

Human Sexual Response

Supplemental Activities

SUPPLEMENT OVERVIEW

The *Best Practices in STI/HIV and Pregnancy Prevention* curriculum contains 10 lessons of essential knowledge and skill-based activities related to sexual health. This Human Sexual Response Supplement includes information that allows for a deeper understanding of the various ways, both physically and emotionally, that humans respond to sexual activity and intimacy. These activities go beyond the foundational sexual health information provided in *Best Practices* and are most appropriate for older youth.

These supplemental activities can be delivered individually, in the order that best meets your needs. Review the material first, to determine what is developmentally appropriate for your students, based on your curriculum needs and the culture of your classroom, school or community. Include the content where it fits best as you deliver *Best Practices* or any other sexual health curriculum. The supplemental activities address basic knowledge on the physical, emotional and social aspects of human sexual response, as well as activities that explore attitudes, skills and student self-reflection.

All activities are designed to be gender inclusive. Body parts and experiences of sexual response are not labeled as true for someone who is ‘male’ or ‘female’ but can be true for people regardless of their gender identity.

PURPOSE

Many young people are curious, and receive many messages from peers and the media, about pleasure and human sexual response. There are many reasons why it is important to educate young people about these topics as you teach sexual health.

1. Addressing pleasure as one of the primary reasons people have sex can create an honest, open dialogue about safe sexual behavior.
2. Messages that young people receive about sexual pleasure, through the media, their peers, and the Internet, often promote misinformation and stereotypes.
3. Pleasure is a common reason people give for why they don't use condoms. Messaging focused on pleasure promotion can support consistent use of barrier methods and lubricant to reduce the risk of STIs and unintended pregnancy.
4. Discussing the pleasure needs of sexual partners may increase communication, consent and equality in relationships, reducing sexual violence and promoting self-advocacy and self-esteem.
5. Understanding research on human sexual response, including arousal and pleasure, can validate common sexual experiences. This information can also reduce shame and stigma and increase body awareness and communication.
6. By including activities on the different types of intimacy and ways people receive and express love in relationships, we are demonstrating that human sexual response includes more than what people experience physically.

USING THIS SUPPLEMENT WITHIN *BEST PRACTICES*

This supplement can be delivered in its entirety or integrated into the delivery of the other lessons in the *Best Practices in STI/HIV and Pregnancy Prevention* curriculum. Options for using the Human Sexual Response Supplemental Activities include:

1. Delivering this information after the activities in the *Sexual and Reproductive Anatomy Supplement*.
2. Delivering this information after completing the *Best Practices* curriculum, or other lessons in a sexual health unit.
3. The ***Brainstorm and Introduction*** may fit well within *Lesson 1 of Best Practices*.
4. Incorporating ***Writing My Own Relationship Script*** within the *Best Practices, Lesson 2* activity called *Messages We Hear about Sex*.
5. Incorporating ***Promoting Safer Sex*** into *Best Practices, Lesson 5: Barrier Methods*.
6. Incorporating ***Types of Intimacy and/or Love Languages*** into *Best Practices, Lesson 8: Healthy Relationships*.
7. In lieu of delivering the activities in full, concepts of how pleasure relates to overall sexual health can be integrated throughout the *Best Practices* lessons.
8. Offering this supplement as part of an upper level health course for older youth.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The activities in this Supplement cover the following learning objectives.

Participants will:

1. Increase comfort in discussing sexual response and pleasure.
2. Describe the human sexual response cycle.
3. Analyze media and societal norms about romantic and/or sexual relationships and how they can impact relationships and sexual experiences.
4. Describe how safer sex practices, such as using barrier methods, can make sex more pleasurable.
5. Analyze different types of intimacy in relationships.
6. Identify and explore ways to communicate and express love, intimacy and personal boundaries in relationships.

HUMAN SEXUAL RESPONSE SUPPLEMENT OVERVIEW

Activities	Student Learning Objectives	Minutes	Materials and Preparation Checklist
Brainstorm and Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase comfort in discussing sexual response and pleasure. 	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easel paper or white board and markers.
What Happens to the Body During Sex?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the human sexual response cycle. Increase comfort in discussing sexual response and pleasure. 	20-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review videos and decide which you will use and how you will project them in class. If using, review the mini-lecture and Google Slides. If appropriate, print the Sexual Anatomy During Arousal handout, one for each student.
Writing My Own Relationship Script	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze media and societal norms about romantic and/or sexual relationships and how that can impact relationships and sexual experiences. 	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easel paper or white board and markers. Print the Media Messages handout, one for each student. Note cards, one for each student, or journaling option.
Promoting Safer Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how safer sex practices, such as using barrier methods, can make sex more pleasurable. 	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lubricant and barrier methods, one for each student or small group. Print the Barrier Methods and Lubricant – The Safer, More Pleasurable Option handout, one for each student. Smart phones or camera/video recorders. Way to project or share student videos/print ads.
Types of Intimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze different types of intimacy in relationships. 	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easel paper or white board and markers. Print and post More Intimate and Less Intimate signs.
Love Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and explore ways to communicate and express love, intimacy and personal boundaries in relationships. 	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Print Love Languages handout, one for each student. Print scenarios for small group activity. If using, review information about the quiz and share with students as part of self-reflection activity.



BRAINSTORM AND INTRODUCTION



Say,

In our sexual health unit, we discuss how to reduce risks of unintended pregnancy and STIs, healthy and unhealthy relationships, consent and coercion, communication and goal setting. We also consider messages young people hear about sex, and their decisions to have sex, or not. What are some of the reasons you think people have sex?

Possible answers: intimacy, reproduction, tension release, power, boredom, pleasure, need for affection, money or basic necessities, curiosity, peer pressure or pressure from a partner, showing love to your partner.

Studies show that a common reason most people have sex is because it feels good. At the same time, sexual response and pleasure are sometimes left out of the conversation during sex education. Why do you think pleasure is not often discussed?

Possible answers: embarrassment, lack of knowledge, fear, discomfort among parents and adults in talking about this topic with youth, because they don't think youth are mature or ready for these conversations.

What are some reasons pleasure might be included when we talk about sex and sexuality?

Possible answers:

- *There's a lot of misinformation about sex and pleasure, and people should have the facts.*
- *Can promote communication with a partner, including discussing boundaries, consent and what partners want from the sexual experience.*
- *Can help someone decide how to protect themselves and their sexual partners from unintended pregnancy and STIs.*
- *Can lead to respect of self and others.*
- *Can result in more enjoyable sexual experiences.*

Today, we are going to talk about human sexual response and pleasure. Human sexual response involves the physical and emotional changes that occur to most bodies during sexual arousal.

