



WORKSHEET

THE DEBATE ON SEX POSITIVITY

Activity 2

1. Asking for what you enjoy during sex (especially if it is kind of 'dirty') gives the wrong message to your partner about you.
2. If we allow young people to explore their sexuality with sexting or other online means, then we're giving the wrong message about what sex should mean between partners.
3. A young person can express their sexuality in an open and sex-positive manner, even if they choose not to have sex
4. There should be a limit to what is okay to do in a person's sexual encounters. Some behaviours may be high-risk, unsafe or hurtful
5. Talking about what you like or want to do before you do it during a sexual encounter, destroys the spontaneity and pleasure of it
6. It is easier for men to experience sexual pleasure than women
7. Women often pledge their sexual agency (decisions about their sexual lives) to their fathers or partners.
8. A young person should not go against their family values and they should behave sexually according to what they have been taught
9. The whole issue of consent is over-rated
10. The more you experiment and remain open to explore your sexuality, the more pleasurable and positive your sexual relationships will be
11. Online sex or sex over digital means just reflects how we have completely lost human connection

Possible answers (for the facilitator)

1. *Asking for what you enjoy during sex (especially if it is 'dirty') gives the wrong message to your partner about you.*

Sometimes communication about pleasure is hindered by taboo. This is particularly evident in the case of women who may be stigmatized as sluts or of low morality if they open up a communication on sexual pleasure. This also reflects how sexuality is controlled by social expectations and social norms which define what is considered 'acceptable', 'normal' and 'moral' in sex. What is 'acceptable', 'normal' and 'moral' during sex depends on the partners themselves, on what they each feel comfortable with and enjoy without coercion and when they all provide their full, meaningful, active, free and informed consent.

2. *If we allow young people to explore their sexuality with sexting or other online means, then we're giving the wrong message about what sex should mean between partners.*

Similarly as above, taboo, social and cultural norms may demonize non-'traditional' ways that provide grounds for young people to explore their sexuality as 'unacceptable', 'abnormal' and 'immoral'. Theoretical background Module 6, includes some additional information which could be useful in leading the discussion on this point.

3. *A young person can express their sexuality in an open and sex-positive manner, even if they choose not to have sex*

This pertains to the right to have a choice whether to have sex or not and to choose the type of sexual activity you enjoy. Being sex positive means being accepting, inclusive, open and non-judgmental about sexuality. It also means empowering people to claim the sexuality that

gives them enjoyment and pleasure. To display these qualities it is not a prerequisite to have had sex or to be having sex. Sex positivity entails that having sex or not needs to always be a choice. People who decide not to have sex, are not having sex or define themselves as asexual have very enriching and positive lives and romantic encounters.

4. *There should be a limit to what is okay to do in a person's sexual encounters. Some behaviours may be high-risk, unsafe or hurtful*

Again this reflects how sexuality is controlled by social expectations and social norms which define what is considered 'acceptable', 'normal' and 'moral'. While this point may bring out discussions about kinky sex and what is acceptable or not, it is important to refocus the discussion on the fact that what makes sexual encounters safe and pleasurable is the fact that they are based on mutual free and active consent, respect, negotiation, assertive communication, personal agency, self-determination and safe sex practices, which all partners understand, feel comfortable with and embrace without manipulation or coercion.

5. *Taking about what you like or want to do before you do it during a sexual encounter, destroys the spontaneity and pleasure of it*

A sexual encounter is pleasurable when there is consent. You cannot have meaningful consent unless you have a discussion of what is okay and not okay and what each partner considers pleasurable or not. Actually, having consent can help partners feel relaxed which enhances the feeling of pleasure.

6. *It is easier for men to experience sexual*



pleasure than women

This statement reflects the taboo, the myths and social expectations about women's sexuality which want women to control their sexuality and exercise it primarily for the pleasure of men or for reproduction. On the other hand, gender roles position men as sexual beings, who express their masculinity when they are sexually active or act as sexual 'players'. Women should have the personal agency to define their sexuality and decide for themselves whether, how and when they want to express their sexual desires .

7. Women often pledge their sexual agency (decisions about their sexual lives) to their fathers or partners

We are still living in a world where sexuality essentially remains taboo and is largely, and destructively, controlled. Gender roles, stereotypes, gender inequalities, social norms restrict, judge and shame women's sexualities. Patriarchal structures result in women having little power to decide for themselves whether, how and when they will express their sexuality. Women often pledge away their sexual agency to their families or partners and are still making sexual choices based on cultural and social norms, outside their own desires and based on the needs of others (fathers/partners). A father restricting who his daughter will date, or who is forcing her to marry and have a child at a young age; a partner who exercises coercive control over his female partner, who demands sex regardless of whether there is consent or not, who shares an intimate picture to humiliate her and acts as if his female partner is his own property, are only but a few reflections of this.

8. A young person should not go against their family values and they should behave sexually according to what they have been taught

Again this reflects how sexuality is controlled by

social expectations and social norms which define what is considered 'acceptable', 'normal' and 'moral'. However, going against family values is a very personal decision and sometimes specific contexts or specific situations that constitute the realities of young people may make it very difficult for them to go against their families. What is important is that young people understand their sexual rights and the need for personal sexual agency. Different ways can also be explored in supporting young people in the process of identifying and exercising personal sexual agency.

9. The whole issue of consent is over-rated

Young people may tend to agree with this statement using the argument that certain behaviours are very easily classified as sexual harassment/assault without being so. Consent can never be over-rated. It is the foundation of any pleasurable, safe, healthy and positive sexual encounter.

10. The more you experiment and remain open to explore your sexuality, the more pleasurable and positive your sexual relationships will be

This is a fact. It also entails that experimentation takes place out of free and informed choice, in a consensual and safe manner.

11. Sex over the internet just reflects how we have completely lost human connection

This statement aims to challenge young people's perception as to whether meaningful connection is still possible through online means. As we are increasingly living more of our lives online, it is important to explore new notions of human connection through the online world. This includes sexual connection as well (more information in Module 6, Theoretical background)

