

8th graders and older

BUILDING A CURRICULUM USING SEX ED TO-GO

Here are our suggestions for which Sex Ed To-Go courses you can use with 8th grade and up and in which order when you are building your curriculum. We also summarized the key messages to reinforce and ideas for follow-up questions, both to test their knowledge and to prompt deeper conversation.

Review the courses for 6th and 7th graders to make sure your young person didn't miss any important messages.

If your young person is older (age 16 through college), you can use the "Testing Understanding" questions to judge their knowledge level before assigning the course.

Worried YOU can't answer the knowledge-check questions? That's okay! Role model how to look up answers. Go back to the Sex Ed To-Go course together and see if you can find the answer together. Model how to search for answers online from trusted sources (you know, NOT TikTok!).

There is a lot of material to cover for young people this age. In the first section, we cover the more **"technical" topics**: pregnancy prevention, STIs, gender identity and sexual orientation, human trafficking, how to access services, etc. The second section covers more **social-emotional and relationship-based topics**: healthier relationships, consent, communication skills, sex in the media, navigating emotions, handling break-ups, etc. *Make sure your young person is exposed to both kinds of topics, but you can choose which ones to start with!*

"TECHNICAL" TOPICS



COURSE TITLE

Understanding Your Body: Reproductive Anatomy & Physiology



CONTENT

- Discuss the most common methods of birth control.
- Identify common myths and facts about birth control.
- Learn about how a person can obtain birth control.



KEY MESSAGES TO REINFORCE

- There are three main ways contraception (birth control) works: preventing sperm from reaching the egg, preventing ovulation (no egg cell is released) and preventing implantation of fertilized egg cell.
- Birth control methods vary in effectiveness. It is important to use each method consistently and correctly.
- Dual use means using a hormonal method to prevent pregnancy and condoms to prevent STIs.
- How to use a condom (best practice is to have them demonstrate on a banana or cucumber with an actual condom.)



IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

TESTING UNDERSTANDING

- What are the main forms of birth control and how do they work? (barrier methods/condoms, pill/patch/ring/shot, IUDs, implants, withdrawal, fertility awareness).
- Which methods are most effective? Why?
- Show me how to put on a condom.

OPENING CONVERSATION

- What are some things a person might consider when choosing a birth control method?
- If a friend was considering having sex, how might they get birth control in our neighborhood?
- How might a person start a conversation about pregnancy prevention with a potential partner? What could they say?
- What's one thing you wonder about after taking this course?



COURSE TITLE

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)



CONTENT

- Review bacterial and viral STIs.
- Learn how STIs are transmitted and how to prevent them.
- Discuss testing, treatment, and communication about STIs.
- Watch a condom demonstration.



KEY MESSAGES TO REINFORCE

- Bacterial STIs like chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis are curable with antibiotics. Viral STIs like HPV, herpes, and HIV aren't curable but can be managed with medications.
- The most common symptom of an STI is no symptom. That's why it's important a person get tested regularly if they are sexually active.
- STIs are very common. Having an STI doesn't mean a person is "dirty" or promiscuous.
- The stigma around STIs means people don't talk about them and often avoid getting tested.



IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

TESTING UNDERSTANDING

- Describe the difference between bacterial and viral STIs. What are examples of each?
- What are ways to prevent STIs? (abstinence, condoms, open communication, testing and treatment, PEP and PrEP for HIV)
- What's the most common symptom of an STI?
- Show me how to put on a condom (if you didn't do this already while reviewing pregnancy prevention).

OPENING CONVERSATION

- Where have you seen STI stigma in your life?
What's one thing you could do to reduce STI stigma?
- How might a person start a conversation about STI prevention with a potential partner?
What could they say?
- What's one thing you wonder about after taking this course?



COURSE TITLE Pregnancy, Childbirth, Adoption, and Abortion



CONTENT

- Review how pregnancy happens.
- Discuss pregnancy options.
- Review basics of pregnancy and childbirth.
- Learn about abortion and adoption.



KEY MESSAGES TO REINFORCE

- Pregnancy occurs when a fertilized egg implants in the uterus.
- An egg cell must be fertilized within 24 hours. Sperm can live up to 5 days. The highest likelihood of pregnancy is in the 5 days before ovulation and the day of ovulation.
- A person's options if they are pregnant (parenting, adoption, and abortion).



IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

TESTING UNDERSTANDING

- Describe how pregnancy happens.
- When is the highest likelihood of pregnancy occurring?
- What options does a person have if they are pregnant?
- Bonus: what are the laws around abortion in our state?

OPENING CONVERSATION

- How might a person know if they are ready to be pregnant or cause a pregnancy?
- What are some things a person might consider if they have an unintended pregnancy?
- What are some of the messages you got growing up about teen pregnancy, adoption, and abortion? Do you agree with them?
- What's one thing you wonder about after taking this course?



