in the end they die from AIDS.

It may take seven to ten years after becoming HIV positive for the signs of AIDS to show up.

Think about what you would want to accomplish in the next ten years.

ALLOW ABOUT ONE MINUTE FOR REFLECTION.

An obituary is what they write about people and put in the paper after they die.

It usually tells what they achieved in their life time and who they left behind—a husband or wife or partner, brothers and sisters, children.

It might go something like this:

Billy Jones died yesterday. He was 33 years old. He is remembered by his loving mother and father as a wonderful son and by his friends as a deeply caring person. Billy had recently become a junior partner in the law firm of Hill and Smith. He chaired the Urban League's committee on housing discrimination. His charm, wit, and generosity will be sorely missed.

That's a rough idea of an obituary.

I am going to pass out a card to each of you.

I want you to write your own obituary—write it so someone else can read it.

What do you want them to say about you when you die?

ALLOW TEN MINUTES TO WORK ON THE OBITUARY. USE A LITTLE MORE TIME IF NEEDED. THEN COLLECT THE CARDS AND SHUFFLE THEM.

I am going to pick up the cards now, shuffle them, and give them back out.

Please read what it says on the card.

HAVE EACH PERSON READ AN OBITUARY.

On the Feeling Thermometer where would you put your feelings of comfort at this point?

ENCOURAGE RESPONSES AND DISCUSSION ON HOW IT FEELS TO WRITE YOUR OBITUARY.

### **Exercise 4: Future Dreams**

Take a moment to relax.

Get yourself in a comfortable position.

READ THE WORDS IN SLOW, STEADY VOICE WITH AN EASY BEAT. SEE IF YOU CAN RELAX YOURSELF AT THE SAME TIME.

Just watch your breathing.

PAUSE

Can you feel the warm air coming-out and the cool air coming in?

PAUSE

Can you feel yourself taking three easy and deep breaths?

PAUSE

Can you imagine the air coming in your nose and flowing down your body and out your toes—taking all the tension with it?

PAUSE

Can you sense how relaxed your body and mind are beginning to feel?

PAUSE

Now from deep inside you, let your dreams flow up to the surface.

PAUSE

What do you want for yourself?

Just let all your dreams for yourself come out.

Can you see what they are as they float up?

PAUSE

Let your hopes dreams be all around you.

Hold on to your dreams.

PAUSE

Now yawn and stretch.

Where are you on the feeling thermometer?

ENCOURAGE RESPONSES.

Everyone here has lots of strengths and resources.

What are you doing now to work toward your dreams?

Think about it for a moment.

Like being here is working on your future.

What are you doing now?

I want each person here to tell us one strength that you have and one thing that you are doing now to move toward achieving your dreams.

GO AROUND AND GET IDEAS OF WHAT PARTICIPANTS' STRENGTHS ARE AND WHAT THEY ARE DOING NOW TO MOVE AHEAD. USE THE TOKENS FOR ENCOURAGEMENT.

### **Exercise 5: Sex and Death**

We know that AIDS leads to death, and that you can get the virus from drugs and unprotected sex.

But what a mistake it would be to think of death every time we thought of sex.

Did you ever hear those stories about movie stars who were highly active sexually when they were young and how they wanted to die?

It is rumored that when they got old they wanted to die at the moment of orgasm while having sex with a beautiful partner.

Well, we're not talking about that.

Terrified sex is pretty lousy.

I'm going to divide the group in half.

I want both of you to think of as many situations as possible where a couple could have great sex without fear of getting AIDS and dying.

I'll give you one example: a couple who had been together for thirty years and who didn't cheat.

DIVIDE THE GROUP IN HALF AND HAND OUT MARKING PENS AND NEWSPRINT.

Write your ideas on newsprint.

ALLOW FIVE MINUTES.

OK, let's hear what you have written down there.

HAVE EACH GROUP PRESENT. ENCOURAGE SHARING AND USE TOKENS TO SUPPORT AND REINFORCE.

We are at the end of the session, but before stopping there are several pieces of business to take care of.

First, for homework, please think of one step you plan to take this month which moves you closer to your goals for yourself.

Second, let's go around and tell people what we appreciate about how they helped make this a good session.

It is not easy to talk about death.

Most people have lots of fears and feelings about that topic.

So you all deserve at least a token for touching on death.

GIVE OUT TOKENS.

Now tell each other what you liked about them today.

ENCOURAGE STROKES AND FILL IN FOR PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T GET ANY.

What's your feeling level now?

ENCOURAGE RESPONSES.

I'll see you next time at \_\_\_\_\_ (time) on \_\_\_\_\_ (date).

END OF SESSION 6

Jud and Curly

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