Pleasure plays a role in people's decisions around using barrier methods or birth control and can be an important part of conversations around sexual consent. Some things we should keep in mind when talking about pleasure and sexual response:

- Not all people are interested in sex or respond to sexual activity in the same way.
- Each person has unique sexual experiences which are influenced by thoughts, fantasies, abilities, real life experiences, relationships and physical and emotional wellness.

- No two people are the same in how they respond sexually; therefore, it is very important to know yourself and your body.
- Communication and consent are key to promoting equality, reducing sexual violence and ensuring pleasurable experiences in our relationships.

FACILITATOR NOTE

Consider this definition from the World Health Organization (WHO) to help promote a comprehensive understanding of sexual health.

“A state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.”



WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BODY DURING SEX?



Say,

When we learn about sexual anatomy, it's often in the context of how the different body parts function for reproduction. Sexual pleasure and response is an important part of sexuality. Humans are unique from most other mammals in that sexual arousal and pleasure are both physical and emotional.

Human sexual response describes the physiological changes that occur during sexual activity. While sex has been around forever, researchers only started to study how human bodies responded during sexual activity in the 1960s. The original research defined four phases of sexual response: arousal, plateau, orgasm and resolution, following a linear path that is the same for most people, with the ultimate goal of orgasm.

Over time, studies of human sexual response have come to show that humans are a diverse group. Their experiences with sexual activity are not all the same, and the ultimate goal of sex is not just reaching orgasm. Human sexual response is not just about the physical changes that happen to a body, but is also influenced by people's emotions and relationships.

Instructions

- Provide a mini-lecture or show one of the recommended videos (or another of your choosing) to explain what many bodies experience during the sexual response cycle.
- If you provide the mini-lecture, you can use the accompanying Google Slides. Open the presentation in Google Slides, save a copy for your own use and adapt as needed: <http://bit.ly/37kFfJh>
- For more information, you may want to read this article: https://www.scarleteen.com/article/bodies/with_pleasure_a_view_of_whole_sexual_anatomy_for_every_body
- Review or refer to the **Anatomy Review** activity in the **Sexual and Reproductive Anatomy Supplement**, to ensure a common understanding of how human sexual response affects the body.
- Provide students with the **Sexual Anatomy during Arousal** handout, if appropriate.
- Debrief the lecture or videos as a class, using the debrief questions on the next page.

Option 1: Mini-Lecture with Slides

Show the *Human Sexual Response Google Slides*. Use and adapt the script provided in the **Mini-Lecture Facilitator Guide**. Remind students that not everyone's bodies and brains function in the same way when it comes to sexual response and arousal. For example, for people with certain medical conditions or any kind of paralysis, the body may not be able to respond sexually in the same way as others, or may not be able to respond at all. People may still feel intimacy or pleasure in different ways than what's described here.

Option 2: Video(s)

Review the following videos and decide if they are a good fit for screening in your classroom.

- ***Your Body During Sex***

This AsapScience video explains the anatomy and physiology of arousal and orgasm.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-xbQeGZ6rk&vl=es-419>

- ***The Science of Orgasms***

This video uses humor to show how the brain releases chemicals that create pleasure and connection within the human sexual response cycle and orgasm.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jSIdoa7Hrk>

DEBRIEF THE ACTIVITY

Debrief the videos or mini-lecture by asking the following questions:

1. **What do you notice about the human sexual response model that describes desire, arousal, plateau, orgasm and resolution?**

Possible answers:

- *There is a beginning, middle and an end.*
- *Regardless of body parts, bodies respond in similar ways.*
- *It is linear – and implies that everyone experiences the phases in the same way.*
- *It might create an expectation that sex is supposed to always be a certain way.*
- *The main focus or expectation is orgasm.*

2. **How might someone feel if they do not experience desire, arousal or orgasm?**

Possible answers:

- *They might feel like something is wrong with them.*
- *They might feel frustrated.*
- *If they don't have desire for sex, they might question their identity or sexual orientation.*
- *If their partner has trouble with arousal or orgasm, they might think they are not doing something right.*

3. Was there anything surprising or confusing from the video(s) or lecture?

Answers may vary

4. What was one take-away message you got about human sexual response?

Answers may vary

SUMMARIZE

Summarize the activity by including these key points.

- Studying sexual response shows how our bodies are capable of feeling intense pleasure and connection either with ourselves or a partner.
- While research can provide important information about sexual response, it is not always representative of all people or all experiences. Most research included people who are cisgender and heterosexual and is not inclusive of all people's experiences.
- Choosing to be in a romantic and sexual relationship can be exciting and enjoyable. It can feel good to have a close connection to someone. Because of the hormones involved, it can also bring up feelings like anxiety, nervousness and excitement or make it hard to eat or sleep.
- Taking time to pause and slow down can create the space to think about what you are feeling and what you need. This can help you communicate effectively and make the best decisions not only for your sexual health but also for your emotional and mental health.
- There can be diverse experiences when it comes to sexual relationships and sexual response. Speaking with trusted adults and having sources of accurate information can provide support when you have questions or need to process your feelings.

MINI-LECTURE FACILITATOR GUIDE - HUMAN SEXUAL RESPONSE SLIDES

Slide 1: Introduction

Scientists first started doing research on human sexual response in the 1960s. Since then, other scientists have studied sex and relationships to understand human sexual response and what happens to human bodies during sex. This research was initially mostly focused on cisgender, heterosexual people and did not represent all people's experiences.

Slide 2: The Human Sexual Response Cycle

The original theory identified four different phases of sexual response –arousal, plateau, orgasm and resolution. Keep in mind that since the 1960s, other research has shown that these four phases don't describe every person's experience.

Slide 3: Here is a diagram of the Human Sexual Response Cycle

Slide 4: Sexual Desire

Most sexual activity (whether alone or with another person) starts with **desire**. Desire is a strong internal sense of wanting. It is important to remember that when engaging in sexual activity with someone else, there needs to be mutual consent. What causes desire is different for each individual and may change over time or with different sexual experiences.

Slide 5: Phase 1 – Arousal/Excitement

The first phase of how bodies change during sex is **arousal** or **excitement**. During this phase:

- Blood flow increases causing the chest to swell and the skin to become more red or may feel warm. This is also known as a sex-flush.
- Blood pressure and heart rate increases.
- Blood also flows to the genitals filling the corpus cavernosum, the spongy tissue in the penis and clitoris. This is called vasocongestion.

Slide 6 & 7: Vasocongestion

These are images of how the genitals look at a rested state and during sexual arousal.

