

A PERSONAL COUNSELING SESSION

Objectives

1. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss safer sex in a totally private manner with a trained counselor.
 2. Participants will develop strategies for overcoming barriers to practicing safer sex.
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Rationale

By this time in the training the group members have been exposed to a great deal of information about HIV/AIDS and have practiced a variety of skills for coping with internal factors and external situations that can lead to unsafe sex. It is not uncommon as people learn new skills that they find, despite being more proficient, barriers arise that prevent them from using their newly acquired skills. Typically professional help can be useful in finding ways to overcome these barriers.

Furthermore, there may still be reservations about revealing everything in the group setting. Thus an opportunity with little risk for asking questions and sharing sexual information is desirable.

Procedures

1. Orient the adolescent to the purpose of the interview and how it will be conducted.
 2. Determine if the adolescent is sexually active or abstinent.
 3. Ask the questions that correspond with either active or abstinent.
 4. Locate the barriers to either safer sex or staying abstinent.
 5. Develop a plan for overcoming the barriers.
 6. Answer questions about sex and HIV/AIDS.
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Materials

Questions for sexually active adolescents

Questions for inactive or abstinent youth

Step 1: Orienting the adolescent

Counselor says

The purpose of this interview is to help you overcome any barriers that you might have to practicing safer sex.

Like maybe you have practiced how to say "no" and can do it successfully, but once in a while something

just gets in the way of your doing it.

So together we can try to figure out how you could get over that barrier.

Also there may be some question you have about sex that have not been answered or that you weren't comfortable asking in the group.

There is no such thing as a stupid or too embarrassing question.

So, here is the place to bring up anything you want.

By the way how do you feel right now on the Feeling Thermometer as I tell you what this interview is all about?

Encourage self-disclosure.

We'll start by my asking you some questions to help us locate any barriers that might exist.

Everything you say will be kept confidential, unless you are being sexually abused, are suicidal, or are dangerous to others.

How does that sound to you?

Step 2: Determining if the youth is sexually active

First I need to find out if you think of yourself as sexually active or if you think of yourself as abstaining from sex.

By abstaining I mean that you don't consider yourself to be having sex.

Depending on the answer, select the appropriate set of questions to follow, and proceed. The questions here are not meant to form a structured interview. They simply help give clues about where the barriers are and should be considered as examples.

Step 3: Ask questions for a sexually active youth

Last occasion

After each question wait for an answer. Explain why you are asking the question if the youth is puzzled about it.

A good way to get started is to look at an experience that just happened.

I'd like us to think about the last time your were with a partner sexually.

What was your partner's first name?

When was this?

Where were you and your partner?

So you were at _____ (location) around _____ (when).

Can you tell me who initiated the sexual encounter?

Would you describe your partner as
a steady partner
a good friend
an acquaintance
a stranger

When you had sex with ____ (name) this time, was it
for pleasure/fun
because you paid him/her for it
because you were paid for it
because you gave drugs
because you received drugs
because you forced him/her
because you were forced

Do any of the following descriptions apply to ____ (name of partner)?
bisexual or gay/lesbian
IV drug user
HIV-positive, ARC or AIDS
has a sexually transmitted disease
has more than one sexual partner right now
does sex for money or drugs

How do you know?

Were you taking drugs (or alcohol)? If so, which ones?

How much of these different drugs?

What other sexual activities did you do?
kissing
touching/massaging

If heterosexual experience ask

Did you bother with birth control with your partner?

How comfortable did you feel asking about it?

If you did not ask, why not?

Did your partner ask about birth control?

How comfortable did you feel being asked about it?

If the subject of birth control was brought up, when did this occur?
before sex
during sex
after sex

Did you decide to use a form of birth control?

If not, why not?

What kind(s) did you decide to use?

Where did you get these methods?

How easy or difficult (comfort/discomfort) was it to use?

Did you feel confident with the methods?

For all youth ask

Did you ask about protection against AIDS transmission?

How comfortable did you feel asking about it?

If you did not ask, why not?

Did your partner ask about protection against AIDS transmission?

Using the Feeling Thermometer, how comfortable did you feel being asked about it?

If you did discuss this subject, when did this occur?

- before sex
- during sex
- after sex

Did you decide to take some measure against AIDS transmission?

For "if no" ask the following

If no, why not?

For "if yes" ask the following

What kind(s) of measure did you decide to use?

How comfortable or uncomfortable did you feel using this method(s).

Did you feel confident with the method's effectiveness in protecting you and your partner against AIDS transmission?

If a condom was used, ask the following

How easy was it to use the condom?

Ask all youth about what they say to themselves (self-talk) in potential risk situations. It will prove helpful to show the adolescent the following list and ask which are familiar as something he/she has said to himself/herself in sexual risk situations.

