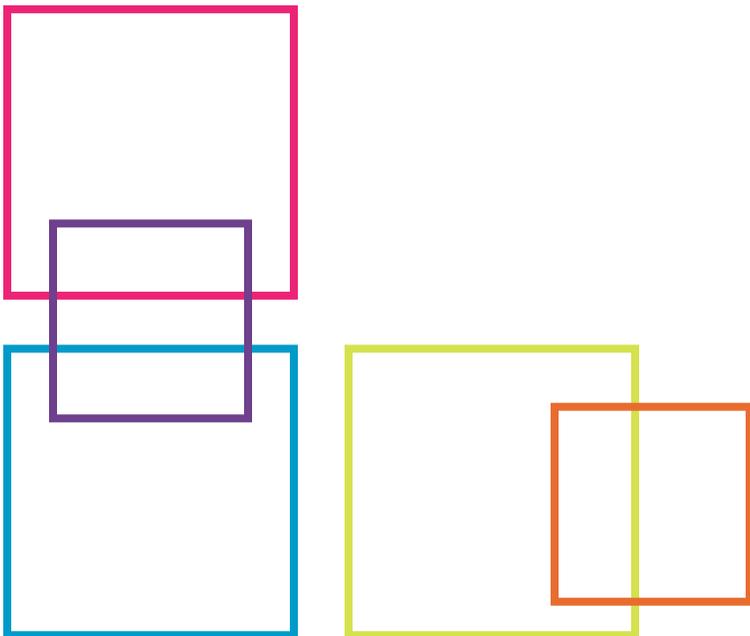


MODULE 4



TELL IT LIKE IT IS

Sexual Health + Wellness Education



“Green Light” - John Legend

CHECK-IN

- Briefly review the main concepts covered during the previous module
- Address any questions or concerns that participants may have at this time
- Introduce the concepts that will be covered during this module

TOPICS TO BE COVERED:

- Personal Space and Touch
- Decision Making
- Introduction to Consent

INTRODUCTION

This module will facilitate and nurture a deeper understanding of decision making and the ways in which it is connected to daily choices, consent to touch, our bodies, and personal space. Participants will also be provided with strategies for making choices that honour their personal preferences and comfort level in a given situation.

EXPLORING PERSONAL SPACE AND TOUCH

Personal space is all about how close we can come to people in different situations without making them feel uncomfortable. Everyone has a different preference about how much personal space they like. They might call this their “personal bubble”. Most of us learn about the rules of personal space without actually being taught. However, for some us, the rule about personal space can be confusing. In some cases, people might be accused of crowding others because they stand or sit too close. Some people might need or want more personal space than we typically expect.

When talking with someone, try to be approximately one arm’s length away from them. At times it is acceptable to be closer than one arm’s length to a person. These times are when it is crowded (at a concert or sporting event) or when the other person is a close friend or family member. People may also have different comfort levels and preferences when it comes to touch.

Some people like hugs and gentle touches on the arm or shoulder while having a conversation, while others don't.

We must ensure that we ask permission before we enter someone's personal space or initiate touch. People are more likely to be willing to get to know and spend time with us if we act in ways that are respectful of the boundaries they've established. We are also more likely to feel comfortable around someone if they respect our personal space and choices. Learning about personal space, boundaries, and respecting others can help us develop a deeper understanding of our own preferences when it comes to space, touch, and our bodies. We all have the right to control our own bodies and be treated with respect and dignity.

WHAT IS A DECISION?

A decision means choosing or making up our mind about what we want to do or say. Decision making involves choosing between two or more different things, activities or ways of doing something.

When we are young, decisions are often made by our parents or caregivers. As we grow up, we learn to make choices for ourselves, and take on bigger and more important decisions. This is a part of becoming a responsible adult. When we have the ability to make choices in our lives, it allows a sense of freedom and independence. Decision making supports us in having a voice and sharing our views and opinions with others.

The choices we make help mold us into the people we are today. At times, making a poor decision can lead to learning a life lesson that helps us become wiser and stronger in the future. Remind participants that even as we learn to make our own decisions, we often rely on other people to help us. This is a natural part of having healthy relationships, particularly with people we trust.

In addition to the information provided above, ensure that the following key points are reviewed with participants:

- We all have the right to make decisions and we can change our minds if we want to.
- Decision making is sometimes based on what we like or don't like, our feelings about different choices, or what we think is right or wrong.
- We can make decisions that are different to other people's decisions, or decisions that other people don't like.

ACTIVITY: SMALL AND BIG DECISIONS

Materials needed: Flipchart and markers

On a flipchart create two columns, one that reads “Small”, and another that reads “Big”. Prompt participants to brainstorm a range of big and small decisions we make in our daily lives. Discuss the idea that big decisions may feel “hard” and small decisions may feel “easy”, indicating that some decisions are more difficult to make than others.

Remind participants that we all have a unique view of the world, and a small decision may be more difficult for one person, while a big decision is easy for another—everyone may not agree.