- **Slide 6:** The vulva swells and releases fluid (from the Bartholin's and Skene's glands) that lubricates the vulva and vaginal opening, which makes sexual activity more pleasurable.
- **Slide 7:** The penis will get hard and become erect and the scrotum swells and elevates.

Slide 8: Phase 2 - Plateau

If sexual stimulation (like kissing or touching) continues, the next step is the **plateau** phase. Contrary to what the name implies, this phase is not a leveling off, but an increase in intensity. The plateau phase may include:

- An increase in sensitivity in the genitals and body.
- Continued blood rushing to chest and face.
- Heart and breathing rate increase.
- More focus on body sensations and less on thinking. ***This is why it can be helpful to plan ahead to have birth control and barrier methods on hand before engaging in sexual activity.***
- It's also important to keep checking in with a partner to make sure consent is still present as feelings intensify.

Slide 9: Phase 3 - Orgasm

After the plateau phase many people will experience **orgasm**, which is the shortest phase of the sexual response cycle. The feeling of an orgasm may be described as an intense pleasurable feeling and experience.

- During orgasm people may experience muscle contractions in the pelvic region.
- For people with a penis this is often when ejaculation (release of semen) occurs.
- For people with a vulva, orgasm is achieved most commonly through stimulation of the clitoris.
- It is common for people to not always experience an orgasm or for orgasms to feel different depending on the person or type of sexual activity or experience.

Slide 10: Phase 4 - Resolution

The last phase of the sexual response cycle is **resolution**, when the body returns to its unaroused state.

- The body will return to its resting state - muscle tension will ease, blood flow will leave the genitals and heart rate and blood pressure will return to a resting state.
- People may feel more relaxed or even sleepy during this phase.
- A person with a penis will experience what is called a 'refractory period' during which they cannot have another erection. This period can last minutes, hours, or days, depending on the person.
- A person with a vulva often does not experience a refractory period. For some people, they may become aroused again (and have multiple orgasms). For others, they are no longer aroused after orgasm.

Slide 11: Sexual Response – It's Not the Same for Everyone

The way the body responds to sexual activity is only part of the picture.

- There is a great deal of diversity in what people experience during sex.
- A person's body can respond to sexual activity (for example, having an erection or vaginal lubrication) even if they don't feel like or want to have sex. This can be true even in cases of sexual abuse, assault or rape and can lead to feelings of confusion and shame.
- The opposite can also occur where someone wants to have sex, but they are unable to get an erection or experience vaginal lubrication.
- This is why verbal communication and consent is so important when it comes to sexual activity. How a body is reacting or not reacting in sexual situations does not always represent a person's emotions, desire or feelings.

Slide 12: The Brain and Sex

We can't fully understand human sexual response without including the brain – the largest and most important of the human sex organs.

- While we often associate sexual arousal and orgasm with body parts like the penis, vagina or clitoris, it's the brain that carries much of the responsibility when it comes to sexual arousal and pleasure.
- The brain controls the central nervous system, cardiovascular system, endocrine system and our senses, which are all involved in sexual arousal and function.
- The brain communicates with the rest of the body by processing information about how things feel – including touch, sound, smell and taste.
- The brain produces hormones that control everything from reproduction, sexual feelings, desire and emotions that lead to intimacy and connection with a sexual partner.

Slide 13: The Role of Hormones

Many people experience strong emotions and feelings when there is attraction as well as physical and emotional connection during sexual activity. We'll break down, in a general way, some of the hormones that come into play during sexual arousal.

- Testosterone and estrogen are known as sex hormones, which start to make sperm and begin ovulation/menstruation. These hormones increase during puberty, and decrease in mid-life. They can affect a person's sexual feelings, lust and desire for romantic or sexual relationships.
- Dopamine, norepinephrine and serotonin are the hormones that are involved in attraction. Produced together they can make someone feel euphoric, carefree, excited and energetic and can make us feel like we can't eat or sleep when we're sexually attracted to another person.
- Hormones like oxytocin and vasopressin are involved in attachment. They are produced when we are physically close to someone else and can make people feel closer and connected after sex.

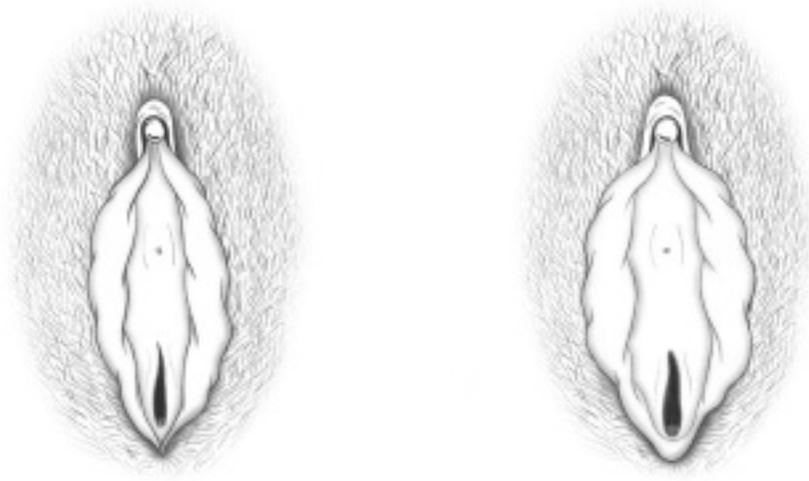
Slide 14: The Brake and Gas Pedals

Human sexual response can be affected by many things. Some things act like a brake pedal, making it difficult to become aroused. Other things act like a gas pedal, encouraging the body to become aroused.

