

SESSION 5:

What are my high risk situations?

Objectives

1. Participants will identify what are high risk situations for them.
2. Participants will determine what people get out of practicing unsafe sex.
3. Participants will learn how to deal with rationalizations that encourage unsafe sex in risky situations.

Rationale

For adolescents to practice safer sex they need to become aware of the situations in which they personally find it difficult to employ safer sex strategies. These situations alert them to danger. Consequently they can avoid them, prepare for them and practice coping with them if and when they occur. Such situations often related to self esteem, needs to be part of the group, reluctance to counter pressure from a partner, drugs and alcohol, excited feelings being out of control, and negative emotional states.

From a learning theory point of view when people engage in behavior that appears to be unhealthy, some set of reinforcements are at work to initiate and maintain the behavior. Expectations of positive rewards is one crucial factor. Consequently it is important to have adolescents identify what "good" they and their peers might hope to receive from unsafe sex. Discovering and labeling these expectations can begin to change perceptions and reduce the positive valence associated with unsafe sexual situations.

Knowing which behaviors are unsafe, adolescents need to explain away movement in that direction. One of the key ways to do that is through rationalization. This session deals what rationalizations are used, and then provides practice in countering those rationalizations. As it is hoped that the rationalizations which are uncovered are ones used by members of the group, paradoxical techniques are employed to make using these excuses less potent.

It is assumed that for adolescents to change their behavior toward more safe sexual acts personal motivation is needed. Hopefully by discovering what is risky for them, concern about different situations will be generated, and a wariness on their part will increase.

Procedures

1. Introductions are made including what are people's favorite foods. Foods are chosen to have fun and learn more about each other. Also this session deals with appetites for unsafe sex. Review of what went on between sessions, homework and current feeling states are covered. Tokens are given to reinforce desirable behaviors and successes.
2. Brief, prepared, scripts are used to enable participants to learn about risky situations. Then group members identify what are the circumstances in which they might be tempted to engage in or unable to resist unsafe sex.
3. Next group members divide into sub-groups and work on answering the questions, "What positive expectations do I have about unsafe sex?" and "What do I gain by having unsafe

sex?" Ideas are reviewed and discussed.

4. As unsafe sexual behavior in risky situations is often explained away, participants first understand rationalizations and what they do. Then through using rationalization practice cards each person demonstrates how he or she would argue against a rationalization.
5. A very brief relaxation exercise is used to reduce any tension that has built up during the previous exercises.
6. Group coherence is built through giving strokes to everyone, and new homework is assigned - finding another situation which might be risky for them personally.

Materials

Tokens

Feeling Thermometers

Risky Situations Scripts

3 x 5 cards

Rationalization Cards

Newsprint and marking pens

Exercise 1: Introducing and reviewing

Leader says

Welcome back to Stay Safe.

As you know, we are building up our abilities to keep us from getting HIV, and we are working on leading the kind of life we want for ourselves.

Let's go around and introduce ourselves. Tell your name and what your favorite food is.

What do you really like to eat?

Don't make it long.

We don't want to get hungry.

Just say "I'm Marie and my favorite food is pizza."

I'll start. I'm _____ and my favorite food is _____.

Have everyone give their name and what their favorite food is.

Very good.

How are you feeling right now on the Feeling Thermometer?

Encourage answering and pass out tokens for participation. Also give out tokens for use by group members.

Remember how important it is to stay in touch with how much discomfort and comfort you are feeling and what those feelings are.

At the end of the last session I asked you to teach two of your friends about AIDS.

How did that work out?

Ask everyone what they came up and use tokens.

What did you do since we last met to stay safe?

Include also any steps you took to make things better for yourself.

I'm interested in even the smallest thing you did because I want to see you stay healthy.

So what did you do?

Encourage sharing and give out tokens. Catch someone doing something good.

Exercise 2: Finding out my high risk situations

Let's say I was trying not to drink too much.

And let's say I had figured out that if on my way home from work, I went down 145th street, past Billy's Bar where all my friends hung out, I'd end up going in there, drinking for hours, and coming out with a few too many.

Knowing that is a risky situation for me, I can do something about it.

Today I want you to find out what situations are risky for you in terms of safer sex.

Then you can do something about it.

Let's start with going through some scenes from our homemade TV studio.

Who will play Slim and who will play Big Daddy?

Obtain volunteers. (Remember to use tokens) give them scripts to read before the class.

Go ahead and read.

Slim and Big Daddy

BIG DADDY: How you doing, my man?

SLIM: Pretty good, Big Daddy.

BIG DADDY: What you been up to?

SLIM: Not much. And you?

BIG DADDY: Just my usual. Any pretty girl I can find. You been boning much, Slim?

SLIM: Some.

