Advantages of postponing sexual involvement

Background and rationale
Many young people have heard of abstinence related to pregnancy and sexual transmitted infection (STI) prevention but do not fully understand the concept. This lesson clarifies that abstinence is the choice to avoid a behavior for a period of time, and that people can decide to abstain from sex even if they have engaged in previous sexual behaviors. After defining the behaviors that put a person at risk for a pregnancy or an STI, Teen Leaders facilitate an activity exploring reasons young people might choose to have sex. Students then analyze these reasons and examine the risks involved to conclude that abstinence is the best choice for middle schoolers. Students will also identify the many ways affection can be expressed in a romantic relationship that do not include sexual involvement.
Parts of this lesson are adapted from:
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Before you go into the classroom

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

• Demonstrate an understanding that most middle school-aged people in Oregon and the United States do not engage in risky sexual behaviors.

• Demonstrate an understanding of what it means to choose to wait to have sex.

• Identify short- and long-term personal goals.

• Recognize the personal benefits of postponing sex by listing ways in which having sex could interfere with their life goals.
1: Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.

1.6.1 – Analyze the relationship between healthy behaviors and personal health.

1.6.13 – Describe the benefits of and barriers to practicing healthy behaviors.

1.6.18 – Define sexual abstinence as it relates to pregnancy prevention.

1.6.38 – Identify ways to prevent HIV and other STDs.

1.6.43 – Identify that no one has the right to touch anyone else without giving and receiving consent.

1.6.44 – Identify why a person who has been raped or sexually assaulted is not at fault.

2: Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology and other factors in health behaviors.

2.6.14 – Explain the influence of personal values and beliefs on individual health practices and behaviors.
6: Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health.

6.6.1 – Create a goal to maintain or improve a personal health practice.

8: Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family and community health.

8.6.1 – State a health-enhancing position on a topic and support it with accurate information.
This lesson takes 50-55 minutes as written. It can vary depending on the length of discussions.
Classroom setup and preparation

- Organize small mixed-gender groups. Do so, before class starts.

- Display ground rules and keep them up for the duration of all lessons.

- Handouts are at the end of the lesson.

- Copy one per student:
  - “Learning Outside the Classroom 4” (two-sided worksheet)

- Copy one per group:
  - “Reasons Why Teens Might Choose to Have Sex” and “Reasons Why Teens Might Choose to Wait to Have Sex” (two-sided)
  - “Alternatives to Having Sex” worksheet

- Gather the following materials:
  - Ground rules copied onto poster paper or white board
  - Poster paper
  - Markers
  - Tape
  - Index cards or blank paper for “Personal goals and self-reflection” activity
  - Blank pieces of paper for question box
  - Question box
Special instructions

• Statistics on sexual behaviors among middle schoolers in Oregon are available from the Oregon Healthy Teens Survey: [http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/BIRTHDEATHCERTIFICATES/SURVEYS/OREGONHEALTHYTEENS/Pages/2017.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/BIRTHDEATHCERTIFICATES/SURVEYS/OREGONHEALTHYTEENS/Pages/2017.aspx). You can find results from 2017 at Oregon Healthy Teens Survey Sexual Behavior Grade 8. It is helpful to review these findings and be prepared to share them with students as needed. The statistic provided in this lesson is from the 2017 survey. You may need to update this as new data become available. Please check the website before teaching this lesson for the most up-to-date information.

• Be prepared to define sexual involvement (page 14).

• Assist Teen Leaders with classroom management.

• Circulate around the room with Teen Leaders.

• Assist Teen Leaders in editing responses and re-framing answers in a positive way.

• Assist Teen Leaders with their speaking volume.

• Provide written feedback to each Teen Leader at the end of all teen led lessons. Include one area for improvement and one strength.
Hi. Let’s introduce our high school Teen Leaders who will be delivering the next set of lessons. I will be here in the classroom assisting with the presentations.

Hi, I am ______________ from ______________ High School.

Hi, I am ______________ from ______________ High School.

Add a statement about yourself, why you are a teen leader and why you think it is important to make healthy choices about sexual involvement and relationships. Use the introduction you practiced in training.