Small or easy decisions may include:

- What to eat for breakfast
- What to do on the weekend
- What shoes to wear for the day
- What movie to watch

Big or hard decisions may include:

- What kind of job you want to apply for
- Getting a tattoo or a piercing
- Deciding to date someone
- Deciding to engage in sexual activity with someone

Ask participants to reflect on the body clues (physical sensations) someone may experience if they are confident or uncertain about the choice they made. Explain that sometimes our bodies can give us clues about whether our decisions are the right ones for us. Feeling butterflies in our stomach, sweating, feeling our heart beat more quickly, or breathing faster, are signs that may indicate that we are feeling uncertain or worried. If our bodies experience these signs we can always choose to delay making a decision and ask for help and support from someone we trust.

ACTIVITY: THE DECISIONS I MAKE

Materials needed: Flipchart and markers

Depending on the decision that needs to be made, the process can oftentimes feel overwhelming. This activity introduces a five step approach to decision making when choices are more challenging. To demonstrate how to navigate the steps, provide a scenario that the participants can work through together, with facilitator guidance. Scenarios can be created or adapted to meet the needs of the group.

Scenario: You've known your good friend for several years. You feel very comfortable around each other and spend lots of time together—you go for coffee, watch movies, attend BBQs and take art classes together. Lately, you've started to have romantic feelings for this friend. It's very confusing, but also exciting, to have these feelings. You are now trying to decide what to do next.

Step 1: Relax and take a few deep breaths. Think or say something positive about your ability to make choices— “I can do this. I can deal with this” or “ I can get help if I need it.”

Step 2: Identify the decision that needs to be made, or the problem that needs a solution.

Step 3: Brainstorm possible choices and the good (positive) or bad (negative) outcomes that would accompany each decision. Some decisions do not need to be made right away. When we are in the process of making a big or hard decision, we must take our time to explore the available choices and allow ourselves the time we need to feel ready.

Scenario: If you should tell your friend about your romantic feelings.

Choice 1- Keep your feelings to yourself.

Possible outcomes: You'll never know if your friend feels the same way. You may find it difficult to be around your friend as often due to the feelings you have. Your friendship will remain the same, with no risk of change.

Choice 2- Tell your friend how you feel.

Possible outcomes: Your friend may not feel the same way and you feel a sense of rejection. Your friend may not feel the same way and your friendship becomes more distant. Your friend may not feel the same way but you remain good friends. Your friend feels the same way and you decide to start dating.

Step 4: Identify if you need help or more information to make an informed decision. When making a decision it is important to remember that we can ask for additional information, support, and advice from someone we trust.

Step 5: Make your decision.

GIVING CONSENT OR PERMISSION

Sometimes we have to make important decisions about our bodies and personal boundaries. Decision making about our bodies is referred to as consent. Consent means giving permission for something to happen. If they are capable, every person has the right to consent or give permission. When it comes to any kind of touch, including touch for medical reasons, friendly touch, or intimate sexual touch, we have the right to decide when, where, how, and with whom we want to do it.

Inform participants that consent is one of the most important elements of any relationship. Let them know that consent will be explored and reviewed several times.

Note to the facilitator(s): The following activity is a gentle way to introduce the concept of consent. Given the importance of understanding consent, it will be covered in greater detail in upcoming modules.

ACTIVITY: EXPLORING PERSONAL SPACE AND TOUCH

Present the following scenarios which involve appropriate and inappropriate talk and touch with people they may encounter in their daily lives. Prompt participants to explore the following questions:

- Was consent given?
- Is the talk or touch appropriate or inappropriate?
- If the talk or touch is inappropriate, what should you do?

Scenarios:

1. Your doctor begins a standard physical exam and asks you if you feel comfortable. You are feeling fine. The doctor then starts sharing sexual thoughts while examining your private parts.
2. The librarian taps you on the shoulder and asks if you need any help finding a book.
3. Your coach gives you a “high five” after you score a goal.
4. A stranger touches your bum on the bus.
5. A bus driver asks to see your bus pass.
6. A firefighter picks you up to help you escape a burning building.
7. A support talks to you about their personal sexual relationship.
8. You spilled a drink at work. Your co-worker helps wipe the drink off the table, then begins to wipe off the front of your shirt and touches your chest.

Remind participants that no matter the nature of touch, someone must always obtain consent or permission to touch you. Explain the following: If you are in a situation that makes you feel uncomfortable, or someone is touching you inappropriately, you can say “No” and “Stop” in a loud and clear voice. Move your body away from the person if you can. Tell someone you trust. Your body is yours. You own your own body and no one can or should touch you if you don’t want them to.

CHECK-OUT

- Review the main “takeaways” from today’s module
- Address any question or concerns that participants may have
- This may be a good opportunity to complete a “Head, Heart, and Hands” check-out. Head explores elements of ‘what’ and ‘why’, heart explores values, beliefs, and feelings, and hands explores practical skills and tools. Invite participants to pause and reflect on their learning experience, and ask:
 - Head: What’s one thing you learned?
 - Heart: What’s one thing you are feeling?
 - Hands: What’s one thing you can do?

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