Which of these statement have you said to yourself in a sexual risk situation?

Let's be safe. The condom will be fine.

I don't want to use it, but I better.

Knowing takes out the magic.

Being safe shows my love.

I have done lots of risky acts. Nothing has happened to me. Nothing will.

I don't want a barrier in our love.

Planning makes perfect.

I only have sex with the one I love. I don't need to wear a condom.

S/he is loyal to me, so I don't need to worry.

I know how to use the condom.

I am sexy. It will be good with a condom.

We are going to enjoy this.

This is my job. My partner will not like it.

I will not be able to feel my partner.

It will feel bad (hurt and dry).

Condoms are expensive.

I do not know where to get one.

If the boy pulls out, it will be just as good.

My partner may say yes once, but we won't have sex again.

Nobody is going to tell me how to have sex.

Now I want to find out how you were feeling together.

What were you feeling as you were together having sex?

Anxious/nervous

Passion/desire

Anger

Hurt

Shy/passive

An hour after you had sexual intercourse, how did you feel?

About yourself?

About your partner?

About your behavior?

Your feelings afterwards were?

Anxious/nervous

Passion/desire
Anger
Hurt
Shy/passive

You are interested in each youths attitudes and attributions to aspects of sex and safer sex. Below is a list of attitude statements about pleasure, relationships, condom use, etc. it may prove helpful to go through the list with each youth to determine individual barriers.

Physical Pleasure

I will not be able to feel my partner as well.

Perceptual Attribution to Love Relationship or Love Act

It (condom) puts a barrier between me and the one I love.

It (condom) takes the spontaneity out of sex.

Sex becomes planned, not free.

Carrying one means I admit I will have sex.

Others

They will think I do not trust them.

They will go with someone who does not ask them to use a condom.

They will tell everyone else that I am scared and a wimp.

They are planning to drop me.

They are not serious about our love.

They will think I am having sex with others.

They will get turned off.

They think I've got it.

They might say okay once but won't have sex with me again.

They won't tell me the truth anyway, so why ask?

They don't ask me - it's not fair for me to ask them.

They're more experienced (attractive, intelligent, etc.) than I am, so it's up to them.

They'll tell others what I tell them.

They wouldn't tell the truth anyway.

Fears and Negative Feelings About Using Condoms

They will burst inside of me.

They will come off inside of me.

I do not want to touch one.

They will hurt and be dry.

Misinformation About Safer Sex

Having the boy pull out early is as good as using a condom.

They're really not that safe anyway.

Using non-oxynol 9 is just as good - so a condom isn't necessary.

None of the porno stars use them - they obviously know what to do.

They're too young to have gotten AIDS.

Step 4: Ask questions for sexually inactive youth

To start off I want to learn more about your being abstinent.

Is that OK?

What are your reasons for abstaining from intimate sexual activity?

Are you happy with this decision?

Do you find it difficult to stay with this decision?

If so, why?

If not, do you have any ideas why it is easy for you?

Are most of your friends also abstaining or are they sexually active?

Do your friends support you in this decision?

It is important to acknowledge and support this decision and also to explore sexual experiences and issues with these youth.

One way to find out if there are barriers which make it hard to keep being abstinent is to look at a specific situation.

In the last year have you had a sexual encounter? By a sexual encounter I mean a relationship that included any romantic feelings and any sexual activity from holding hands to petting.

If yes, ask the following questions.

What was the farthest you went with a partner? (How intimate did you get?)

What was your last partner's first name?

When was this relationship happening?

Would you describe your partner as

- a steady partner
- a good friend
- an acquaintance
- a stranger

When you had this encounter was it

- for pleasure/fun
- because you were forced
- because you did not know how to stop it
- for another reason such as money, drugs or anything else?

What activities did you do with this partner?

- kissing
- massaging/touching
- masturbation

Spend some time focusing on the details of this encounter.

Do any of the following descriptions apply to _____ (name of partner)?

- bisexual or gay/lesbian
- IV drug user
- HIV-positive, ARC or AIDS
- has a sexually transmitted disease
- has more than one sexual partner right now
- does sex for money or drugs

Were you taking any drugs (or alcohol)?

If so, which ones?

How much of these different drugs?

In this last encounter did you and your partner discuss having intercourse?

If so, what brought it up?

Did your partner want to go farther sexually than you?

If so, how did you feel about what happened?

How comfortable did you feel talking about sex?

How comfortable did you feel about saying "no" to a sexual activity, if this is what happened?

If you and your last partner did not discuss intercourse, have you ever had to say "no" to a partner about intercourse or another sexual activity?

What happened?

How comfortable did you feel saying "no?"

If you have been in this situation, how did your partner react?

