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For more information on ***Time Out! For Me***, please contact:

Institute of Behavioral Research
Texas Christian University
TCU Box 298740
Fort Worth, TX 76129
(817) 257-7226
(817) 257-7290 FAX
Email: ibr@tcu.edu
Web site: www.ibr.tcu.edu

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*Talking About Sexuality***Objectives**

1. Participants will identify why partners have difficulty discussing sexual issues.
2. Participants will review strategies for effective communication.
3. Participants will practice using effective communication strategies for discussing sexual issues.

Rationale

Most people have had few opportunities to explore issues and strategies for improving honest communication with a partner about sex. Most role models for how men and women should relate to each other sexually come from the media. These images are fantasy-laden and seldom involve setting limits or discussing safer sex practices. This lesson helps participants become aware of these problems and uses role play and communication skills to help gain comfort in talking with a partner about sexual issues.

Materials

- > Easel and paper flip chart or chalkboard
- > Flip chart sheets from Session 2 and 3:
 - Steps for I-Messages*
 - Tips for Better Listening*
 - Tips for Effective Refusal*
- > Overhead transparencies from Session 2 and 3:
 - My Personal Rights*
 - I-Messages vs. You-Messages*
 - Communication Roadblocks*
- > Handouts:
 - Novel Excerpt*
 - Community Resources List* (from Session 4)
- > Role play situations (p. 133)
- > **Session Evaluations**
- > **Client Closing Surveys** (posttest)
- > Refreshments

Prepare Before Class



Assemble the following charts and overhead transparencies from Sessions 2 and 3.

My Personal Rights (p. 42)
Steps for I-Messages (p. 46)
I-Message vs. You-Message (p. 45)
Tips for Better Listening (p. 47)
Tips for Effective Refusal (p. 78)
Communication Roadblocks (pp. 69-77)



Make copies of the following for each group member:

Novel Excerpt (p. 135)
Community Resources List (p. 82)
Role Play Situations (p. 133)
Session Evaluation (pp. 136-137)
Clients Closing Survey (posttest; pp. 201-203)



Develop a plan for how you want to handle graduation. Here are some options:

Prepare certificates to hand out to the group.
 Obtain small gifts or other incentives.
 Have a special cake or other treat.
 Ask the Agency Director to officiate.

Procedure

1

Welcome participants to the workshop. When everyone is seated, go around the room and ask members to introduce themselves. Go around the room again and ask members to answer the following question: Who is the most unforgettable person you have ever met? Why?

2

Thank members for their participation. Ask for a volunteer to highlight what was discussed in the previous session. Thank the volunteer.



3

Use flip chart sheets from the first session to briefly go over the *Group Goals* and the *Group Agreement*. (As needed)

4

Explain that this session is the last session, and will focus on reviewing strategies for effective communication and how these skills can be used within intimate relationships. Note that the session also will explore why people have such a hard time talking about sex with a partner.



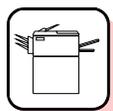
5

Write on a piece of flip chart paper or the chalkboard: GOOD SEX IS... Ask members to call out completions for this sentence. Accept all answers. When finished, ask the following questions:

Discussion Guide

How do we learn what “good” sex should be?

What does “good” sex look like on T.V. or the movies?
Is media sex realistic?



6

Tell the group you want to read them a piece from a popular novel that involves a sexual scene between a man and a woman. Distribute handouts. Ask them to listen, and hold their thoughts until you have finished. Read the excerpt from the Harold Robbins novel (p. 135). When finished, discuss the points on the following page:

Discussion Guide

What's your reaction to this scene?

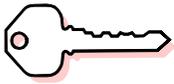
This was written in 1954. Do some men still have this kind of attitude about sex today? Why or why not?

Books, movies, T.V. and music are filled with sex. How do these media images influence us?

Just for fun, if we wanted to write a "safer sex" version of the scene from the book, what would it sound like?

7

Thank participants for their input. Conclude by noting the following points:



KEY POINT: Popular media perpetuates myths and fantasies about what sex should be. Many people blindly accept the media images and never bother to ask themselves what they really want from sex, and what is good for them.

