

Lesson two: Communication and readiness

Ages 14–16

+ Lesson overview

This is the second of four lessons, focusing on empowering and supporting young people as they develop relationships. This lesson explores how people can assess readiness for different ways of expressing intimacy and how this can be communicated.

Learning objective

To learn how to communicate about intimacy in relationships and assess readiness for different ways of expressing intimacy.

Learning outcomes

Young people will be able to:

- Identify factors that affect readiness to take part in different kinds of intimacy.
- Explain that there are different ways to express intimacy and how people can communicate about their comfort and preferences.
- Describe strategies to manage pressurised situations and seek support.

Resources

- Box or envelope for questions
- Resource 1: *Talking heads – Intimacy* [1 per pair]
- Resource 2: *Diamond 9 – Ready for sexual intimacy?* [1 per group of 3–4]

Lesson summary

Activity	Description	Timing
Introduction	Introduce learning objectives and outcomes and reinforce ground rules.	5 mins
Baseline assessment	Respond to a character's question about communicating readiness and expressing intimacy.	10 mins
Expressing intimacy	Identify the ways that characters choose to express intimacy and suggest ways that the character could communicate this to a partner.	15 mins
Diamond 9	Discuss the factors that might affect readiness for sexual intimacy and negotiate which factors are most important.	10 mins
Script writing	Respond to questions about a scenario regarding pressure in an intimate relationship.	10 mins
Reflection and endpoint assessment	Return to the class list from the baseline activity and write any further suggestions and one question they have.	5 mins
Signpost support	Remind the class how to access further advice, guidance and support about rights and communication in relationships.	5 mins

Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher guidance notes before teaching this lesson. These include guidance on ground rules, the limits of confidentiality, relevant subject knowledge, communication, and handling questions effectively.

Keywords

Communication, readiness, assertiveness, negotiation, compromise, coercion, manipulation

Baseline assessment

➤ Introduction – 5 mins

Negotiate or revisit ground rules for the lesson and remind the class that they can put questions in the anonymous question box, either anonymously, or with their name on if they would like to have a follow-up conversation with the teacher.

Introduce the learning objectives and outcomes. Explain that today's lesson will explore how people can assess readiness for different ways of expressing intimacy and how this can be communicated.

➤ Baseline assessment – 10 mins

Working on their own, ask the class to write a response to the character on Slide 3.

Using the questions on slide 4, take feedback from the class, creating a whole-class list of ideas under the following headings:

- How a person might know they are ready to be sexually intimate with someone
- Different ways people can express intimacy
- How partners can communicate about intimacy and readiness
- How someone might manage pressure from a partner

This will give you an understanding of the class's current attitudes and understanding regarding intimacy and communication in healthy relationships. Keep this list safe as the class will return to it at the end of the lesson.

Core activities

➤ Expressing intimacy – 15 mins

Hand pairs Resource 1: *Talking heads – Intimacy*. Ask pairs to pick out the three suggestions they think are the most effective ways of expressing intimacy towards another person, and which they think are least effective. Emphasise that there are no right answers in relation to this activity.

Each pair should find another pair and join to make small groups and compare the ways of expressing intimacy that they have decided are most and least effective. Take feedback from the class, discussing whether there are any ways of expressing intimacy that were more commonly identified as effective.

➤ Diamond 9 – 10 mins

Hand out Resource 2: *Diamond 9 – Ready for sexual intimacy?* to small groups of 3–4. Working in their groups, ask the class to place the cards in a diamond shape as illustrated on Slide 7. At the top should be the factor they see as most important to deciding if both people are ready for sexual intimacy together, working down towards the least important at the bottom of the diamond.

Remind the class of their previous learning about consent. Although there is no right answer to the choices they make in this activity, each factor will have an impact on how comfortable someone feels and that consent requires both people involved to feel enthusiastic, safe, and confident in their decision to engage in sexual intimacy. Encourage young people to try to agree about which they consider most and least important as a group and be prepared to justify their choices during feedback.

Take feedback by asking each group for their most and least important factors, and any additional factors they want to share; perhaps those that caused most debate in their groups.

Key points that may arise during discussion:

- As explored in KS3, under no circumstances should one person put anyone else under pressure to do something they are not ready and willing to do. It is always the responsibility of the person seeking consent to ensure consent is given, including in long-term relationships.
- There are a range of external pressures someone may experience when deciding if they want and are ready for sexual intimacy; however, each person is an individual and it is important that they are able to freely make their own choice and have the capacity to consent.
- People who are ready to have sex are able to talk about contraception and sexual health.
- Most people will desire and be ready for sexual intimacy at different times. While the age of consent for sexual activity is 16, this does not mean that everyone will be ready for intimacy at this point.

Support: Ask groups to select two aspects they think are most important, and two aspects they think are not as important as any other cards.

Challenge: Hand out nine blank cards and ask the young people to create their own features of a sexual relationship to prioritise.

During feedback, ask the young people to consider any aspects from the Diamond 9 core activity that had not featured in their cards and decide where they think these would feature in their diamond.

➤ Script writing – 10 mins

In pairs, ask the class to imagine they had seen the conversation on Slide 8, and ask them to discuss the questions on the slide.

After discussion, ask the class to consider if any of their answers would be different depending on whether Sam was a boy or a girl. Use this discussion to explain that coercion and manipulation can happen in any relationship and that the relationship skills needed to maintain healthy, equal relationships are the same for people of any gender.

Ask the class to continue scripting the conversation between the two characters using two different colours: one colour should show what the characters are thinking, and one colour should show what the characters are saying. Aim for the conversation to demonstrate clear and respectful communication so each character can understand what the other is thinking and feeling.

Key learning:

- Remind the class that it is never OK for someone to pressure another person. This includes manipulating someone to agree through lying, or pressuring someone to take part in sexual activities without a condom, which may be what Sam is referring to in the conversation. Lying to someone (for example about being allergic to contraception) infringes on their ability to give informed consent freely and is against the law.
- Clear communication between partners can help to avoid ambiguity in situations. However, if Joe is seeking consent from Sam, then it is down to him to be certain that Sam has given their consent, and to respect Sam's decision if they choose to not give, or withdraw, their consent.

Support: Focus on what the characters might say to each other to reach a safe and respectful conclusion for both individuals.

Challenge: Consider the possible consequences of Sam and Joe's experiences the previous night. What concerns might Sam and Joe have? What might they need to do to ensure their health, safety, and respect for one another? Who or what might be able to help them manage this?

Plenary/assessment for end of learning

➤ Reflection and endpoint assessment – 5 mins

On an exit card or pieces of paper, revisit the class lists from the baseline assessment.

Ask the class to privately reflect on their learning and write down any additions to the lists. They can also submit any further questions on this topic.

➤ Signpost support – 5 mins

If the young people need advice on what they have discussed in the lesson or have concerns, signpost them to support at home or in school (such as parents/carers, tutors and head of year).

- Childline: childline.org.uk 0800 1111

Extension activity

Complete research on the Childline website about how to make difficult decisions in lots of different contexts. While conducting their research, the young people should decide which bits of advice they think are most useful for people making decisions about romantic relationships, and use these tips to make a blog post or script, or draft a short-format social media post (for example, something that could be shared in a video of around 10–15 seconds):

www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/school-college-and-work/life-issues-planning/making-decisions/

Are there any additional bits of advice the young people want to add that are specific to making decisions in a relationship?