

Working with Girls Activities Supplement

by
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Although the majority of youth group activities involve boys and girls, it can be good to focus on gender specific activities every now and again. Girls tend to prefer activities that require conversations rather than sport. So the aim of this activities supplement is to provide youth workers with activities and information which focus on issues specifically geared towards working with girls such as friendships, sexuality, alcohol & self-image.



Ice Breaker - Tell Three Things

Aim: To break down barriers between the group, and get everybody comfortable with each other

- Bring the girls into a group circle and get each person to say three things about herself: two of which are true and one of which is a lie.
- The rest of the group have to guess which of the three is a lie.
- The girls can also be asked to justify their guesses if time allows.

Whether groups are just getting to know one another or have been together a long time, they can still learn things about each other from this activity.

Source: www.youth-activites.suite101.com

Activity One Friendship Pyramid

Aim: To encourage discussion and debate about attributes girls look for in their everyday friendships & relationships

Explain to the girls that the aim of the session is to look at what are important attributes in the people that they choose to hang around with and have friendships with.

- Divide the girls into small groups of 3 or 4 - if you have a smaller group you can do this in pairs.
- Hand out the Pyramid Cards (see next page)
- Set the task for each group to agree a pyramid of importance for the cards - they can do this by placing the least important attributes to form the base of the pyramid and building up to one card representing what they think is the most important.
- It should end up with five cards along the bottom row, then four, then three, then two and finally one at the top.
- Allow about 20 minutes for the pyramids to be agreed and when everyone is happy with their cards ask the girls to place them on the floor in front of them.

Take a look at the cards, are all the pyramids the same? Where there is difference ask the group to share their thinking behind the decision.

Facilitate any discussion and encourage the girls to challenge decisions.

Finally ask the whole group if they can agree a pyramid of three attributes that they think are the most important for a good friendship or a healthy relationship.

Friendship Pyramid Cards

<i>Has a good body</i>	<i>Is a good laugh</i>	<i>Doesn't talk behind my back</i>
<i>Someone I can trust</i>	<i>Cares what I think</i>	<i>Wears great clothes</i>
<i>Is good looking</i>	<i>Has lots of mates</i>	<i>Listens to me</i>
<i>Has great taste in music</i>	<i>Chooses to spend time with me</i>	<i>Is loyal</i>
<i>Has a brain</i>	<i>Has the same interests as me</i>	<i>Cares what I think</i>
<i>Is not afraid to say how she feels</i>	<i>Isn't a show off</i>	<i>Is fun to be around</i>
<i>Gets on well with my other friends</i>	<i>Understands how I feel</i>	<i>Doesn't bitch about other people</i>
<i>Cares about personal hygiene</i>	<i>Is affectionate</i>	<i>Someone I am proud to be with</i>

Source: Let's Talk Relationships - A handbook of resource activities for young people



Activity Two Understanding Sexuality

Aim: To explore what we mean by sexuality and to identify the different influences on our sexuality.

Materials: Flipchart paper & pens

Introduce the exercise by explaining that our personal attitudes feelings and thoughts about sexuality will affect how we feel about others and ourselves.

Part A - Brainstorm “what do we mean by sexuality” and try to arrive at a group consensus.

In small groups discuss who or what the girls think influences their understanding of sexuality – such as religion, the law, work, school, magazines, the media, boys, friends, parents, celebrities or being a young woman.

Some sample questions they could consider:

- How are they affected by these influences?
- What are the positive and negative influences?
- Is everyone a sexual being?
- Do they think there are differences between male and female sexuality? If so what?
- Does sexuality have to be acted out as sex?

Get the groups to feedback to the larger group & record the inputs onto flipchart paper

Part B - Prior to the session prepare five large sheets of paper with one of the following heading on each - Lesbian; Heterosexual; Gay; Celibate & Bisexual – and stick to the walls.

Ask the girls to write all the words they can think of that they associate with each heading on the sheets of paper on the wall.

Bring everyone back to the larger group and have a discussion using the following questions:

- Does it matter whether a person is heterosexual, gay or bisexual?
- Why do they think some people discriminate against or bully others on the basis of their sexuality?
- If there are lots of negative words under the ‘lesbian’ or ‘gay’ heading ask how it might feel to be labelled in this way?
- What effect might their being talked about in this way have on someone’s health and self esteem?
- How would they react if their best friend told them they were a lesbian or bisexual?

