Curriculum links

WA HPE Curriculum

Sub-strand: Personal identity and change

- Ways that positive self-identities can develop and change over time

Sub-strand: Interacting with others

- Skills to establish and manage positive relationships
- Situations in which emotions can influence decision-making

International technical guidance on sexuality education

Key concept 5.1: Norms and peer influence on sexual behaviour

- Peers can influence decisions and behaviours related to adolescence and sexuality
- There are ways to challenge negative peer pressure and accept and promote positive peer influences related to adolescence and sexuality.

Key concept 5.2: Decision-making

- There are multiple influences on decisions, including friends, culture, gender-role, stereotypes, peers and the media

Key concept 5.3: Communication, refusal and negotiation skills

- Effective communications uses different modes and styles, and is important to expressing and understanding wishes, needs and personal boundaries.

Materials

- Butcher's paper
- Teaching Resource: *How would you feel?* [one per group]
- Student Activity Sheet: *Peer influence decision-making plan* [one per group]

Before you get started

- Students may have questions that they feel uncomfortable to ask. Providing a question box for students to place their questions in anonymously will ensure their questions are answered in a safe environment.
- For further content information related to this activity, refer to the Educator note: Adolescent relationships.
- Protective interrupting - All staff in the room need to know and understand how to use this technique to prevent students from potentially disclosing sensitive information or abuse in front of other students.
- Managing disclosures - All staff in the room must be aware of the school and legal procedures if a student discloses personal issues, particularly disclosures of sexual abuse.

Learning activities

Group agreement

5 min

Teaching tip: A group agreement must be established before any Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) program begins to ensure a safe learning environment. Read Essential Tool: Establishing a group agreement for tips on how to create one and what to include.

1. Revise or create the class group agreement.

Empty seat game

30 mins

2. To play the *Empty seat game* find a space large enough to make circles with six to eight chairs (depending on class size) facing the centre of each circle. There should be enough seats for each student. Demonstrate the steps first so that all students understand the intent and the flow of the activity.
   - All students sit in a seat.
   - Choose one student to stand in the middle of the circle, leaving one chair unoccupied.
   - The person to the right of the empty seat 'quickly' moves onto it (there will always be one empty seat and the person to the right moves onto it each time it is next to them).
   - The person in the middle tries to sit on the empty seat before the person on the right does. If the middle person gets the seat first, the person they beat to the chair replaces them in the middle.
   - Establish a clear set of safety rules once the game starts, e.g. no physical contact, bumping etc.;
   - Continue the game until everyone has had a turn in the middle.

Teaching tip: This activity may start out as fun for some and then become quite competitive as it progresses. It is important for the teacher to intervene when needed to debrief actions that may be causing distress.

3. At the end of the game, facilitate a whole class discussion about **being part of a group**. It may be appropriate to use a T or Y-chart strategy to structure the conversation.

   Ask:

   What is peer pressure?

(it is when you feel coerced or pressured to do something because of some form of threat of put downs or social rejection. It is different to peer influence which can be a good thing, e.g. you may be influenced to wear your bike helmet while skating if all your friends do it)

Why do you think people your age like to feel like they belong or be similar to others?

(you feel safer; you feel more likeable; you feel they understand you more)

Why do some students have more influence than others?

(some may have better social skills or be more confident; some may intimidate others to make them do what they want because they are scared of them)

How was the empty seat game we just did like peer pressure?

How did it feel to not be allowed to join in a group?

(not being able to sit down with the group and being left in the middle)

How would you encourage someone to join your group?

What groups do we most like being part of?

Why can't you push yourself into a group?

What happens if you do and you are not wanted? How do you think this would feel for that person? Can you give examples of a time when this has happened to you?

If you had a friend with you do you think it would be easier to resist peer pressure?

Why do teachers always recommend that it’s helpful for someone who is being bullied to ask other kind students they know to support them?

Why do teachers always recommend that if someone is a bystander to bullying that they grab a friend to help them try to stop the bullying?

Is it easy to just ‘be yourself’ and still be accepted by your peers?

When should you trust your own judgement about how to behave when you are around other students? (when it negatively affects someone’s wellbeing or feelings; when it is something unsafe or illegal)

4. Explain that by their age and stage they are able to appreciate differences in their friends rather than being critical of someone who is unlike the rest of the group. This age also tends to breed a feeling of not being ‘good enough’ or ‘not fitting in’, so it’s important to identify some of their natural strengths and interests and make the most of them and not worry too much about what their peers might think of them.
5. Discuss how people like to belong to groups, how people often dress the same, go to the same places, talk alike, like the same things. Include statements such as:
   - *It is good to be a member of a group and have friends.*
   - *When we are a part of a group we are all still individuals.*

- *We all want to be liked by others.*
- *Sometimes we feel that we should act a certain way to stay part of the group. Is this a healthy thing? Why/why not?*
- *Sometimes we may not feel good about what we are doing to stay popular in the group. What should we do in this situation?*

6. **Optional activities:** In small groups or pairs, ask students to:
   - Create a PowerPoint presentation about 'Groups'; or
   - Script a short role-play, interview or video about someone joining a group and the obstacles they faced.

Making a decision

20 mins

7. Using the Teaching Resource: *How would you feel?* and some butcher's paper, groups of four students consider how each situation would make them feel.
   - Assign a role to each member of the group, e.g. leader, manager, speaker and recorder.
8. As a whole class, work through one of the situations using the Student Activity Sheet: *Peer influence decision-making plan*. Then allocate one of the situations to each group and ask the students to use the decision-making plan to explore the options and come to a decision about what they would say or do.

3-2-1 Reflection

Reflection

5 mins

The following reflection questions could be used in the whole class or independent/small group activities. As an activity session on its own, choose some of the following questions to discuss and/or write responses to.

- *Why is it important to have friends?*
- *How do we try to fit in with friends?*
- *Why do we sometimes feel pressure to behave in certain ways to maintain friendships?*
- *What would you do if you felt too pressured by your friends?*
- *Describe times when someone's peers might be a positive influence.*
- *Describe times when someone's peers might be a negative influence.*

Health promoting schools

Background teacher note: Health promoting schools framework.

Partnerships

Family

- Talk Soon. Talk Often: a guide for parents talking to their kids about sex is a free hardcopy resource that can be bulk ordered by schools and website. Send a copy home to parents prior to starting your RSE program. The booklet offers ages and stage related information on puberty (and other topics) so that parents can reinforce the topics covered in class. (How to order hard copies.) Provide the link to parents on school websites and social media.
- Order copies of *Puberty* and *Relationships, sex and other stuff* to be sent home for parents. Provide the link to parents on school websites and social media.
- Run a parent workshop and run this activity with parents to model the content that will be covered in your RSE program.
- Run a parent and child evening session, where the children can teach the parents what they have been learning about.

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