Materials

- Butcher's paper with a gingerbread shaped body outline already drawn - 1 for each group of 5/6 students
- Coloured markers
- Some up-tempo music
- Resource/s with reliable information about puberty. Some examples are:
  - The Puberty booklet - you can order physical copies, or you may print off sections.
  - The puberty page of the Talk Soon, Talk Often booklet or the webpage.
  - You may play a video for the whole class.

Before you get started

- Protective interrupting - Teachers need to know and understand how to use this technique to prevent students form potentially disclosing sensitive information or abuse in front of other students.
- Dealing with disclosures - Teachers must be aware of the school and legal procedures if a student discloses personal issues, particularly disclosures of sexual abuse.
- Question box - Have a question box available in every lesson to allow students the opportunity to ask questions that may be too embarrassing or unsafe for them to ask openly in class. See Setting up the question box for further information. For ways to answer some of the curly questions, see Scripted answers to FAQs.
- Speak to the community health nurse if there are any students in the class that you may need more individual support in terms of puberty changes and home circumstances. This may include students who are transgender, have intersex variations, disabilities, special educational needs, history of trauma and abuse, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse students, etc.
- Consider any cultural needs. Read: Co-ed vs gender segregated lessons and Cultural considerations when teaching Aboriginal students.
- Read the Educator notes: Puberty and Body image.

Learning activities

Group agreement

10 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.

Trigger warning: It is important to be mindful of the diversity of bodies during this lesson. Some people may have been born with natural variations in their body (e.g. intersex variations) that means puberty will happen differently for them. Some people have disabilities, injuries or illnesses that mean their bodies may look and function in different ways and go through puberty in different ways (or not at all). Careful choice of wording is needed to help everyone feel included and respected.

Puberty can be a particularly challenging time for people who are gender diverse and people who have intersex variations (some people only find out that they have intersex variations when they do not experience puberty as expected). It is important to remember that you may not be aware of these students in your class as they may not have disclosed this to you or anyone.

Question box

Teaching tip: Establishing a question box when starting any RSE program is useful to allow students to ask questions anonymously and have them answered in a safe environment. Read Essential information: Question box guide for how to set up the system and how to answer tricky questions.

2. Set-up or remind students of the question box for any questions they feel uncomfortable asking aloud.

Puberty

5 minutes

3. Ask:

   What is puberty?

   (*Puberty is the time when the body changes from a child to an adult)*

   Why do we go through puberty?

   (*These changes usually mean that a person is physically able to have a baby)*

   When does puberty happen?

   (*There is a wide range of 'normal' when it comes to puberty. Everyone is different. Girls (or people born with ovaries/uterus) usually start puberty between 8-13 years. Boys (or people born with testicles/penis) usually start puberty between 9-14 years)*

   How quickly does puberty happen?

   (*Puberty happens over a number of years - usually about 2-5 years)*

2. Say:

"***During puberty there are a number of changes that happen. We are going to explore some of the different changes in the next activity.***"

Puberty race

15 minutes

3. Split students into groups of approximately 5 or 6 using a grouping strategy.
4. Give each group a gingerbread shaped body outline (these can be put up on walls around the room or on the floor/desks) and coloured markers.
5. Have students line up near to their group's gingerbread shaped body outline.
6. Say:

   "***When I put the music on, you are going to take turns to race to the gingerbread body outline poster and add one change that happens during puberty. You can use words, symbols, pictures - or a mix of all these. Don't worry about spelling for now - this is just to get your initial ideas on paper. Have a think about whether this change happens mostly to boys, mostly to girls or if it usually happens to everyone. How will you record that on your poster? This is a race to see how many ideas you can come up with. You will have the length of this song (approx 3-4min)***"

Teaching tip: Using music can help put students at ease to feel safe to participate. Using up-tempo music helps to create the atmosphere of a 'race' but it need not be a competition between groups. Having the time limit/race helps to avoid some of the awkwardness that some young people may feel to start writing about puberty changes. Most songs are around 3-4 minutes long and it gives a clear indication to students how long they have to complete the task. You may wish to offer to play the song again if the students need more time.

7. Ask each group to share some of their answers (this is just initially to give students more ideas to add to their posters - not to work through every answer).
8. Give each group a resource/resources about puberty. Have them go through the resource/s and add any changes they may have missed. Some ideas include:
   1. The Puberty booklet - you can order physical copies, or you may print off sections.
   2. The puberty page of the Talk Soon, Talk Often booklet or the webpage.
   3. You may play a video for the whole class.
9. Draw attention to the different ways the puberty changes have been represented (i.e. symbols/words/drawings) and how students have represented that the changes happen mostly to boys, mostly to girls or usually everyone.

Teaching tip: Try to focus on the similarities in changes for boys and girls rather than the differences (most of the changes happen to all genders - getting taller and broader, becoming more independent, mood changes, etc).

10. Draw attention to any groups that have identified changes that are not just physical body changes (i.e. emotional and social changes).

Physical, emotional, social

20 minutes

11. Collect posters and display so that all students can see them.
12. Say:

    "The changes we go through during puberty can be categorised into physical, emotional and social and relational/relationships."

13. Ask *:*

    What are physical changes? Can you give some examples?

    (*Physical changes are the changes that happen to the body. They are usually changes that we an see. E.g. getting taller, widening hips, growing breasts, etc)*

    What are emotional changes? Can you give some examples?

    (*Emotional changes are to do with how we think and feel. E.g. mood swings, sexual feelings, etc).*

    What are social/relationship changes? Can you give some examples?

    (*Social or relationship changes are to do with how we relate to our friends, families and other people in our lives. E.g. wanting more independence from our parents, changes in friendships, crushes, etc)*

14. Demonstrate the Auslan sign for the words physical, emotional and social/relationship.

    Physical (external site)

    Emotional (external site)

    Social or Relationship (external site)

15. Work through each of the different answers the students have contributed and ask the students to identify if the puberty change is physical, emotional, social/relational by indicating with the Auslan sign.

Teaching tip: Please see Background teaching note: Puberty for possible answers to the grouping.

Body diversity and reflection

5 minutes

16. Explain:

    "Most of these changes will usually happen to everyone as they go through puberty. Some of the changes will happen mostly to boys (or people with a penis) and some will happen mostly to girls (or people with a vagina).We say words like mostly and usually because everyone's body is different and their is a wide range of 'normal'. Everybody deserves to be treated with respect.Puberty can be a challenging time for many people with all the changes that can take place. It is also a very exciting time with lots of positives."

3-2-1 Reflection

5 minutes

17. Ask students to have a quiet moment of reflection to think about :

- One thing you are looking forward to about puberty. This may be something you want to discuss with a trusted adult at some stage.
- Who you can go to if you have any questions about puberty? Where can you go to get reliable information about puberty?

Health promoting schools

Background teacher note: Health promoting schools framework.

Partnerships

Parents

- 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.

School staff

- Invite the school nurse to your class to answer some of the question box questions. This serves two purposes - they may be able to answer some of the questions you are unsure of and helps to build a relationships between the students and the nurse.
- The school nurse may like to take small groups of students requiring additional or specialised care to run separate activities with on this topic.



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