COURSE TITLE Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation



CONTENT

- Identify differences between sex and gender.
- Discuss key terms related to sexual orientation.
- Review challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth.
- Learn about how to be an ally.



KEY MESSAGES TO REINFORCE

- Definitions of gender identity and biological sex (sex assigned at birth) and examples (cisgender, transgender, gender non-binary).
- Definition of sexual orientation and examples (gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual).
- LGBTQ+ youth face challenges not because of their identities but because of bias and discrimination in our society.



IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

TESTING UNDERSTANDING

- What's the difference between biological sex, gender identity, and gender expression?
- What is sexual orientation? What are some examples?

OPENING CONVERSATION

- What were the messages you got growing up about LGBTQ+ people? How did those messages affect your behavior?
- What has been the experience of people at your school who have come out as LGBTQ+ or transitioned genders?
- What's one thing you wonder about after taking this course?



COURSE TITLE

Human Trafficking

Remind your young person that this is a sensitive topic and make sure you are prepared with resources in case they disclose something difficult.



CONTENT

- Definitions of trafficking.
- How victims are recruited.
- Warning signs and barriers to seeking help.



KEY MESSAGES TO REINFORCE

- Human trafficking includes both sex and labor trafficking. Sex work is different than sex trafficking because it is consensual (no one under 18 can legally consent to sex work).
- Online social media platforms are often used to recruit and often look like legitimate job postings or great offers.
- The use of force like kidnapping, violence, and rape are not the most common ways of recruiting, even though media, like movies and TV, make it appear so.
- Any person, regardless of race, zip code, or financial status can be vulnerable to trafficking.



IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

TESTING UNDERSTANDING

- What are some reasons someone might be vulnerable to trafficking?
- Why might someone stay silent about being trafficked?

OPENING CONVERSATION

- What kinds of suspicious messages or posts have you seen, that might be trafficking?
- What's one thing you wonder about after taking this course?



COURSE TITLE

How to Access and Pay for the Care You Need

Use [this course](#) for California residents.



CONTENT

- How to access care: making an appointment, understanding youth rights, and payment options.
- What to expect at your visit.



KEY MESSAGES TO REINFORCE

- Taking care of your body is important.
- In most states, young people can access some services without parental permission.
- There may be funding sources to help pay for care.
- Recognizing and effectively communicating your needs (self-advocacy) is an important skill.



IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

TESTING UNDERSTANDING

- What services can you access in our state without parental permission?
- Skill demonstration: Describe for me how you'd figure out where a friend could get STI tests, how they would get to the appointment and pay for it, and what they should expect when they arrive.

OPENING CONVERSATION

- How would you figure out which services young people can access in our state without parental permission?
- What might make young people nervous about getting the care they need? What could you tell a peer if they told you they were nervous?
- What's one thing you wonder about after taking this course?



COURSE TITLE

Understanding Your Rights in California (California residents only)



CONTENT

- Explain your rights as a young person in California.



KEY MESSAGES TO REINFORCE

- In California, young people have the right to comprehensive sex education, confidentiality about certain health information, consent to certain medical care without parental permission and to leave school to access confidential care.



IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

TESTING UNDERSTANDING

- What are 3 to 4 medical services a young person can consent to without parental permission?

OPENING CONVERSATION

- Who could you talk to if you think your rights are being violated?
- What's one thing you wonder about after taking this course?

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AND RELATIONSHIP-BASED TOPICS



COURSE TITLE

Healthier Relationships



CONTENT

- Define healthy, unhealthy, and abusive behaviors in relationships.
- Discuss communication and boundaries.



KEY MESSAGES TO REINFORCE

- Everyone deserves to feel safe and cared for in all their relationships (with friends, family, or romantic partners)
- Everyone has the right to set their own boundaries and have those boundaries respected. In healthy relationships, no one pressures or shames others to do or not do specific activities.
- "I" statements ("I feel ___ when you ___. I need ___") are powerful ways to express your needs and avoid shaming or blaming others.
- The messages in media (movies, shows, music) often romanticize unhealthy or abusive relationship behavior.



IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

TESTING UNDERSTANDING

- Tell me three behaviors that are generally healthy and three that are abusive.
- Describe how to use an "I" statement and three tactics for healthier communication.
- Why might a person stay in an abusive relationship?

OPENING CONVERSATION

- What is important to you in a relationship? What values or behaviors do you look for in a friend or romantic partner?
- What's healthy and what's unhealthy about the relationship described in ____?
[pick a movie, show or song they enjoy]
- If you are worried about a friend's relationship, what might you say to them?
- What's one thing you wonder about after taking this course?