KEY POINT: Sex scenes in the media almost never feature people communicating about the responsibilities of sex. As viewers and readers, we are rarely exposed to examples of sexually active adults discussing condoms, sexually transmitted diseases, or unintended pregnancy **before** they have sex.

KEY POINT: You have the right to define "good" sex for yourself. Ultimately, good sex should be not what your partner wants you to do, or what the movies tell you is sexy, but rather what feels comfortable and right for you.

KEY POINT: Nine out of ten "sexperts" say that open communication between partners makes sex better.



8

Write on the flip chart or chalkboard: TALKING ABOUT SEX IS...

Ask participants for responses. Use the responses to lead a brief discussion about why many people find it difficult to talk about their sexual feelings, even with a partner. Use the following questions, as needed:

**Discussion
Guide**

Why is it difficult to bring up sexual issues with a partner?

What are some benefits of being able to talk honestly with a partner about sexual feelings and concerns?

What are some strategies for opening up communication about sex with a partner?

Why is it important to talk with a partner?

9

Thank members for their participation. Explain that the remainder of the session will be used to review strategies for effective communication and to practice communicating effectively about sex.



10

Take about 20-25 minutes to review effective communication strategies from Sessions 2 & 3. You also may want to review the self-esteem strategies discussed in Session 1 (“E” is for Esteem). Be sure to encourage discussion as you proceed. Use overheads and prepared charts for reference. **Hang the charts so they are easily visible for reference.** Illustrate the points with examples. Include the following:

- ❖ Personal Rights
- ❖ Steps for I-Messages
- ❖ I-Messages vs. You-Messages
- ❖ Tips for Better Listening
- ❖ Nonverbal Communication
- ❖ Communication Roadblocks
- ❖ Tips for Effective Refusal



11

Ask for volunteers to role play some relationship situations using effective communication strategies. You will want 2 volunteers to play the scene and an observer. Ask the group to help generate role play situations and list them on paper or chalkboard. Allow about 5-6 minutes per role play. Remind the person playing the “asserting” role to use and practice the communication skills discussed. Do 3 or 4 role plays, as time allows. The role plays on page 133 may be used, if needed.



12

Stop after each role play and process the experience using some of the following questions:

(To the players) How did it feel to role play this situation? Was it easy or difficult to begin the conversation?

In real life, how do you think a man would respond to this situation?

(For the “asserter”) How did it feel to have your request for safe sex resisted? **(To other player)** How did it feel to have someone insisting on safer sex?

(To the observer – then to the group) What happened in this role play? Did the woman use effective communication? What specific techniques did she use?

Were there other strategies that the woman in this situation could have used to get her point across?

What strategies seemed to be the most useful for making sexual communication effective?



Louise likes her freedom, and isn't ready for a steady man in her life. She dates three or four guys, all of them nice people. Two of them have used needles before. Louise always insists on condoms. Lately, one of her beaus, Willie, has complained about using condoms. Louise and Willie are alone tonight, feeling romantic. But Willie says he's not ever gonna use a condom again. Louise feels strongly enough about it to end the sexual part of the relationship if he won't.



Lois has been close friends with Howie for several years, but has never felt romantically attracted to him. They have just been out to a movie together and are at Lois' house, when Howie starts to make some moves on her. Lois doesn't want to hurt the friendship, but she doesn't want sex with Howie either. Howie tries again...



Sharla hasn't dated anyone for about six months. Her last boyfriend told her he had HIV about 3 months after they broke up. Sharla had a test and found out she wasn't infected, but it was a close call and has made her really think about things. She's at a party and a guy named Jack is really coming on to her. Sharla is interested, but she wants Jack to know up front that she's not taking any more chances and will insist on using condoms. Sharla decides to bring up the subject...



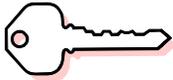
Teresa is at a bar, having a quiet evening with some of her girlfriends. A cute guy comes over and sits at their table and starts making a move on Teresa. She's not interested. She came out tonight to talk with her friends, and besides, she feels uncomfortable around this guy. He has just whispered in her ear that he thinks she's beautiful and has asked her to leave her friends and go party with him. Teresa doesn't want to go.