Getting back to the last romantic encounter, how did you feel when you were together?

anxious/nervous
passion/desire
anger
hurt
shy/passive
sad/depressed

After discussing sex with a partner (this time or another time if applicable), how did you feel?

anxious/nervous
passion/desire
anger
hurt
shy/passive
sad/depressed

How did you feel later - after you had parted?

anxious/nervous
passion/desire
anger
hurt
shy/passive
sad/depressed

Do any of the following influence your decision to abstain from more intimate sex?

It conflicts with my religion.
Your family would disapprove.
You are concerned about getting AIDS.
You are afraid of becoming pregnant.
You don't have birth control or don't know enough about it.
You are concerned about your reputation.
You feel you are too young.
You are embarrassed.
You would want to know more about sex before doing it.
You only want to have sex with someone you love.
You only want to have sex if you are in a committed relationship.
You did not like any of your partners enough.
You did believe sexual intercourse should wait for marriage.

How much does concern about birth control influence your decision?

How much does fear of AIDS or other diseases influence your decision?

Ask all youth what they say to themselves (self-talk) in situations in which they set limits on sexual activity. Show the adolescent the following list and ask which are familiar as something he/she has said to himself/herself in these situations.

I want to do it, but I better not.

Sex should be magical and special.

I must be a child for saying "no."

If I went this far, I am a tease if I stop now.

Planning when I do it is important.

I am sexy.

My partner will lose interest in me.

I may never see him/her again.

My partner is not ready yet.

We can do other things and still feel close.

I want to protect my partner.

I don't know enough about sex.

I'm too young to have sex.

He/she thinks that I don't like him/her.

I might not be able to perform well sexually.

Something must be wrong with me for not wanting to.

My body is not that attractive right now.

Nobody is going to tell me when to have sex.

It's too early in our relationship.

You are interested in each youth's attitudes and attributions to aspects of sex and sexual abstinence, below is a list of statements about pleasure, relationships, etc. it may prove helpful to go through this list with each youth in determining individual barriers.

Tell me if any of these statements fit you.

Could you see yourself thinking them?

Physical pleasure

I will not feel satisfied.

I will not feel as close to my partner as I want.

I don't know other sexy activities.

Perceptual attribution to love relationships

Not having intercourse puts a barrier between me and the one I love.
Saying "no" takes the spontaneity out of romance.
Taking about sex means I really want to do it.
My relationship will be ruined.
Why am I so afraid of sex?

Others

They will think I am immature.
They will leave me.
They will think I don't care enough.
They will think I do not trust them.
They will think I am pushing for commitment.
They will tell everybody I am scared.
They will tell everybody I am a prude.
They will tell everybody I am a tease.
They will tell everybody I did it anyway.
They're planning to drop me.
They will get back at me somehow.

Misinformation about sex

I can't get pregnant.
I can't get birth control.
No one would sell me a condom.
Having a boy pull out is as good as wearing a condom.
Everyone but me has sexual intercourse.
I couldn't learn how to have sex and be safe.
Only sexual intercourse counts as sex.

Misinformation about AIDS

The only way to get AIDS is through sexual intercourse.
I am too young to get AIDS
If I start to have sex, I could not get AIDS for a while.
You can not get AIDS from doing it one time.
Condoms are really not safe at all.

On the Feeling Thermometer how do you feel after having answered all these questions?

Step 5: Determining barriers

Using the data collected from the questions, identify and explore potential barriers to either practicing safer sex or remaining abstinent. A partial list of areas in which barriers may exist follows:

Increase self esteem
Increase self confidence
Increase positive self efficacy beliefs
Dysfunctional cognitions
Irrational beliefs (I must be perfect)
Faulty logic (overgeneralization)
Increase accurate information
Increase skills in appraising risky situations
Increase in appraising risky people
Increase reward system
Faulty attribution system
Increase emotional control skills
Increase problem solving skills
Increase relaxation skills
Increase confident communication skills
Increase self-talk skills
Doesn't know how to handle peer pressure
Doesn't know how to say appropriately "yes" "no" or "goodbye."
Increase peer support systems
Increase adult support systems
Increase social, health, counseling, recreational, and housing support systems

Step 6: Developing a plan for overcoming barriers

Once the barriers have been identified, develop priorities with the adolescent.

Jointly select the ones to be worked on first and develop a plan for overcoming the barriers.

That plan may be implemented within the counseling session, within a follow-up session, or through referral.

Use the counseling session as a model of problem solving.

Ask for feeling thermometer readings.

Step 7: The adolescent's questions

What questions do you have about sex or about HIV/AIDS that you would like to get answered?

Any question that you have is really important - even if you think it is just a little one.

Help answer questions.

END OF THE COUNSELING SESSION