BIG DADDY: Well, I hope them girls haven't got you under their control - making you wear them jimmy caps. These girls act like they don't know they belong barefoot and pregnant. You're not wearing them things are you?

SLIM: Well..... I maybe once. You heard of AIDS?

BIG DADDY: Screw that AIDS noise. I'm disappointed in you, Slim. Never thought you would have turned into a pussy. The boys and me better not hear you are wearing raincoats.

SLIM: OK, Big Daddy, you won't.

BIG DADDY: You don't want people laughing at you. It's not the real thing with a jimmy cap.

SLIM: I don't want anyone laughing at me. If they do, I'll kick some butt. I want the real thing.

THE END

That was great! How about some applause.

Give out some tokens

Let's go through a couple more and then we'll talk about them.

Who will be Eddie and who will be Maria?

Obtain volunteers and give out scripts.

Maria and Eddie

MARIA: A couple of minutes ago every thing was romantic and wonderful. I felt really warm. What happened?

EDDIE: Don't try that stuff on me. I'm not wearing a rubber. That's what happened. You suddenly tell me no screwing without a rubber. No way!

MARIA: But I don't want to catch anything.

EDDIE: You tell me that I got it? That I'm out sticking it in anything? You don't trust me.

MARIA: I trust you but....

EDDIE: Let's cut the bullshit. You lie on your back, and we do it now - without a rubber - or I'm leaving. It's as simple as that.

MARIA: Don't leave. I love you.

EDDIE: Open up or I'm out of here.

MARIA: Eddie, please, please, please.
EDDIE: What's it going to be? I haven't got all night.
MARIA: Eddie, don't do this to me.... Eddie?... OK, go ahead.

THE END

We have some group of actors and actresses here.

We have two more quickies.

For this next one I need Fred and Angie.

Who will play them?

Obtain volunteers and remember the tokens.

Angie and Fred

ANGIE: Quick! Put the rubber on.
FRED: I can't! I'm too excited. I got to slip it in.
ANGIE: Oh, please!! I can't hold it back. Put the damn thing on.
FRED: I can't wait! I can't wait!
ANGIE: Oh, stop! I'm getting too worked up!
FRED: I can't stop!
ANGIE: Get it on fast... Pull out! Pull out!
FRED: I.....ohhhhh.
ANGIE: You bastard.
FRED: God, that was great.

THE END

That was too much.

Give out tokens.

The last one is Felipe and Tom.

Let's have our two last volunteers.

Obtain volunteers.

Let's hear this scene.

Tom and Felipe

FELIPE: Who are you?

TOM: What kind of thing is that to say? We make love all night. You wake up naked next to me in the morning and you ask me who I am.

FELIPE: I don't remember a thing.

TOM: Well, you were pretty high.

FELIPE: So what happened?

TOM: I'm standing on my usual corner - about two in the morning. I'm almost ready for bed. It was a lousy night. No one I really liked, and you staggered along. I liked you. You said you wanted to spend the whole night with me and that you'd give me a fix in the morning.

FELIPE: I said that? Did we have sex?

TOM: Honey, you must have been brain dead. After awhile you kept trying, but couldn't get it up. Now where's the fix?

FELIPE: You're on drugs?

TOM: These little marks on my thighs aren't bed bug bites.

FELIPE: I'm a little sore. Are you a top? Did we use a condom?

TOM: Dear, you must try and remember. It's no fun without remembering it.

FELIPE: Jesus! How did I get into this?

TOM: Where's the fix?

THE END

Soon we'll have to give out Academy Awards.

Encourage appreciation and give out tokens.

Now let's take a look at these four scenes.

The first scene was risky for Slim, the second one for Maria, the third for both Fred and Angie and the fourth for Felipe.

Why was it risky for them?

Let me give you an example of answering that question.

If when I got depressed and felt lonely and worthless, I went out to pick someone for quick sex - if it made me feel better, then being depressed would start me moving toward a risky situation.

Each of the scenes gave an example of typical risky situations.

So what was the risky situation for each of them?

Encourage discussion. Try to help the group see that adult and peer pressure created a risk for slim; being rejected for Maria; being too turned on for Fred and Angie; and drugs and alcohol for Felipe.

What are some other kinds of risky situations?

Let's see how many you can think of.

Just call them out and I'll write them down.

Write ideas on newsprint and post it around the room. Try to include ideas such as going out alone, going to places where you get picked up, certain kinds of parties, getting picked up, not having condoms, making out in a bedroom.

Now I want you to think about what is the most risky situation for you?

Again, that means when might you be tempted to have unsafe sex even though you knew it was taking a big chance?

Write the most risky situation on this card and don't put your name on it.