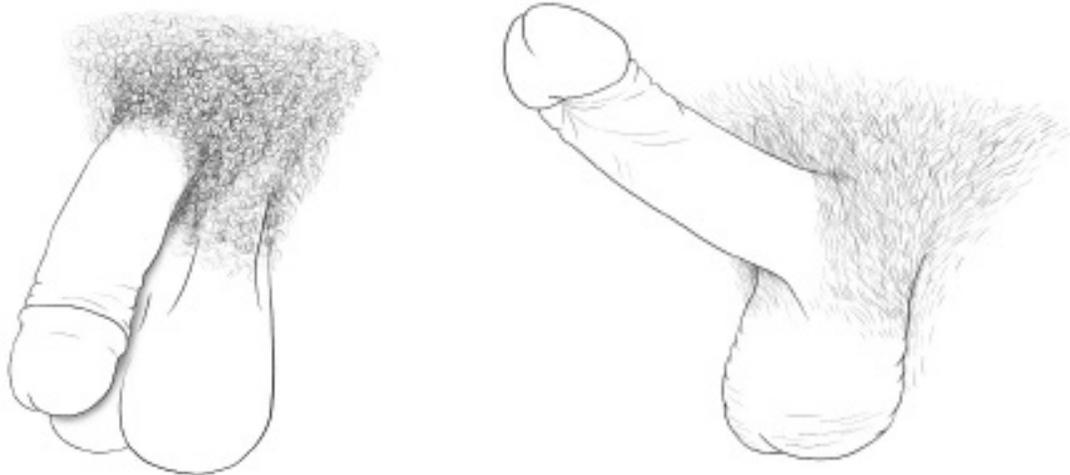
- The **brake pedal** is everything that tells the body that it's not a good time to have sex. The brake pedal can be activated by stress, relationship conflict, performance anxiety, negative body image, history of trauma, fear of unwanted pregnancy, worry about STIs and other physical or emotional responses to sex. This can stop the body from being able to become aroused or reach orgasm.
- The **gas pedal** is everything that tells the body it might be a good time to have sex. The gas pedal can be activated by a partner making them feel special or safe, their partner's appearance or smell, excitement about new love, a romantic or safe environment or being able to communicate well and trust a partner.



STUDENT HANDOUT: SEXUAL ANATOMY DURING AROUSAL



Above Figures: On the left is a vulva at rest, on the right is a vulva after arousal. Arousal causes blood flow to the genitals, filling the corpus cavernosum of the clitoris and causing the labia and clitoris to swell and the vagina to lubricate from fluid released from the Bartholin's and Skene's glands.



Above Figures: On the left is a penis and scrotum at rest, on the right is the penis and scrotum after arousal. Arousal causes blood flow to the genitals, filling the corpus cavernosum of the penis causing it to get hard and become erect and the scrotum to elevate.



WRITING MY OWN RELATIONSHIP SCRIPT



Say,

Media is one way that we receive messages about sex and relationships. However, just like watching the movie *Fast & Furious* is not a good way to learn how to drive, sexual content in movies or pornography is not the best way to learn about sex and relationships. Scripts include scenes and language written for actors and performers. They are often not based on reality and are written to entertain, rather than educate.

In this activity, we'll explore some common scripts and messages about sex and relationships that we see in the media, and how they can be helpful or harmful when it comes to having our own relationships and safe, consensual sexual experiences, now or in the future.

We will first look at media scripts that reinforce stereotypes, gender roles or behaviors that are portrayed as common, appropriate and even expected in relationships or sexual situations. We will then compare these messages and scripts to what we might want in our own lives.

Instructions

- Break the class into small discussion groups.
- Instruct them to fill in the **Media Messages** handout with notes from their discussions. They may be able to fill in some questions more easily than others, which is okay.
- Instruct them that the handout is to help them brainstorm common messages they may receive from different media sources in their culture.
- Optional: If you have a particular example of a media script from a show, movie or music, you can share that as an example to start them off. Or ask students to find examples.
- Give the students 15 minutes to brainstorm different scripts that media sources portray about sex and relationships.
- When finished, ask groups if they would like to share some of their responses. Debrief this activity by using the questions on the next page.

FACILITATOR NOTE

We include in this activity several types of media, including pornography. With a very lucrative and pervasive online porn industry, we know that many young people know about porn, and are familiar with the common scripts and behaviors portrayed in porn.

Let students know that you are not assuming that everyone watches or is exposed to pornography or other sexually explicit media. At the same time, studies tell us that an ever increasing percentage of young people have seen pornographic material, even if they've come across it by accident online or heard about it from peers.

Many people receive unhelpful messages about sex by watching pornography, so it is important to address it with youth when discussing media portrayals and messages about sex and relationships. We want young people to know that pornography, like all media, is entertainment, and not reality. That it is meant for adults, even though many younger people may have seen it. Basing relationships on what is portrayed in pornographic media can lead to unrealistic expectations for young people who are navigating relationships and sexual experiences.

Below are two videos about how pornography is often different from real life. Be sure to review the videos before deciding if you'll show them to the class.

- **Porn: Fact of Fiction?** <https://amaze.org/video/porn-fact-fiction/>
- **Porn Sex vs Real Sex : The Differences Explained with Food** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q64hTNEj6KQ>

DEBRIEF THE ACTIVITY

Use the following questions to debrief the activity as a large group.

1. What were common scripts about sex and relationships you identified across the various types of media?

Possible answers:

- *Sex just happens without communication about what each partner wants.*
- *A lot of focus on starting a relationship, and less on maintaining a relationship.*
- *Focus is on the 'highlights' or the exciting parts of sex/relationships rather than the awkward or mundane/everyday situations.*
- *People having sex just know what to do, and is portrayed as 'hot and heavy' without showing common experiences of the awkwardness that can happen with sex.*

2. Were there different scripts based on gender?

Possible answers:

- *Men are supposed to pursue women and be confident.*
- *Women need to dress or act a certain way to attract men.*
- *Men and women are very different in what they want out of sex and relationships.*

3. What (and who) is left out of many of these media scripts and messages?

Possible answers:

- *People who have disabilities are not often considered when it comes to portraying sex and relationships.*
- *Trans people and 'same sex' relationships are not as common in mainstream situations or media scripts, or are built on stereotypes.*
- *That it can be awkward navigating sex with someone for the first time.*
- *Communication about what people want, consent or using protection.*

4. How do you think these media messages and scripts affect people?

Possible answers:

- *The messages can be harmful by creating unrealistic expectations and pressure to act or look a certain way.*
- *They can be harmful in that they encourage people to act without talking, for example, to just kiss someone you like and that the other person will want that and automatically respond back in a positive way.*
- *It is helpful to see not just the 'highlights' of sex and relationships but also what a sexual situation or relationship may look like in real life.*
- *What the media scripts portray are often not an accurate representation, so people think they must be doing something wrong if it doesn't look or feel the same way for them.*

SUMMARIZE

Summarize the activity by including these key points:

- **Analyzing scripts can help us become aware of how culture and media influence our beliefs and behaviors. Often media can give dramatized, exaggerated or false depictions of reality. Since sex is an activity that is done in private, we generally don't have real life examples to compare with these scripts, which can lead to unrealistic expectations.**
- **Remember that you are the co-author of your relationships and can decide how to look, act and be, in a way that feels good for you and respects your partner.**
- **Conversations about how to practice safer sex or how to have a mutually pleasurable experience are often cut out of media depictions of sex and relationships. It is important to practice having open and honest conversations to support each other's needs and wants in a relationship, and to engage in safer sex.**

REFLECTION

Pass out a note card to each student or have them use a journal to reflect on the following questions. Write the questions on the board or on easel paper. This is meant to reflect on romantic or sexual relationships, but can also apply to other close, platonic relationships.