Name: ___________________________ Grade: ________

School: ______________________________________

Things about yourself: __________________________

Why you are a teen leader: ______________________
Today we are going to begin talking about decisions that young people often have to make when it comes to sex. We will define what we mean by sexual involvement and explore the reasons why teens might choose to wait to have sex. We will talk about how being sexually involved can affect our ability to achieve goals.

Before we get started, let’s review the ground rules:

- Respect each other’s ideas and opinions.
- Do not tell personal stories or ask personal questions.
- Everyone should participate as much as possible.
- It’s OK to pass.
- Clapping pattern = stop and listen.
What does it mean to wait?

Discussion and information

Most people choose to avoid different things at different times in their lives, for different reasons. Some include because of health, personal values, and life goals.

For example, a person might avoid playing a video game so they can focus on studying for a test. Someone might avoid chewing gum while wearing braces. Someone might avoid playing sports to let an injury heal.

A word for choosing to avoid something temporarily is called abstinence. A person can wait to become sexually involved or abstain from sex. However, there may be many definitions of sex depending on who you ask. That’s why it’s important to be clear about what we mean in this program when we talk about sex and abstaining from it.
In this program, when we say sex or sexual involvement we want to be clear about what we mean. We mean sexual activity between people of any gender.

We also want to be specific about what behaviors this includes. Sex or sexual involvement includes vaginal, anal and oral sex.

**Vaginal sex** is a penis going into a vagina.

**Anal sex** is a penis going into an anus.

**Oral sex** is a mouth going on the genitals, either a vulva or a penis, or a mouth going on an anus.

**Vaginal sex** can increase the risk for pregnancy. All three: vaginal, anal or oral can put a person at risk for sexually transmitted infections.

Sex is natural. It is a normal and healthy part of human behavior. However, there may be some physical and emotional risks involved with the decision to have sex, especially if you are not ready.

A person can choose to wait to be sexually involved for a period of time. That decision can change at any time.

We realize that some people have had this choice taken away from them if someone forced them to have sex. This is called rape or sexual assault.

It is never the fault of the person who is raped or sexually assaulted. That is because no one ever has the right to touch another person, if that person doesn’t want them to.

If someone you know has had this happen to them, you can be a good friend by believing and listening to them. Encourage your friend to talk to a trusted adult. An example of a trusted adult may be a family member, a teacher or a guidance counselor.
I have a question for you to think about.

_**Raise your hand if you can guess what percentage of 8th grade students in Oregon have had sexual intercourse?**_

Repeat answers. Take up to 3–4 responses.

**Teacher’s note:**

These statistics are based on the 2017 Oregon Healthy Teens Survey. Check the website listed at the beginning of this lesson. Be sure to look for updated statistics.

Those were good guesses. Now, I’ll tell you the results according to the Oregon Healthy Teens Survey. They found that only 8.4 percent of the eighth-grade students surveyed have had sexual intercourse.

Keep in mind, just because a person has had sex in the past does not mean that they have to have sex again.

People can always choose to wait to have sex.

Also, people forced to have sex against their will can still choose to wait to have sex.
Now, we are going to do an activity and we would like everyone to participate. We are going to look at reasons why teens might choose to have sex as well as why teens might choose to wait.

Half of the groups will brainstorm reasons why some teens might choose to have sex. The other half of the groups will brainstorm reasons teens might choose to wait to have sex.

We need each group to identify a recorder and a speaker. Recorders raise your hand until you have received a worksheet.

Distribute one worksheet to each recorder.

Have half of the groups work on one side of the worksheet, “Reasons Why Teens Might Choose to Have Sex”. The other half of the groups will work on the other side of the worksheet, “Reasons Why Teens Might Choose to Wait to Have Sex” (pages 31–32).
Your whole group does not have to agree on everything said. Recorders, remember that everyone’s answer is important, so you should write down all answers. Don’t worry about your spelling. You have five minutes to work on this.

Ready? Go!

Circulate and remind groups to record all answers and follow the ground rules. Call time when groups have 8–10 answers.

Make clapping call. Listen for students to repeat the pattern.