13

Thank participants for their time and involvement in the workshop. Go around the room and ask members to state one thing they learned and one thing they plan to use from the workshop sessions they have attended.

14

Summarize using the following points:



KEY POINT: It is sometimes difficult to talk with a partner about sexual issues, whether they are safer sex issues or just relationship issues. It takes practice. The more we do it, the easier it becomes. Being able to communicate openly and effectively about sexual feelings and concerns increases intimacy.

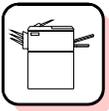
KEY POINT: Learning about sex is a lifelong process. In today’s world, information and communication skills are critical for protecting our health and the health of our loved ones.

15

Lead a brief discussion to summarize and reflect on the issues brought up in the “Time Out! For Me” workshop.

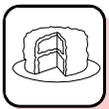
16

Thank the group again for their participation. Offer a *Community Resources List* for anyone needing information about where to get reproductive health care, maternal health care, and other services.



17

Ask each member to complete a Session Evaluation form (pp. 136-137). **When finished, ask them to complete the Client Closing Survey** (posttest; pp. 201-203) **for the workshop.**



18

Introduce and conduct a graduation ceremony. Socialize, chat and serve refreshments.



Excerpt from *NEVER LEAVE ME* by Harold Robbins

“I let her push my hand down to the table. I stared at her. There were tears shining like standing diamonds in the corners of her eyes. Her lips were parted tremulously and her long blond hair was cascading down around her white shoulders. Her breasts were jutting proudly against her bra and there was a tiny trace of moisture in the valley between. Her stomach was flat beneath her ribs and lightly rounded as it molded the silk of her slip and joined the slight swell of her hips and thighs.

‘You’re beautiful, Sandy’, I whispered.

I reached out a hand and touched a snap. The brassiere came off in my fingers. Her nipples were like rosebuds bursting open in the summer sun.

‘When you look at me like that, Brad, I could die’, she whispered. ‘If you could love me as you do her, there is nothing I wouldn’t do for you.’

I pulled her toward me. She moaned in pain as her arms went around my neck. I forced her around so that her back was toward me. Holding her tightly around her waist so that she could not move, I ran my lips down the side of her neck. She was crying aloud now, but I didn’t care. I pushed my weight against her and she sank to her knees on the floor. I pushed her violently and she sprawled out before me. I bent over her and tore the last of her clothing from her.

We embraced on the floor, our bodies locked in fierce combat. Her heavy sobbing was a pleasing sound to my ears, proof that I was superior to her, as I was superior to all women. I was the instrument of her pleasure, the reason for her existence.”

SESSION EVALUATION OF “TIME OUT! FOR ME”

SESSION 6

THIS BOX IS TO BE COMPLETED BY DATA COORDINATOR:

[FORM 68; CARD 01]

SITE # __ __ [5-6]	CLIENT ID# __ __ __ __ __ __ [7-12]	DATE: __ __ __ __ __ __ MO DAY YR [13-18]	COUNSELOR ID# __ __ [19-20]
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INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer the following questions based on what you learned in today’s session. Circle 1 (True) or 2 (False) after each statement.

True	False
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1. T.V., movies, and other media give a realistic picture of sex. 1 2 [21]
2. Effective communication can improve relationships and intimacy between couples. 1 2
3. The right to ask for what you want is an example of a personal right. 1 2 [23]
4. An I-Message is a selfish and childish way of communicating. 1 2
5. Listening is often the most important part of good communication. 1 2 [25]
6. The best way to say “No” is to apologize before you say it. 1 2
7. It is possible for you to make another person change his/her behavior. 1 2 [27]
8. An I-Message is helpful in communicating your feelings about another person’s behavior. 1 2
9. The more you practice talking with a partner about sexual concerns the easier it becomes. 1 2 [29]
10. A You-Message is effective for telling people what they have done wrong. 1 2

|__|__| [31-32]