Reflect on your own life and a relationship you have or may want to have in the future. Write down what you want that relationship to look like and feel like.

1. What messages and scripts best reflect what you want in your relationships?
2. If your ideal relationship was made into a movie, what would be the story line?
3. How would you describe your character?
4. What would be the themes of your script?



MEDIA MESSAGES

Instructions: Think about the scripts, or narratives, about sex and relationships that you see or hear in the media. This could be music lyrics; videos; scripts from movies, TV series, advertisements; or social media. Think about the scripts from each of these media sources and answer the following questions. It's okay if you don't have responses for each type of media listed below.

MESSAGES	MOVIES	MUSIC	SOCIAL MEDIA	PORNOGRAPHY
What messages or script does it tell about sex or relationships?				
What messages or script does it tell about what bodies are supposed to look like?				
How do the messages or scripts change for different genders, sexualities, races, abilities or ages?				
How are these messages or scripts either helpful or harmful?				



PROMOTING SAFER SEX



Say,

Many people think that having safer sex takes the enjoyment out of sex and don't realize that for many people, safer sex can also mean better sex. It's understandable why people may think this. Sexual health education often focuses on ways to stay safe from STIs or pregnancy, which is important, but often leaves out the aspects of sex that make people feel good.

In this activity, you will imagine you have been hired by a condom and lubricant company as a social media influencer to increase the use of their products among young adults. This company wants to promote how their lubricants and barrier methods make sex more fun and pleasurable, in addition to being safer.

When thinking of your message, it may help to tailor it to your social media followers. Think about their gender, race, ability, sexual orientation and how your message can speak to them specifically. Be as creative as you want; just remember to keep your message positive! You can use song, dance, artwork, catchy phrases or stories to get your message across.

Instructions

- Students may work individually or in small groups to come up with a short piece of media (for example: video, photo, meme or artwork) with a caption that promotes the use of barrier methods or lubricant through positive messaging.
- Remind students that the information might not be relevant for them now, but may be helpful for the future.
- Provide students with lubricant and barrier methods to use in their ad.
- Provide each group or individual with the handout **Barrier Methods and Lubricant – The Safer, More Pleasurable Option** for instructions and positive key points to consider as they create their ad.
- After they have made their social media posts, share them and have the class vote for the one that's most effective at promoting the use of barrier methods or lubricant through positive messaging.

FACILITATOR NOTE

These additional key points may not be addressed when the students present their ad. You may choose to mention some of these points as they relate to certain ad campaigns.

- Some people with penises find that external condoms can help delay ejaculation, making sex last longer.
- Some people with vulvas report that the outer ring of the internal condom rubs against their clitoris during intercourse, increasing their pleasure.
- Some people report that using condoms can increase pleasure and arousal by decreasing the stress of worrying about STIs and unwanted pregnancy.
- Some people report that different types of condoms (for example ribbed or studded condoms) create new and different sensations, enhancing sensitivity and increasing pleasure.
- Some people report that using flavored condoms or oral dams increases the pleasure of oral sex.
- Some people report lubricant reduces friction, thereby increasing pleasure. Lubricant can reduce the risk of micro tears in the skin, decreasing the risk of STI transmission while increasing pleasure.

DEBRIEF THE ACTIVITY

Debrief the activity by asking the following questions.

1. What messages were effective at promoting the use of barrier methods or lubricant?

Answers may vary.

2. Why is it important to discuss pleasure when talking about using barrier methods and lubricant?

Possible answers:

- *People may be more likely to use barrier methods if they feel good to use.*
- *Knowing how to make barrier methods more pleasurable can give people the skills to use them in a way that feels good.*

SUMMARIZE

In summarizing the activity, include these key points.

- **Using barrier methods and lubricant can increase both safety and pleasure by reducing worry about getting an STI or having an unintended pregnancy.**
- **Taking time to try out different styles, brands, sizes and flavors of barrier methods and lubricant can be helpful in finding what works best for you and your partner, now or in the future.**
- **Various community organizations and sexual health clinics have free condoms and lubricants available in different styles to make them more accessible.**
- **Taking time to think and research what works best for you not only helps you be safer but also can be a fun way to learn about your body and what feels good.**
- **Talking about safer sex options in your social circles and with your partner can normalize and promote safer sexual activity.**



BARRIER METHODS AND LUBRICANT THE SAFER, MORE PLEASURABLE OPTION

Instructions: *You have been hired by a condom and lubricant company as a social media influencer to increase the use of their products among young adults. Create a short piece of media (for example: video, photo, meme or artwork) with a caption that promotes condom or lubricant use through positive messaging.*

When thinking of your message it may help to tailor it to your social media followers. Think about their gender, race, ability, sexual orientation and how your message can speak to them specifically. Be as creative as you want, just remember to keep your message positive!



CONSIDER THESE POSITIVE KEY POINTS WHEN CREATING YOUR AD

- ❖ Highlight the positive in using barrier methods and lubricant.
- ❖ Come up with fun, sexy catch phrases to encourage the use of condoms, oral dams and lube.
- ❖ Remember that condoms come in many different sizes, styles, textures and colors.
- ❖ Consider ways someone can engage sexual partners in making barrier methods more enjoyable to use.
- ❖ There are flavored oral dams or one can be made out of a flavored condom.
- ❖ Lube comes in different flavors and some add a heat sensation.
- ❖ Lubricants and condoms can decrease friction and increase sensation.
- ❖ Using a condom can help prolong sex.
- ❖ Communication is key to pleasurable sex.
- ❖ Pleasurable sex involves consenting partners.



TYPES OF INTIMACY



Say,

Intimacy, or feeling close or connected to someone, can occur in any type of relationship, including with family, friends, co-workers, classmates and romantic or sexual relationships. Intimacy often builds over time as you share and connect with another person in various ways. Intimacy might also be described as “Into-Me-See,” as it involves revealing parts of yourself for another to see. When showing your authentic self to another person, it can feel vulnerable as you may run the risk of rejection. Knowing yourself, and having positive self-esteem and self-worth, can make intimacy with another person easier.

In this activity we will explore different types of intimacy and ways to build intimacy with others. Finding ways to connect with someone before being sexually intimate can help build respect and communication. This can make it easier to have a mutually safe and satisfying relationship. Whether you are interested in being sexual with someone or not, there are many ways to build intimacy and feel close to someone. Some of these activities we may think of as more intimate than others.

