



LESSON: Abstinence

CONTENT AREA: Family Health and Sexuality

GRADE LEVEL: Middle School

Synopsis

Students identify physical, emotional, and social reasons why abstinence is a good choice for adolescents. Students role play being a "Dear Teen Advisor" who answers letters from other adolescents who are making a decision about sexual abstinence.

About this Lesson

Key Concepts

Benefits of abstinence

Social norms

Benefits of setting sexual limits

Respecting sexual limits of others

NHES Alignments

Common Core: English Language Arts (ELA) Alignments

- ▶ Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing
- ▶ Reading: Key Ideas and Details

National Science Standards Alignments

- ▶ Personal and Social Perspectives: As a result of activities in grades 5–8, all students should develop understanding of: personal health, populations, resources, and environments, natural hazards, risks and benefits, and science and technology.
- ▶ Life Science: As a result of activities in grades 5–8, all students should develop an understanding of structure and function in living systems, reproduction and heredity, regulation and behavior, populations and ecosystems, and diversity and adaptations of organisms.

Objectives

Students will explain reasons to choose abstinence.
Students will advocate for abstinence.

Skill Emphasis

- ▶ Advocacy

Preparation

Time Requirements

One or two 45-minute sessions

Materials & Preparation

Copy student pages (one for each student):

Why Abstinence?

Dear Teen Adviser

Have art and poster supplies for group work.

Have 100 marbles in a glass jar.

Find the percentage of adolescents your students' age who are abstinent. Statistics are available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention publication *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States*. This information can also be obtained from your local or state health department.

Have a second jar with the number of marbles that represents the number of students who report not having sexual intercourse.

Copy teacher page:

Abstinence

Background Information

Teaching Steps

Define abstinence.

Define abstinence. Show students the jar of marbles. Ask a volunteer to count out the number of marbles from the jar that she or he thinks matches the percent of students their age who are abstinent (not having sexual intercourse). Ask the class if they agree with the volunteer.

Then show the class the second jar of marbles to demonstrate the number of adolescents in their age group who are actually abstinent. Have a student count the number of marbles in the second jar. If the class overestimated or underestimated, ask why.

CONCEPTS

- ▶ Abstinence means choosing not to have sexual intercourse.
- ▶ Not every student in this age group has had sexual intercourse. Stress the percentage of

students who are not sexually active.

Discuss benefits of abstinence.

Student Page: Why Abstinence?

Teacher Page: Why Abstinence?

Have students complete the student page. Ask for volunteers to read some of the reasons for abstinence they listed. Write the headings from the student page (Physical Reasons, Emotional Reasons, Social Reasons) on the board and record student responses under the appropriate headings.

Fill in the gaps and stimulate discussion from information contained in the Teacher Page. Compare the percentages between your class and the reported study.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- ▶ Which reasons are the most important? Why?
- ▶ Which reasons would you give a friend who was thinking of having sex?
- ▶ Why should you respect another person's reasons for wanting to be abstinent?

Students create an outline for an advocacy campaign.

Have students work in groups of three to create an outline for an advocacy campaign based on one of the following topics:

A reason for abstinence: avoiding pregnancy.

A reason for abstinence: avoiding STD.

A reason for abstinence: just wait until you're older.

A reason for abstinence: just wait until marriage.

CONCEPTS

- ▶ Fear of pregnancy is a top reason for sexual abstinence.
- ▶ Fear of STD is a top reason for sexual abstinence.
- ▶ Sexual activity involves physical and emotional risks and responsibilities better managed when students are older or in a more stable relationship of marriage.

Reflect, summarize, and discuss.

Have students present their advocacy campaign outlines. Lead the class to examine each outline for the following points.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- ▶ Are key concepts covered?
- ▶ Are the benefits of abstinence clearly presented?

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Is there evidence of:

- ▶ A clear, health-enhancing stand
- ▶ Direct advice to others
- ▶ Persuasion for making a healthy choice
- ▶ Passion and conviction

Assessment

Student Page: [Dear Teen Advisor](#)

Have students answer this letter from an adolescent who is making a decision about abstinence.

Assessment Criteria

CONCEPTS

Student work demonstrates accurate information about:

- ▶ The benefits of abstinence

ADVOCACY

Student work demonstrates proficiency by showing the ability to:

- ▶ Take a clear, health-enhancing stand.
- ▶ Provide direct advice to others.
- ▶ Persuade others to make healthful choices.
- ▶ Show passion and conviction.

[Need Help?](#)



Name: _____



Directions: Abstinence means choosing not to have sexual intercourse. List at least three reasons why abstinence is a good choice for adolescents.

Physical Reasons: _____

Emotional Reasons: _____

Social Reasons: _____



Name: _____



Directions: Use what you have learned about abstinence to give advice to "No Reason in Manhattan."

Dear Teen Adviser,

I have been going with Jordan for three months now. Jordan is so much fun and very sexy. I guess you can tell I'm in love. When we are together, we can't keep our hands off each other. Jordan says it's just natural for two people who care about each other to want to be together in every way. Lately, we've talked about having sex. I'm sure just about everybody at school has already had sex. I really can't think of any good reasons to wait. I want to show Jordan how much I care. What do you think?

No Reason in Manhattan



Name: _____



Abstinence, or refraining from sexual intercourse, is the most effective and risk-free method of avoiding pregnancy and STD/HIV infection. Most adolescents decide that not having intercourse is the best decision for them. In addition to avoiding pregnancy and STD/HIV, abstinence protects against emotional and social risks that may accompany sexual intercourse.

People who choose not to have intercourse are still free to express affection in a variety of ways. Ways to show affection without intercourse include talking, hugging, massaging, smiling, holding hands, touching, sending notes, taking walks, doing things together and kissing. An advantage of abstinence is that refraining from sexual intercourse allows a couple to get to know and trust each other gradually before facing the emotions and stresses brought about by intense levels of physical intimacy.