

Choose Life 3.0

with Adaptations
and Skills for Healthy Relationships
by Food for the Hungry

Guide for Peer Educators and Youth Leaders

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Session 1 • Being Yourself, Being Content

Notes to the Facilitator

Youth often suffer from a poor self image (what a person thinks about themselves) and need to know that they are acceptable and lovable as they are. Many are not happy with who they are or their situation. They constantly compare themselves to their peers. They want to have more money, look like movie stars, live in a different house, be more popular, be older, etc. They are vulnerable to pressures from their peers. In order to feel better about themselves or to feel accepted and admired by others, they try things even if they know it could bring them harm.

The purpose of this lesson is to help youth build self confidence, to see that it is all right to be different, and to accept and feel good about themselves. Improving self image can decrease a young person's vulnerability to poor life choices that could put them at risk for HIV.

During this learning session youth will:

1. Describe the benefits of being content.
2. Identify some of their good qualities and their capacities.
3. Define HIV and AIDS.
4. Be able to describe the link between self respect/confidence and the ability to protect oneself from HIV.
5. Describe how HIV affects the immune system.

Values, Attitudes and Beliefs strengthened through this session:

6. Youth discover that they are unique and valued.

Materials needed:

- basket or other container for "Guess Who" game
- (optional) an umbrella and crumpled piece of paper or cardboard for the HIV demonstration

Activities:

Warm up Game:

Story and Discussion:

HIV Facts:

Reflection Verse:

Review and Reinforcement:

60-minute format

20 minutes

30 minutes

10 minutes

2 minutes

90-minute format

20 minutes

45 minutes

15 minutes

2 minutes

10 minutes

Warm Up Game: 20 minutes

Opening prayer

The Guess Who Game: Ask participants to write on a piece of paper something that they can do well (a unique skill or talent). Ask them to fold these papers and put them in a container (i.e. basket, hat). Then have each participant choose one from the container. If they pick their own, they should put it back and take a new one. The youth should stand in a circle. Ask one youth to read aloud what is on the paper and try to guess who it describes. If they are not able to guess after two tries, the others in the group can try to guess. Continue giving each youth a turn to identify the person described on their paper, until all the youth are identified.

Option 2: If the group does not know one another well, ask each youth to choose a partner. Give them two minutes to find out 1) their partner's name and 2) one thing that their partner does well (a talent or skill). Then each person should quickly introduce their partner to the rest of the group and sharing their talent or skill. For example – “This is John. He is very good at fixing motorbikes.”

Each of us has different talents and skills. Sometimes when we are feeling sad, we need to remind ourselves of these talents and the things that we can do well. This group will be a place where we help each other and focus on the positive; a place where we all feel accepted.

Today and in the coming months, we will explore life issues that young people are facing. We will discuss your dreams for the future, choices you have to make, and changes you are going through. We will also be talking about some of the challenges that we are facing today, including sex and HIV/AIDS.

This will not be like your school classes. You do not need to take notes unless you want to. I am not here just to teach you, I am also coming to learn from you. The important thing is that we discuss together. You must feel free to speak what is on your mind and in your heart. Whatever you want to ask, whatever you want to know, I will try to answer.

We will have 15 meetings. It is important that we come to every meeting! We will be learning new skills to help us make healthy relationship choices. If you miss some of the sessions, you miss out on skills that will help you in your daily life.

Serial Story and Discussion: 30 (or 45 minutes)

Let's start our session with a story.

Change names of the story's characters to fit your context. Know the story well and practice telling it before the session begins. You may also ask one of the participants to read the story to increase participation.

Story: Rebecca is 17 years old and in secondary school. She does very well in her classes and hopes to get a spot at the university to study law. She will be the first woman from her family to attend university, and sometimes she feels burdened by the expectations her family members have for her.

Lately though, concentrating during math class has not been so easy for Rebecca. Two weeks ago, when the teacher decided to reassign the seating positions, a boy Rebecca had been interested in all year was assigned the seat in front of her. Rebecca really has to try to listen to the lecture. Otherwise, she could spend the entire class period imagining what it would be like to be his girlfriend.

As you read the story, be expressive and look up occasionally.

Rebecca is pretty but does not try to draw attention to her looks. When she was younger, boys paid a lot of attention to her, but once they realized that she was more interested in studying than flirting with them, they stopped. Now she feels almost invisible to boys, especially the boy from her math class. She is afraid to speak in front of him in case she says something foolish. She does not raise her hand to answer questions because she does not want him to think she is smarter than him. When she sees him talking and laughing with other girls, she finds herself comparing the way she looks to them. She wishes her skin and hair were as pretty as the other girls. Sometimes it feels like she would give anything, even her place at university, just to feel like she was attractive to this one boy who she has never even spoken to!

Say: Now let's hear about Peter. Peter also struggles, just like Rebecca.

Peter is 15 years old and a student at the same school as Rebecca. His older brother David is in Rebecca's class. Peter has always looked up to his older brother and tried to be seen with him and his friends as much as possible. They tease him sometimes and he is always comparing himself to them.