Instructions

- Familiarize yourself with the concept of intimacy, including different categories and examples, using these articles for more information.
https://www.scarleteen.com/article/politics/intimacy_the_whys_hows_hownots_and_sonots
<https://www.healthline.com/health/intimacy#overview>
- Write or project on the board some different types of intimacy. You may include some or all of the following.
 - Emotional Intimacy** – sharing your joys, pain, fears and feelings.
 - Physical Intimacy** (not including sex) – hugging, holding hands, snuggling.
 - Intellectual Intimacy** – sharing your thoughts and opinions, discussing ideas.
 - Experiential Intimacy** – doing things together, playing games, exploring places.
 - Spiritual Intimacy** – sharing activities that nourish your soul, sharing your faith.
 - Crisis Intimacy** – reaching out to each other when big or small problems arise, supporting each other through challenges and difficult moments or events.
- Post the **Less Intimate** and **More Intimate** signs on the wall, spaced out to create a scale or continuum.
- Alternatively, use a polling option or game like Kahoot.
- Select from the following statements (or add your own). Read aloud (or include in a poll/game) the statements one at a time. Instruct the students to respond along the scale from more to less intimate, depending on where they consider the activity fits for them. Tell them there is no right or wrong answers, as everyone is different in how they connect with others.

- Let students know that even if they may not personally see themselves doing these exact activities, they can imagine similar activities that might feel more or less intimate to them. The purpose is to better understand what is intimate for them and how that may differ from other people.
- You may pause after students move along the scale to ask if students would like to share why they chose to stand where they are on the scale.

Say,

Imagine yourself in these situations. Move along the scale if you think the activity is MORE INTIMATE or LESS INTIMATE for you.

- **Sharing something you did that was embarrassing for you.**
- **Telling someone how excited you are about going to an event [i.e., school dance, prom, sporting event, etc].**
- **Snuggling with someone when watching a show.**
- **Giving someone a hug after not seeing them for a while.**
- **Talking about something you heard in the news.**
- **Discussing politics with someone.**
- **Sharing your family’s holiday (or other) traditions.**
- **Talking with someone about what faith means to you.**
- **Inviting someone to go to a concert with you.**
- **Sitting in silence with someone as you both read or do your own thing.**
- **Calling someone when you get a flat tire and need a ride.**
- **Reaching out to someone when you are feeling anxious or sad.**
- **Posting a selfie with someone on social media.**
- **Working on a fundraiser with someone for your sports team.**
- **Playing an online video game with someone.**
- **Taking a long car trip with someone to visit a new place.**

DEBRIEF THE ACTIVITY

Debrief the activity by asking students the following questions.

1. What can make something feel more or less intimate?

Possible answers:

- *When you feel vulnerable.*
- *If there's the possibility of rejection or not being supported, it might feel more intimate.*
- *If it's an activity you only do with certain people, it may feel more intimate.*
- *When you have personal connection, it might feel more intimate. For example, bringing someone to a place that means a lot to you (versus a random place).*
- *Sharing personal information about yourself that not many other people know.*

2. Why might it be important to experience other types of intimacy before being sexual intimate?

Possible answers:

- *To get to know someone better and what they like or don't like.*
- *To build trust with someone before being sexual with them.*
- *Gives you a chance to practice communication with someone else.*
- *To be more comfortable with each other.*

3. What types of intimacy do you think are most important to have in a sexual relationship and why? (refer to the list on the board)

Answers may vary.

SUMMARIZE

In summarizing the activity, include these key points.

- **Building different types of intimacy is an important part of relationships, including sexual relationships.**
- **Building intimacy can take time and effort as it can often include vulnerability and the need to trust one another.**
- **Different things can feel more or less intimate to different people. Communication can help build mutual understanding for satisfying relationships.**

LESS INTIMATE

MORE INTIMATE



LOVE LANGUAGES



Say,

Healthy relationships are built on mutual understanding and respect. At the same time, people may feel understood, respected and loved through different actions. While media often generalize what people want with lists like “What all women [men] want,” or “5 ways to pleasure your partner,” in reality everyone is unique. The best way to show someone you love or care is to know and support them in the ways that feel best for them. This is true for sexual and romantic partners as well as friends and family members.

What are some of the ways people show others they care about them?

Possible answers:

- *Doing a fun activity together.*
- *Giving them a present.*
- *Helping them with a project or chore.*
- *Telling them how much you appreciate them.*
- *Spending time with them doing something they like to do.*

Today we are going to talk about the Five Love Languages® (originating from a book by Gary Chapman) and how they can be used to enhance relationships whether those relationships are with friends, family or a sexual or romantic partner. The Five Love Languages® is one model for identifying how people prefer to give and receive love.

The five love languages are:

- WORDS OF AFFIRMATION
- RECEIVING GIFTS
- ACTS OF SERVICE
- QUALITY TIME
- PHYSICAL TOUCH

Communicating through the love language someone prefers is one way to show you respect and understand them. Whether it is a relationship with a sexual or dating partner, friend or family member, everybody is unique and wants and needs different things. Instead of assuming what someone wants or likes, getting to know them better can help to customize how you show love and support in a way they understand and appreciate. Knowing your own needs and wants and communicating that to others can also help them love and support you in the best way possible.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Share the **Five Love Languages**[®] handout, providing one to each student.
- Divide the students into small groups and assign each group one of the five scenarios.
- Tell the students they have 10 minutes to read, discuss and respond to their scenario and then you will come back together as a large group to share their responses.
- While completing the scenarios, if a group looks stuck, use the Facilitator Key for each scenario to help prompt them with examples.
- After 10 minutes, bring everyone back together. If you have time, they can share their scenario and responses.
- Debrief the activity as a large group, using the following debrief questions as a guide.

DEBRIEF THE ACTIVITY

Debrief the activity, using some of the following questions.

1. How can you learn someone's love language?

Possible answers:

- *Take time to get to know them.*
- *Ask them questions.*
- *Observe how they react in different situations.*
- *Ask their friends.*

2. How would it feel if someone communicated to you in a love language you don't like?

Possible answers:

- *It might feel uncomfortable (examples: if you feel self-conscious when given praise or if you don't like physical touch and they ask to hug you).*
- *It might feel like they don't know you well enough to know what you like or don't like.*
- *It might make you feel obligated to just accept what they give you (a gift, hug, praise, etc.) even if you're not comfortable with it.*

3. How can you communicate your love language(s) to other people?

Possible answers:

- *Be up front with them about what you like. (examples: "I love spending time with you." or "I appreciate it when you help me out.")*
- *Let them know if they do something that bothers you (examples: "I am really not much of a hugger." or "It feels uncomfortable when you compliment me so much.")*

4. How is knowing someone's love language important when it comes to sexual relationships?

Possible answers:

- *It might make them feel safe and supported and more comfortable and safe to engage sexually.*
- *It might help alleviate stress or make them feel more at ease or interested in getting closer.*

SUMMARIZE

In summarizing this activity, include these key points.