COURSE TITLE

Consent

Remind your young person that this is a sensitive topic and make sure you are prepared with resources in case they disclose something difficult.



CONTENT

- Define consent.
- Review definitions around assault and rape.
- Learn about laws that create safer environments for people.
- Talk about how bystanders (people witnessing bad behavior) can help.



KEY MESSAGES TO REINFORCE

- Consent is an enthusiastic yes, not just the lack of a no.
- Consent must be given every time, be continuous, and can be withdrawn at any point.
- Rape culture is an environment where sexual violence is normalized and excused.
- Bystanders witnessing an incident can be direct (“Hey, that’s not okay”), distract, delegate (get someone else involved), or delay (follow-up later).
- Sexual assault is any sexual contact or behavior without the consent of the victim. It can include emotional coercion, threats, or manipulation.



IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

TESTING UNDERSTANDING

- What are some reasons a person might not be able to consent to an activity?
- Other than saying yes out loud, what are other ways a person can give consent?
- What are three things a bystander can do if they see something happening?

OPENING CONVERSATION

- Why might someone not report sexual assault? What advice would you give a friend who doesn’t want to report?
- Where have you seen movies, shows, or songs make sexual violence seem glamorous?
- What might be hard about stepping in as a bystander? What might make it easier?
- What’s one thing you wonder about after taking this course?



COURSE TITLE

Sex in the Media: What You Need to Know



CONTENT

- How media, including porn, sends messages about sex, sexuality, relationships, beauty, and desire.
- How those messages can affect our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
- The difference between porn and the reality of relationships and sex.
- How to find trusted sources of information.



KEY MESSAGES TO REINFORCE

- The way relationships, sex, and bodies are portrayed in media and pornography don't match most people's real-life experiences.
- It's important to ask yourself who created a message and why, and what values the message is reflecting.



IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

TESTING UNDERSTANDING

- *Skill demonstration:* Pick an ad or social media post. Who is sending this message? Who is their audience and what do they want from them?
- What are some common messages or behaviors in media or porn that don't match most people's real-life experience?
- How might you decide if something is an information source you can trust?

OPENING CONVERSATION

- How do you think the media you usually see influences what people do in real life or how they feel about themselves?
- What's one thing you wonder about after taking this course?



COURSE TITLE

Communication Skills



CONTENT

- Important topics of communication in relationships.
- How to communicate in a more effective way.
- Tips for specific conversations.



KEY MESSAGES TO REINFORCE

- Communicating can be hard. There are specific things to think about to make it easier and more effective.
- "I" statements ("I feel _____ when you _____. Can you please _____?") can make emotional communication easier.



IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

TESTING UNDERSTANDING

- What are four things to consider when you need to communicate something to someone?
- Give me an example of an "I" statement.

OPENING CONVERSATION

- What about your communication style works well for you? What do you wish you were better at?
- What's one thing you wonder about after taking this course?



COURSE TITLE

Navigating Emotions



CONTENT

- The difference between love, lust, and a crush.
- What to consider when starting a relationship.
- The emotions that are common during relationships, and how to handle some common and complex emotions.



KEY MESSAGES TO REINFORCE

- Love, lust, friendship, and crushes are different things.
- Jealousy, frustration, and stress are common in relationships. You can handle them in healthier or less healthy ways.
- Knowing where our emotions are coming from helps us manage them in a healthier, more respectful way.

IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

TESTING UNDERSTANDING

- What's the difference between love and a crush?
- What is a healthy way to handle jealousy, frustration, or stress? (open communication)

OPENING CONVERSATION

- When have you seen a friend handle jealousy, frustration, or stress in a good way? Have you seen anyone handle it badly?
- What's one thing you wonder about after taking this course?



COURSE TITLE

Handling Break-Ups



CONTENT

How to handle break-ups in a healthier and safer way, including:

- Why relationships might end.
- How grief works and strategies for managing grief.
- Things to consider when ending a relationship.



KEY MESSAGES TO REINFORCE

- It is normal to be sad about the end of a relationship. Coping with grief in healthier ways (taking care of your physical and mental health) is important.
- When you end a relationship, have a safety plan, plan ahead, be honest (not brutal) and get support from a trusted adult.
- Don't share private information about someone else (including images), no matter how angry or hurt you are.



IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

TESTING UNDERSTANDING

- What are 5-7 ways of coping with grief in a healthier way?

OPENING CONVERSATION

- When you are sad, angry, or upset, what are some ways you make yourself feel better?
Which are you proud of?
- When have you changed your mind about something before (about sports, activities, friends, family, etc.)?
How did you handle that situation?
- What's one thing you wonder about after taking this course?