Create a T-chart on the board. Record answers under “Reasons Why Teens Might Choose to Have Sex” header on the left side of the T-chart.
Let’s start with the groups that worked on the “Reasons Why Teens Might Choose to Have Sex” list.

Speakers, stand up if you worked on this list.

If there are students for whom movement is a challenge, change the instructions to have students raise their hands.

When I come to your group, I want the speaker to give us two reasons why teens might choose to have sex.

If other groups have the same answer, cross it off so we don’t have the same answer on the board more than once. We will get two answers per group until all your answers are up on the board. Our Classroom Facilitator will keep track of our list on the board.

Paraphrase responses from each group.
Teacher’s note:

For the responses to “Reasons Why Teens Might Choose to Have Sex”:

If students list “rape” or “forced,” address it by saying, “We are discussing reasons people choose to have sex. Being raped or forced is not a choice and that is not OK. If you know someone who has been raped or forced to have sex, it is important that person talk to a trusted adult.” Don’t include “rape” or “forced” on the list.

If students list “money,” address it by saying, “If someone has sex for money, that is called prostitution. If someone in middle school is involved in prostitution, most likely they have been forced into it and that is not OK. It’s important for that person to talk to a trusted adult.” Don’t include “money” on the list.

If students list “drugs” or “alcohol,” address it. Say, “Someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol cannot legally agree to have sex. If anyone has experienced this, it is important to talk to a trusted adult.” Don’t include “drugs” or “alcohol” on the list.

If students use a derogatory term such as “slut,” address it. Say, “That is a negative label. Using this term is a form of bullying. It does not fit with our list.” Do not include “slut” on the list.
Speakers, stand up if you worked on the second list, “Reasons Why Teens Might Choose to Wait to Have Sex.”

If there are students for whom movement is a challenge, change the instructions to have students raise their hands.

If any of the other groups have the same answer, cross it off. That way, we don’t have the same answer on the board more than once.

Paraphrase responses from each group.

Record answers under “Reasons Why Teens Might Choose to Wait to Have Sex” on the right side of the T-chart.

If students list “gay,” “lesbian,” or “bisexual,” clarify what the group meant by that reason. If the reason was given because the group is making fun of gay, lesbian, or bisexual people, let the class know that bullying is unacceptable. Do not include “gay,” “lesbian,” or “bisexual” on the list.

If the reason was brought up because the group is thinking about students questioning their sexual orientation, affirm this answer and put it on the list.
Look at this first list you created.

Why do you think these reasons for having sex can be unhealthy or risky for someone in middle school?

Paraphrase responses. Share examples from below if students are struggling with answers.

Possible answers:

Some of these reasons could …

- Put someone at risk for pregnancy or STIs.

- Increase emotional stress. It could cause stress with the relationship, a parent or guardian, being distracted from school, or feeling confused.

- Be a sign of being in an unhealthy relationship or be a sign of peer pressure.

- Be a sign that a young person doesn’t have access to sexual health information. This is information that could help them make safe and well-thought out decisions.
Let’s look at this second list you created.

\[ Why \text{ do you think these reasons for waiting to have sex can be healthy or important to someone in middle school? } \]

Paraphrase responses. Share examples from below if students are struggling with answers.

Possible answers:

Some of these reasons could …

- Support future goals and being successful in school.
- Help avoid pregnancy and STIs.
- Help avoid emotional stress. It could help avoid stress with the relationship, a parent or guardian, staying engaged in school, or with feeling confused.
- Help a young person wait until they are 100 percent ready to have sex.
- Help a young person stick to their morals and values.

This class came up with a lot of reasons to wait to have sex. You also identified reasons people choose to have sex.

It is important to remember that when a person chooses to have sex there can be physical and emotional risks. Deciding to have sex, especially when you are young, is a big decision.
Sometimes people choose to wait to be sexually involved because of goals they want to achieve in their future. Today we are going to talk about setting goals. Here are some examples of my long-term goals.

Give some examples of your long-term goals such as:

- I want to have a good job.
- I want to own a car.

These are some long-term goals. Short-term goals are ones that you might want to happen soon, like in the next few days, several weeks, or even months. Here are examples of my short-term goals.