Pass out a 3 x 5 card to everyone. Allow 3 minutes for writing down the risky situation. Then collect the cards, shuffle and pass out.

Read aloud what your card says.

Have everyone read what is on the card. Then discuss.

OK so now you know what are dangerous situations for you.

Exercise 3: What do I get out of it?

In the very first session that we had we went over why people keep acting in a certain way.

And we said that people do things when they expect something good to come out of it.

So for example, a person might have unsafe sex because they expect to make some money from it.

Or they might do it so that their partner will like them more.

I want you to get into two groups and try to figure out what do you or your friends hope to get out of unsafe sex.

What good things do you think you are going to get out of it?

Put your ideas up on newsprint.

Divide the group into two smaller groups and give them newsprint and marking pens. Allow ten minutes. Bring the group back together and go over their ideas. Some possible ideas might include feel better about self, instant pleasure, reduce loneliness, could be the right person in my life, look

big in others eyes, gain acceptance.

Tell us what ideas you came up with.

After groups present, then discuss.

What do you think of these ideas?

Discuss.

Where are you on the Feeling Thermometer right now?

Deal with extreme discomfort by exploring what thoughts are behind it. Be supportive. Give tokens for confronting discomfort and reducing the feeling. Try relaxation if you wish.

Exercise 4: Dealing with rationalizations

Sometimes we tell ourselves that having unsafe sex is OK.

A rationalization is the word used to describe making an excuse for ourselves.

It is how we explain away the fact that we did something that wasn't too smart.

When you start telling yourself that unsafe sex is OK, one way to deal with that is to argue against your rationalizations.

Let's say I told myself, "Nothing else is going right in my life now, so what have I got to lose?"

How would you shoot that idea down?

Encourage suggestions. Give out tokens.

I was thinking of saying to myself, "First, you got your life to lose. Second, if you keep telling yourself that life sucks, instead of doing something to make it better, you'll work yourself into a big depression."

Each person will get a card.

The card will tell you who to pass it to.

The person who gets the card will read you a rationalization.

Your job is to argue against that rationalization.

When you are finished, the person will turn the card over and read the suggestion on the back.

Pass out the cards one at a time. When the first person has answered, give a card to the second person. Keep going until everyone has had a chance to argue against a rationalization.

Rationalization Cards

CARD 1, FRONT, RATIONALIZATION

Pass to the person who is an Aquarius (1/20-2/21) or closest to it

"I've waited so long to have sex that I'm sure nothing will happen just this one time."

How would you argue against this rationalization?

CARD 1, BACK

Suggestion: Why wait until you are frustrated and starved? You can have good sex without taking a risk. Besides all it takes is one time to get HIV.

CARD 2,FRONT,RATIONALIZATION

Pass to the person who is a Pisces (2/21-3/20) or closest to it

"I didn't insist that my partner use a condom because my partner was so good looking. I may never have the chance again."

How would you argue against this rationalization?

CARD 2,BACK

Suggestion: There are plenty of good looking people who practice safer sex. Also it is not logical to say "You'll never have the chance again." Does it make sense to put yourself at risk for "good looks?"

CARD 3,FRONT,RATIONALIZATION

Pass to the person who is an Aries (3/21-4/20) or closest to it

"I want to practice safer sex, but I'll hurt my partner's feelings if insist on my partner using a rubber."

How would you argue against this rationalization?

CARD 3,BACK

Suggestion: Are you hiding your fear of getting in a conflict? What about your feelings? It's hard, but you can say "no." Is hurting your partner's feelings more important than putting yourself at risk?

CARD 4,FRONT,RATIONALIZATION

Pass to the person who is a Taurus (4/21-5/20) or closest to it

"I wanted to practice safer sex, but my partner was in me before I knew what was happening."

How would you argue against this rationalization?

CARD 4, BACK

Suggestion: Maybe you didn't know what was happening until it was already done. Aren't you more responsible for what you do than your partner is?

CARD 5, FRONT, RATIONALIZATION

Pass to the person who is a Gemini (5/21-6/20) or closest to it

"I had planned to practice safer sex, but it was the drugs. I didn't think I'd get so messed up."

How would you argue against this rationalization?

CARD 5, BACK

Suggestion: If you don't know what drugs do to you, then maybe being more careful is a good idea. Aren't you aware of how hard it is for you to say "no" when using drugs?

CARD 5, FRONT, RATIONALIZATION

Pass to the person who is a Cancer (6/21-7/22) or closest to it

"I have been so depressed lately. When my partner said, >I really want you,= I didn't care about being safe. I just knew that good sex would raise my spirits."

How would you argue against this rationalization?

CARD 5, BACK

Suggestion: Having someone to want you may make you feel better for the moment, but you know that unprotected sex won't do much in the long run for your depression. Are you forgetting that unsafe sex is poor medicine?