- Getting to know friends and loved ones by asking them questions (for example, if they like gifts or if they like physical touch) can help you know the best way to show your support and affection.
- Remember that consent is always needed in relationships, especially when giving physical touch. Communicating in a way your partner likes is important for feeling safe and supported.
- Communicating in a way that someone doesn't like can be unwelcomed and a form of harassment. (For example, if you give someone gifts they don't want, it could make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.)
- If you are receiving unwanted attention you can always let the other person know or talk to a trusted adult for help.
- Some people have multiple love languages, while others may just have one. Communication is most successful when the giver is showing their love through the love language their partner likes to receive.

REFLECTION

This reflection activity allows students to explore and identify their own love language(s) so that they can share it with others.

- Assign the *5 Love Languages® Profile Quiz for Teens* as an in-class or homework activity.
<https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes/teen-quiz/>
Ask them to save their profile.
- Remind them that this is just a quiz and they may have different responses on different days or in different types of relationships.
- Once students have completed their quiz, have them reflect on their own, using the following questions.
 1. Were you surprised with the results from the quiz?
 2. Think about how you can communicate to your friends, family, or partner what your love language(s) are.

THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES®

THESE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES® ORIGINATE FROM A POPULAR BOOK BY GARY CHAPMAN AND AREN'T NECESSARILY THE ONLY LOVE LANGUAGES SOMEONE MAY IDENTIFY WITH.

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

Verbal compliments that express your love or appreciation.

Examples:

Send a card, text a meme or gif that makes you think of them.

Tell them what you appreciate about them.

Compliment them on something you know is important to them.

RECEIVING GIFTS

Tangible symbols that reflect thoughtfulness and effort.

Examples:

Thank them if they give you a gift.

Remember special occasions with a gift you know they will like.

Make something for them or give them their favorite treat.

ACTS OF SERVICE

Any act that eases the burden of responsibilities.

Examples:

Make them lunch.

Help them study/practice or work on a project.

Offer to pet/plant sit if they are out of town.

QUALITY TIME

Focused and undivided attention spent together.

Examples:

Go to a special place or event together.

Take walks or play a game together.

Have a conversation while sharing a meal.

Work on a project together.

PHYSICAL TOUCH

Non-sexual touch that reinforces your presence.

Examples:

Hugs, holding hands, high-fives, rough housing, etc.

Helping each other stretch or exercise.

Giving massages, doing their hair or nails.

Sitting in each other's presence.



LOVE LANGUAGES

Scenario 1 – Brett and Skylar

Instructions: Read the scenario, and answer the questions, using the **Love Languages** handout as a guide.

Brett and Skylar are good friends and are both math nerds. They have been in the same math classes for the past two years of high school. This year they are in pre-calculus and for the first time Brett is really struggling.

Skylar spent the whole weekend tutoring and quizzing Brett for an upcoming test, and also brought over homemade snacks. Skylar loves to cook and said they needed brain food. They just got their test scores back and they both got an 'A.'

Brett wants to do something nice to thank Skylar for spending so much time helping him study. He is not sure what to do, but really wants to show his thanks in some small way. He knows Skylar really likes presents since they always talk about the cool little gifts their mom gets them.

What might be Skylar's love language(s)?

What information in the scenario helped you reach your conclusion?

What can Brett get Skylar to thank them for helping him study?



LOVE LANGUAGES

Scenario 2 – Laura and Timothy

Instructions: Read the scenario, and answer the questions, using the **Love Languages** handout as a guide.

Laura and Timothy are seniors and have been dating for several months. At their school it is common for people to make sweeping or grandiose gestures when asking someone to senior prom. Timothy wants to do something special to ask Laura to prom, but wants to make sure it is something Laura will appreciate. He left flowers on her desk on Valentine's Day and afterward they got in an argument because Laura said she hates getting gifts and being the center of attention. She said having the flowers left on her desk made her feel embarrassed. Laura seems happiest when they spend time together, just the two of them, talking or exploring new places.

What might be Laura's love language(s)?

What information in the scenario helped you reach your conclusion?

What might be a good way for Timothy to ask Laura to senior prom?



LOVE LANGUAGES

Scenario 3 – Sophie and Clara

Instructions: Read the scenario, and answer the questions, using the **Love Languages** handout as a guide.

Sophie and Clara are best friends who recently started dating. Clara is often asking Sophie for hugs and loves to watch movies and cuddle with her. Sophie also likes watching Clara's favorite movies and loves to spend time hanging out with Clara, even when they're doing absolutely nothing. Lately, their relationship has become more physical, and cuddling on the couch watching movies often turns into making out. Sophie has expressed that she would rather take things slow, and likes physically being close to Clara, but would rather spend time together without making out. Clara becomes upset and begins to question if Sophie even likes her anymore.

What might be Clara's and Sophie's love languages?

What information in the scenario helped you reach your conclusion?

How might the couple compromise in a way that allows their boundaries to be respected?



LOVE LANGUAGES

Scenario 4 – Andres and Kevin

Instructions: Read the scenario, and answer the questions, using the **Love Languages** handout as a guide.

Kevin is an only child being raised by Andres, his single dad. Andres works hard to take care of the house chores and juggle his job at the same time. He still manages to pack a lunch and cook dinner for Kevin each day. Andres and Kevin always give each other pep talks, like before Andres has a big meeting at work or before Kevin's big game. Kevin sees how hard his dad works to provide for them and he really appreciates his dad helping him with things like applying to college. Kevin wants to show his dad how much he appreciates him but is not sure what to do.

What might be Andres' love language(s)?

What information in the scenario helped you reach your conclusion?

What might be a good way for Kevin to show his dad that he appreciates him?



LOVE LANGUAGES

Scenario 5 – Aiden and Erik

Instructions: Read the scenario, and answer the questions, using the **Love Languages** handout as a guide.

Aiden and Erik have recently started dating. Aiden wants to do something nice for Erik to show how much he likes him. He feels like it might be too soon to get him a gift and doesn't want to come on too strong, but really wants to show his interest. It has been challenging for them to spend time together since Erik has so many responsibilities. He is the oldest so he has to help take care of his younger siblings and his parents are pretty strict and make him do all sorts of chores on the weekends. When he talks to him in class it seems like Erik is overwhelmed with balancing school and home responsibilities and is always appreciative when Aiden shares his notes from class.