Source: Spiced Up – A Resource Book for Working with Young Women

Activity Three Sex and the Media

Aim: This exercise encourages girls to reflect on the power of the media and the messages that are given about sex and relationships in the press and on TV and the Internet.

Materials: Markers, sheets of flip-chart paper and a good selection of magazines

To prepare for this exercise look through the magazines and find adverts that use attractive men and women to sell products. This can be anything from cars to food to perfume to clothes.

Divide the girls into groups and give each group a selection of the adverts, some pens and a sheet of flipchart paper. Using a marker, the paper should be divided into four sections and headed:

1. What is being sold?
2. Who to?
3. How do the models look?
4. Are there any hidden messages?

Allow time for discussion and then invite feedback, particularly focusing on the hidden messages. For example, this product is for couples, all young people are having sex, men have to be strong and tough and only thin women are sexually attractive.

Discuss how true these messages are and how representative they are of real-life relationships.

Source: Vanessa Rogers, *Children & Young People Now*, August 2008



Activity Four Young Women & Alcohol

Aim: To discuss issues around alcohol and young women and to learn about the effects of alcohol.



Materials: Flipchart paper, pens,

- Get the girls to work together to write a short drama / role-play act which demonstrates the enjoyable aspects of drinking and also the risks associated with it.
- After they have acted out their drama piece have a discussion around how alcohol can alter behaviour.
- Record on flipchart paper the feedback from the group and follow up with a discussion on the following questions:

Explore the attitudes to drinking using the attitude statement (see below).

Ask the girls whether they agree or disagree.

It's alright to get drunk now and again
Drink makes you more sociable and friendly
Pregnant women should not drink
It's more risky for young women to get very drunk than for young men

Alcohol is high in calories
Women get drunk quicker than men do on the same amount of alcohol

Alcohol is a drug
Being drunk is more unattractive in young women than in young men
Peer pressure is the reason why most young people begin to drink

Makers of alcohol should not be allowed to target young people in their products and advertising (e.g. alcopops)

Source: Spiced up

Activity Five Body Image

Aim: To get the girls to critically reflect on the images portrayed in the media of what a person should look like.

Materials: Old magazines, flip chart paper and pens

Ask the girls to pretend that they are aliens travelling through space. One day they come across a deserted space station from earth. In the space station they find all sorts of magazines. As they have never seen a human before, this is very exciting - so they put together a report on humans based on the magazines that they have found.

In small groups, go through the magazines that they have. From the images that are portrayed in the magazines, create a description of what a "typical" earthling looks like based on what they have found.

Get the girls to create a typical man and a typical woman using bits and pieces of the people they've found in various ads and photos.

As well as physically describing earthlings, what would the aliens say about people based on these magazines, i.e. humans are always smiling and happy, humans live in large modern houses by the beach, humans wear cool clothes, humans have perfect teeth and are tanned and thin etc..

Source: <http://www.cloudnet.com/~edrbsass/affectiveeducation.html>



A Little Food For Thought.... Did you know....

If female mannequins were real women they'd be too thin to have babies?

There are 3 billion women who don't look like supermodels and only a few who do.

Marilyn Monroe wore a size 14, and she is still considered beautiful.

If Barbie was a real woman, she'd have to walk on all fours due to her proportions.

The average woman wears between a size 12-14.

The models in the magazines are airbrushed - no one, not even models, look that good without some help!

References & Support Agencies

Bodywhys - www.bodywhys.ie

Bodywhys is the national voluntary organisation dedicated to supporting the 200,000 people in Ireland affected by eating disorders.

Pieta House - www.pietahouse.ie

Pieta House offers a specialised treatment programme for people who have suicidal ideation or who participate in self-harming behaviours.

Spunout - www.spunout.ie

SpunOut.ie is an independent, youth powered national charity working to empower young people to create personal and social change.

Aware - www.aware.ie

Aware is a national voluntary organisation providing support through depression.

Belong To - www.belongto.ie

BeLonG To is an organisation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) young people, aged between 14 and 23.

Teen Between - www.teenbetween.ie

Teen Between is a specialised support service for teenagers whose parents are going through a divorce or separation. It can also help young adults who have experienced their parent's separation during their teenage years.