Give some examples of your short-term goals such as:

- I want to get an A in my math class.
- I want to help my friend after school.
Hand out a blank sheet of 8½ x 11” paper or index card to each student.

Now, we want you to take a few minutes to think about your goals. Write down one long-term goal and one short-term goal.

Ready, go!

Make clapping call.

Listen for students to repeat the pattern.

Pencils down!

*Would anyone like to share some of their goals with the class?*

Paraphrase responses.

Be sure to give positive reinforcement to students for sharing their goals.
If you have sex at this age, how might it keep you from reaching your goals?

Paraphrase responses. Make sure students stick to the ground rules.

Watch for respectful comments and to help students avoid sharing personal information.

There are many ways sex can get in the way of achieving goals. This can include unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. It can also include the pressures and responsibilities that come from being in a sexual relationship. Each of these take time, energy, and resources from other interests, goals, and priorities.

Keep in mind that a person may have already had sex in the past without anything bad happening. This doesn’t mean they won’t experience any consequences the next time, or the time after that.

Choosing to wait has nothing to do with whether or not you’ve had sex before. Just because a person has had sex in the past, doesn’t mean they have to have sex again.
Alternatives to having sex

Activity

There are a lot of ways that you can show someone you care about them without being sexually involved. For this next activity, we need each group to pick a new speaker and recorder. Recorders raise your hands until you have received a worksheet.

We are going to have a race. In your groups, we want you to come up with 10 things that two teens who are in a romantic relationship can do together rather than being sexually involved. Once your group has come up with 10 ideas, raise your hands and we will call “stop.”

Recorders, put your pencils in the air until I say go.

Give each group the “Alternatives to Having Sex” worksheet (page 33).

Alternatives to Having Sex

List 10 things that two people our age, who are in a romantic relationship, can do together that doesn’t include vaginal, anal or oral sex.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Ready? Go!
Once a group has 10 responses, call, “Stop!” Make clapping call. Listen for students to repeat the pattern.

"Pencils down!
Let’s hear from the group that completed their list first.

What was on your list?

Have the speaker of the winning group read their list. Do not paraphrase their answers.

"Nice work!

Would any other group like to add some ideas?

Be sure that students only share additional ideas and do not repeat what others have said.

"Great job with your lists!
Your class came up with lots of great ideas. There are many things people in a romantic relationship can do together that do not include sexual involvement.
Closure

Discussion and information

You all showed us today that there are many healthy reasons for someone your age to choose to wait to become sexually involved.

You also showed us there are many other things you can do with someone else that do not put you at risk for an unintended pregnancy, STI, or unachieved goals.

We want to remind you that even if you have been sexually involved in the past, you can always make a new choice to wait.
This week, talk with a parent, guardian or trusted adult about some short-term goals you have for your life. Then, talk to them about your long-term goals too.

After that, look on the back of the “Learning Outside the Classroom 4” worksheet. There, you are going to make a collage under the “Goals” section. You are going to be showing why waiting to have sex is a healthy decision for someone your age. Find pictures, phrases or words that represent some of the goals you have in your life. You can get these off the internet, from magazines, etc.

You can use markers, stickers or any art materials, along with the pictures. Feel free to use a bigger piece of paper if the worksheet is not big enough. We can hang them around the room and share them.

Pass out the “Learning Outside the Classroom 4” worksheet (pages 35–36).

Say goodbye!

Collect questions for the question box.
Reasons Why Teens Might Choose to Wait to Have Sex
Alternatives to Having Sex

List 10 things that two people our age, who are in a romantic relationship, can do together. List something that doesn’t include vaginal, anal or oral sex.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 
Dear Parent, Guardian or Trusted Adult,

Please work with your student to complete the following worksheet. These concepts are part of the lessons in the My Future-My Choice program.

Today in class we talked about setting goals for the future. We talked about how becoming sexually involved can affect our ability to achieve them. Here are some questions for you and your student to discuss:

1. (Parent, guardian or trusted adult) Do you remember any of the goals you had when you were my age? If so, can you share some of them with me?

2. (Parent, guardian or trusted adult) What advice would you give me for setting and achieving my goals?

3. (Student) Some goals I have for myself are:
Name: ____________________________