What might be Erik's love language(s)?

What information in the scenario helped you reach your conclusion?

What might be a good way for Aiden to show Erik how much he likes him?

Scenario 1 – Brett and Skylar

Instructions: Read the scenario, and answer the questions, using the **Love Languages** handout as a guide.

Brett and Skylar are good friends and are both math nerds. They have been in the same math classes for the past two years of high school. This year they are in pre-calculus and for the first time Brett is really struggling.

Skylar spent the whole weekend tutoring and quizzing Brett for an upcoming test, and also brought over homemade snacks. Skylar loves to cook and said they needed brain food. They just got their test scores back and they both got an 'A.'

Brett wants to do something nice to thank Skylar for spending so much time helping him study. He is not sure what to do, but really wants to show his thanks in some small way. He knows Skylar really likes presents since they always talk about the cool little gifts their mom gets them.

What might be Skylar's love language(s)?

Possible answers:

- *It sounds like Skylar likes receiving gifts and doing acts of service.*

What information in the scenario helped you reach your conclusion?

Possible answers:

- *Skylar brought Brett homemade snacks.*
- *Skylar talks about the little gifts their mom gives them.*

What can Brett get Skylar to thank them for helping him study?

Possible answers:

- *Since Skylar likes gifts and food, maybe Brett could bring them a favorite drink and snack for their next study session.*
- *Get Skylar some cool little gift similar to things Skylar says they like.*
- *Brett can ask Skylar if there is anything he can help Skylar with to show his appreciation.*

Scenario 2 – Laura and Timothy

Instructions: Read the scenario, and answer the questions, using the **Love Languages** handout as a guide.

Laura and Timothy are seniors and have been dating for several months. At their school it is common for people to make sweeping or grandiose gestures when asking someone to senior prom. Timothy wants to do something special to ask Laura to prom, but wants to make sure it is something Laura will appreciate. He left flowers on her desk on Valentine's Day and afterward they got in an argument because Laura said she hates getting gifts and being the center of attention. She said having the flowers left on her desk made her feel embarrassed. Laura seems happiest when they spend time together, just the two of them, talking or exploring new places.

What might be Laura's love language(s)?

Possible answers:

- *It sounds like Laura likes quality time.*

What information in the scenario helped you reach your conclusion?

Possible answers:

- *Laura told Timothy she didn't like gifts or having attention on her, and got angry and embarrassed with public attention.*
- *Laura is happiest when it's just the two of them doing something new, or spending time together.*

What might be a good way for Timothy to ask Laura to senior prom?

Possible answers:

- *Timothy could ask Laura on an adventure someplace new.*
- *Or maybe over a special dinner in a romantic place.*

Scenario 3 – Sophie and Clara

Instructions: Read the scenario, and answer the questions, using the **Love Languages** handout as a guide.

Sophie and Clara are best friends who recently started dating. Clara is often asking Sophie for hugs and loves to watch movies and cuddle with her. Sophie also likes watching Clara's favorite movies and loves to spend time hanging out with Clara, even when they're doing absolutely nothing. Lately, their relationship has become more physical, and cuddling on the couch watching movies often turns into making out. Sophie has expressed that she would rather take things slow, and likes physically being close to Clara, but would rather spend time together without making out. Clara becomes upset and begins to question if Sophie even likes her anymore.

What might be Clara's and Sophie's love languages?

Possible answers:

- *Clara seems to like physical touch.*
- *Sophie seems to like quality time.*

What information in the scenario helped you reach your conclusion?

Possible answers:

- *Clara often seeks out hugs, and likes to cuddle.*
- *Sophie likes to just be with Clara even when they're not doing anything special.*
- *Clara seems to think Sophie doesn't like her because she doesn't respond the same way physically, and wants to take it slow.*

How might the couple compromise in a way that allows their boundaries to be respected?

Possible answers:

- *They might want to discuss each another's needs and boundaries and find something to do that they both enjoy, like watching movies while holding hands, or only making out when both are in agreement that's what they want to do.*
- *They also might talk about what's important to them in the relationship and if they can find a way to both feel connected with each other.*

Scenario 4 – Andres and Kevin

Instructions: Read the scenario, and answer the questions, using the **Love Languages** handout as a guide.

Kevin is an only child being raised by Andres, his single dad. Andres works hard to take care of the house chores and juggle his job at the same time. He still manages to pack a lunch and cook dinner for Kevin each day. Andres and Kevin always give each other pep talks, like before Andres has a big meeting at work or before Kevin's big game. Kevin sees how hard his dad works to provide for them and he really appreciates his dad helping him with things like applying to college. Kevin wants to show his dad how much he appreciates him but is not sure what to do.

What might be Andres' love language(s)?

Possible answers:

- *It sounds like Andres likes doing acts of service and words of affirmation.*

What information in the scenario helped you reach your conclusion?

Possible answers:

- *Even though Andres is busy, he still takes time out to do things for and with Kevin, like packing lunch every day, making dinner, etc.*
- *They also give each other pep talks for encouragement.*

What might be a good way for Kevin to show his dad that he appreciates him?

Possible answers:

- *Kevin could help his dad cook dinner or pack his dad (and his own) lunch one day.*
- *Kevin could write a college essay about how his dad has influenced him and then share it with his dad or write a letter to his dad thanking him for all that he does.*

Scenario 5 – Aiden and Erik

Instructions: Read the scenario, and answer the questions, using the **Love Languages** handout as a guide.

Aiden and Erik have recently started dating. Aiden wants to do something nice for Erik to show how much he likes him. He feels like it might be too soon to get him a gift and doesn't want to come on too strong, but really wants to show his interest. It has been challenging for them to spend time together since Erik has so many responsibilities. He is the oldest so he has to help take care of his younger siblings and his parents are pretty strict and make him do all sorts of chores on the weekends. When he talks to him in class it seems like Erik is overwhelmed with balancing school and home responsibilities and is always appreciative when Aiden shares his notes from class.

What might be Erik's love language(s)?

Possible answers:

- *Erik might appreciate acts of service.*

What information in the scenario helped you reach your conclusion?

Possible answers:

- *Erik appreciates when Aiden shares notes from class.*
- *Because Erik is so busy he might be overwhelmed.*
- *It might mean a lot for him to have someone help him with all his responsibilities.*

What might be a good way for Aiden to show Erik how much he likes him?

Possible answers:

- *Maybe Aiden could offer to help with one of Erik's weekend chores and then they can spend time together since working together will probably make the chores go more quickly.*
- *He could find out what Erik likes to do, then invite him to do that activity together.*