Now Peter finds himself wishing he was not just always doing what his older brother does. He wants to join the choir at church and to participate in the community drama group, but he can only imagine what David and his friends would say if he tells them he will not be playing football after school anymore because he wants to sing and act instead. He would never hear the end of it!

Encourage participation but do not pressure individuals to answer.

? How does Rebecca view herself?

Encourage discussion. Responses could include: she is unsure of herself, she is shy in front of boys, she does not like the way she looks

? How does Peter view himself?

Responses could include: he feels inferior to his brother; he wants to do something different

? What are some of the good things (qualities or talents) that Rebecca and Peter have? Responses could include: Rebecca does well in school. She does well in math class. Peter likes drama and singing. He is not scared of performing in front of others (in a play or at church).

? How do you think the way they feel about themselves will affect the choices that they make? Responses could include: They may not use their skills and talents. They may make poor choices, because they are not happy with the way they are.

For 90-minute sessions only – Ask youth to choose a partner and discuss:

? What are some things you do not like about yourself that others might see as positive? For example – Rebecca didn't like the fact that she was smart, but many others might see this as something positive.

After the pairs have time to discuss, ask the groups if they would like to share. Listen to several responses.

Each one of us is special. God made us the way we are for a special purpose. But often we are not happy with ourselves and want to be like someone else. Sometimes, we do things not because we want to, but just to get others to accept us.

? What are the benefits of being content with yourself, just as you are?

Encourage discussion. Add any of the following points that are not mentioned:

- *If you are content, you will feel happier about yourself. People will like being around you. (When we are unhappy, and always comparing ourselves to others, our friends may find it difficult to talk with us).*
- *If you are content, you can use the gifts and skills that you have, instead of trying to be like everyone else.*
- *If you are content, you can focus on your work or school, and have hope for the future. (When we feel unhappy, it is hard to focus on our everyday activities, and do things well.)*
- *If you are content, you can make wise decisions and not worry about what others think.*

Another benefit of being content is that you are less likely to be pressured or coerced by others into sexual activities. Sexual activities put us at risk for HIV infection. With the right knowledge combined with self-respect, you can make wise choices and stick to them – no matter what others say. We want to make sure that we not only learn new life skills (like how to be content), but that we also learn how to protect ourselves from HIV infection.

We also understand that there are certain situations where confidence and self respect are not enough. Some youth are sexually abused and unable to enforce their own sexual choices. We will talk about these situations later in our meetings. Today, we are focusing on the situation when you are given a choice, and being content is one tool that will help you make healthy choices.

HIV Facts: 10 Minutes (or 15 minutes)

We hear a lot about HIV in the community around us. In fact, many of us may think that we already have all the facts straight. Let's review what we know so far.

1. What is HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)?

Response: HIV is the name of the virus or germ that causes infection. After a person carries HIV in their body for several years, they become very sick with many different illnesses.

2. What is the difference between HIV and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)?

Response: AIDS is the name of the illness that is caused by HIV. When HIV becomes strong in the person's body, the person become sick with many illnesses; they are said to have AIDS.

3. What does HIV do to the body? Why is it so harmful?

Response: Once HIV enters a person's body, it starts to attack the person's immune system (or germ-fighting system). The immune system fights off diseases and keeps the body healthy by attacking and destroying germs that enter the body and cause illness. HIV slowly "puts holes" in the immune system and destroys it until it cannot protect the body from illness any longer.

The average life expectancy for a person with untreated AIDS from the time that they start having symptoms is one to five years. There is no cure for AIDS. There is no medicine that will kill the HIV virus once it enters your body. ARVs (antiretroviral) drugs help to slow down HIV so that it stops attacking the immune system. These drugs help to prolong the life of a person with HIV. However, they will always have the virus in their body and will need to take ARV drugs for the rest of their life.

For 90-minute sessions only - Optional demonstration: Explain that the immune system works like an umbrella that protects you from sun and rain. Show everyone an umbrella. Ask someone to pour a cup of water on the umbrella to show how it protects you from the rain. Then say, if my umbrella was attacked by a wild dog, it would not be very effective. Explain that the dog may have put holes in the umbrella and damaged the strength of the fabric. Now hold up a crumpled piece of cardboard or paper. Explain that after the dog attacked your umbrella, it is now no stronger than a small piece of cardboard or paper. Ask if there are any volunteers who would like to test your "paper umbrella," to see how it holds up in the rain. Explain that the immune system is like the umbrella. It protects the organs inside your body from germs. If your immune system is attacked by HIV, it loses its strength and can no longer protect you from the germs that cause illness. This is why people become ill with many different illnesses from HIV.

? Does anyone have questions?

Answer questions as necessary. If you don't know the answer, tell the youth you will try to find out by the next meeting.

We will talk more about HIV at each meeting, and learn new ways to protect ourselves from infection.

Reflection Verse: 2 minutes

Psalm 139:14

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

For 90-minute sessions only — Review and Reinforcement: 10 minutes

? What did you learn today that could help you accept yourself the way you are?

Encourage participation, especially among those who have not yet actively participated.

Take Action: This week, do one thing to encourage someone and help them feel better about themselves. Next time we meet, we will hear your stories.

Closing prayer