

# UNHUSHED

Hard topics the easy way. Sex ed done right



**HIGH SCHOOL CONTENT**

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## Getting on the Same Page before Getting Under the Sheets

### PURPOSE:

There are a variety of topics that partners should discuss before engaging in sexual activity (and over time). Unfortunately, awkwardness can get in the way and so these important conversations are never had, leaving partners feeling unseen, uncomfortable, and unfulfilled.

For trans and non-binary people, it is especially important that partners engage them in conversations about the kinds of words they use for their body parts, where they do and do not want to be touched, the kinds of things that can cause discomfort, and what to do if dysphoria starts.

One of the best ways to encourage these conversations is to help people think about the kinds of questions that can be asked about sexually related topics that are important to them and their partner.

### OBJECTIVES:

As a result of this session, participants will be able to

- Identify the kinds of topics that might be discussed with partners before engaging in sexual contact.
- Describe the kinds of questions they might ask and how to navigate the resulting conversation about their bodies and sexual contact with partners.
- Explain how the language they use in these kinds of conversations may increase or decrease intimacy and trust with their partners.

### KEY MESSAGE:

- While it can feel really awkward to have this kind of open and honest conversation about your body and sex, it helps make sure that you and your partner feel seen, heard, and respected in a situation that often feels vulnerable.
- Regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, it is important to establish an understanding of how a person's sexual partners describe their body parts, sexual activities, and boundaries.
- Sometimes these conversations are actually a turn-on because you're talking openly and honestly, which can lead to new ideas too!

## AGENDA:

Activity: Getting on the Same Page ...

45 minutes

## MATERIALS:

- Chart paper
- Markers



## PLANNING NOTES

### ACTIVITY: Getting on the Same Page ...

- Title three sheets of chart paper as follows:
  - Hot Topics!
  - Asking the Questions (make two columns under the title)
  - Conversation Starters
- Some possible universal and inclusive topics that should be included in the Hot Topics! brainstorming activity include:
  - What words should we use (names of body parts, words to use/not use during sex, agreed on language for specific sexual activities, etc.)
  - Boundaries and consent (what are red/yellow/green lights)
  - Sexual health status, testing results, and practices
  - Pregnancy prevention (understanding the gamete situation)
  - Hopes for the relationship after having sex

- Defining overall expectations (is it just a hookup, is there something specific you're wanting to get from the experience, etc.)

## PROCEDURE:

### ACTIVITY: Getting on the Same Page ...

Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Tell participants that this session is all about communication between partners before they engage in sexual activity so that they are on the same page about language, preferences, and boundaries before getting under the sheets. Explain that the purpose of this exercise is not to discuss how this applies to them personally, but how they would explain to their peers how to have these conversations about important sexual topics. Tell them that they're going to make conversation cheat sheets!
2. Ask participants what kinds of topics they think partners should discuss with one another before they engage in sexual activity. Write their responses on the chart paper titled Hot Topics! Encourage participants to think beyond the binary and consider topics that are outside a heteronormative sexual context. Remind participants that these are probably the topics that need to be talked about most.



#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- a. How applicable do you think these topics are to as many people as possible?
- b. What topics aren't included yet because they seem "outside the norm"?
- c. Imagine a person that is as different from you as you can and then read this list of topics again. Do these topics make sense from their perspective?



3. Form participants into small groups of 3 or 4 and have groups select which topic from the brainstorm list they would like to think about in more detail.
4. Give each group a sheet of chart paper and markers. Instruct them to write their topic at the top of the paper and draw a line separating two columns under it. They should write 3 to 5 questions they suggest asking a partner about the topic on the left column.
5. Once all groups have completed their 3 to 5 questions, have them rotate their chart paper to another group so everyone has a new Hot Topic! chart paper.

6. Instruct each group to consider the questions in the left column and write a revised version of the question on the right column that leaves the most room for the partner being asked to be authentic and truthful in their answers without fearing judgement or other negative repercussions. For example, does the question on the left side make assumptions about a partner's gender identity or use gendered language for certain body parts when the question also works if asked in a more inclusive way?
7. Come back together as a large group and have each group report back on the revisions they made to the questions and discuss their reasoning for the changes.



#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- a. How do you think a partner might interpret this question? How might they feel being asked in this way?
- b. How might you go about correcting yourself in the moment if you ask a question in a way that hurts or bothers your partner?



8. Ask participants to reflect on the common traits they see between how the questions are phrased on the left versus the right column. Record the responses on the chart paper titled Asking the Questions.
9. To bring the conversation full circle, summarize the participants' overarching perspectives on how to ask questions in a way that encourages openness between partners. Then point out that all of this work goes to waste if you don't know how to start the conversation in the first place.
10. Engage participants in a conversation about how they might start a conversation like this with a partner. Write their responses on the chart paper titled Conversation Starters.



#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- a. What are important things to consider in starting this kind of conversation? (Examples answers: the timing, the location, the phrasing used, and whether or not their partner consents to having the conversation in the first place.)
- b. Who do you think would benefit from having this kind of conversation? (Ideal answer: Everyone!)
- c. How could you encourage a friend to take the extra step of having this explicit conversation before engaging in sexual activities with their partner?



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