CARD 6, FRONT, RATIONALIZATION

Pass to the person who is a Leo (7/23-8/22) or closest to it

"We just saw each other on the street and knew we were going to do it. No one spoke. Talking about unsafe sex is the last thing we wanted to do. How could I say I wouldn't do it without a rubber?"

How would you argue against this rationalization?

CARD 6, BACK, RATIONALIZATION

Suggestion: How about some sign language, like pushing it away. You could also put a rubber on without saying a word. The rubber speaks pretty loud.

CARD 7, FRONT,RATIONALIZATION

Pass to the person who is a Virgo (8/23-9/22) or closest to it

"We've been together for a year and neither of us has slept with anyone else. Besides, we're in love. We don't use rubbers. What could go wrong?"

How would you argue against this rationalization?

CARD 7, BACK

Suggestion: Think of what could really go wrong. If you love each other so much, why put each other at risk? Together the two of you could solve the problem of love and safer sex.

CARD 8, FRONT,RATIONALIZATION

Pass to the person who is a Libra (9/23-10/22) or closest to it

"I was so turned on I just couldn't break away and get a rubber from the bathroom."

How would you argue against this rationalization?

CARD 8, BACK

Suggestion: Wouldn't it have been fun to get turned on again after you went and the got the rubber? Why weren't there rubbers in the bedroom? Couldn't you do something that was safe and didn't require a rubber?

CARD 9, FRONT,RATIONALIZATION

Pass to the person who is a Scorpio (10/23-11/22) or closest to it

"My partner wants to do it this one time without a rubber. I guess once won't hurt me."

How would you argue against this rationalization?

CARD 9,BACK

Suggestion: Maybe this once you'll be lucky and it won't hurt you, but what if you're not lucky? Why take the chance? And what makes you think it's going to stop after one time?

CARD 10, FRONT,RATIONALIZATION

Pass to the person who is a Sagittarius (11/23-12/21) or closest to it

"Nobody I know uses rubbers. They would laugh at me if they found out."

How would you argue against this rationalization?

CARD 10, BACK

Suggestion: It is hard going against the crowd, but sometimes you have to put yourself first and be the smart one. Which is better living or not being laughed at? And how sure are you that everyone will laugh? Besides where will they be seven years from now?

You all did very well.

Pass out tokens

How do you feel? Check out the Feeling Thermometer.

Obtain responses on feelings.

So what did you think of practicing on the rationalizations?

Did they sound familiar and can you think of other ones?

Encourage discussion and put up new rationalizations that are suggested on the newsprint.

Pick a rationalization that you think is a good one and then we will role play it.

Have the group choose one and set up a role playing scene.

Now that you have chosen one, we need to have two volunteers.

Select volunteers.

One of you will be the person who is trying to use the rationalization.

The other group member will be the person that she (he) is using the rationalization on.

While you two role play the scene, the rest of us will observe.

We will look for what emotions you are showing and how you talk against the rationalization.

Assign observer roles to each person in the group who is not playing one of the parts.

You watch the face of the first person, and you watch the face of the second person.

You look for emotion in the voice of the first person, and you the second person.

You watch the posture of the first person, and you the second person.

You watch the hands of the first person, and you watch the hands of the second person.

OK, now let's do the role play.

Coach the players in acting out the scene. Make it a brief scene. When it is finished, pass out tokens and ask the two actors the following:

How did you feel?

Have the two actors use the feeling thermometer levels.

What did you like about what you did?

Wait for answers.

What would you do differently?

Wait for answers.

Now let's hear what the observers picked up.

What emotions did the two people show?

Ask each observer what they saw.

What did you like about how they handled the situation and what would you do differently?

Ask each observer for responses.

Now you are more prepared for handling your own rationalizations and those of other people.

Let's go a quick relaxation.

Get into a comfortable position.

Look up at the ceiling. ***Pause.***

Can you let your eyes close about half way?

Now observe your breath. ***Pause.***

Can you let your breath get deeper? ***Pause.***

Can you feel your breath slowing down? ***Pause.***

Can you feel your heart slowing down? ***Pause.***

Can you feel your head slowly moving forward so that your chin is almost on your chest? ***Pause.***

Can you feel all the tension draining out of your fingers and toes? ***Pause.***

Now raise your arms above your head.

Stretch up as far as you can go.

Take a big yawn.

Does everyone feel better?

We are at the end of today's session so let's go around and give some strokes to people.

Encourage giving appreciation to each other.

For homework see if you can think of another risky situation for yourself.

What might get you into unsafe sex?

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

(NOTE: The HIV Center at Columbia has videos which may supplement this session. Contact Mary Jane Rotheram-Borus.)

END OF SESSION 5