

For Staff: Group Activities for Youth

Let's Talk About Sex

Discussion: 10 minutes

Make sure everyone has paper and pen. Ask for a show of hands: Who got sex ed in school? Who got a “facts of life” lesson from an adult? Who learned about sex from friends, TV, or the internet? Then say the following question is for everyone, even if they got no instruction in sexual or reproductive health.

Ask, “What did you most want to know about sex that nobody told you?”

Give some examples of questions about the emotional side of sex as well as the physical facts (e.g., “How do you know when you’re ready?” or “How do you start a conversation about it?”). Have them write down their questions and tell them not to add their names. Have them fold their papers up. Gather the questions and write them on the board. Only write the serious questions down. Allow kids to call out questions to add to the list if they want to.

Read the Story: 10 minutes

Have the group read “Pregnant at 13—What I Wish I’d Heard” on p. 16. Go around the room, taking turns reading out loud. Let group members pass if they want to.

Discussion: 15 minutes

Do another brainstorm, and this time ask the question: “What would you tell your pre-teen child about sex?” Add those thoughts on another section of the board, and then compare the two lists.

Ask the group, “Do you think it was the writer’s fault that she got pregnant? Why or why not?” ■

Figuring Out Privacy

Discussion: 15 minutes

Open the discussion by pointing out that opinions about what should be “private” vary a lot. For foster youth, it’s much more confusing. Sometimes your safety or even your life depends on telling the truth about very private things. In the system, you’ll be asked about private things by people who don’t know you at all. And unfortunately, mean people sometimes will use painful details of your life against you, which is why foster youth often hide that they’re in care.

Emphasize to the group that they are now in a safe space, with other teens who’ve been through similar things. First go around and ask people for an instance where their privacy felt violated because they were in care. Tell them that they can be vague, and that they can pass. Then go around,

and ask for an instance when telling something private ended up helping, either by getting them out of danger or just making them feel better. Tell them there may be overlap, that something like talking to a therapist, which felt invasive at first, can end up feeling like a relief. Thank them all for being honest and brave.

Read the Story: 10 minutes

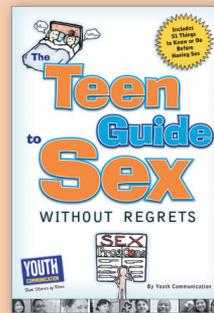
Have the group read “When the Private Becomes Public” on p. 19. Go around the room, taking turns reading aloud. Let group members pass if they want to.

Freewrite and Discussion: 15 minutes

Ask everyone to think about a time when they or someone they know had an experience with the system like the author’s—a time when their privacy felt violated—and how they handled the exposure. Give everyone five minutes to write down what they remember. Remind them that they do not have to share this writing with you or with the group.

Then, ask them to brainstorm some things that foster care workers could do to better respect the privacy of young people in care while still keeping them safe. They can think about the situations they just wrote about as well as the situations the author faces in the story. Write suggestions up on the board. If your group comes up with some good ideas, consider helping them to write a joint letter to the foster care commissioner or another policy organization, or a letter to the editor at *Represent*, to share their suggestions. ■

The Teen Guide to Sex—Without Regrets



Help teens understand that sex isn't something that just happens to them—they have choices. Encourage teens to weigh the risks involved for themselves and their potential partners so that there are no regrets.

Features firsthand accounts from teens who explain how they came to have sex (or decided not to).

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