Healthy Futures

PURPOSE

When teens can identify personal protective factors and environmental risk factors, they can increase their resiliency and are more likely to make positive decisions for their sexual health. Encouraging young people to engage in respectful behaviors helps create supportive community culture that will reduce health disparities for minority students and students facing adversity. Through analyzing common challenges and thinking through solutions, students develop critical thinking skills that will facilitate healthy decision making for themselves, their relationships and their communities.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Participants will:

- 1. Identify and analyze personal and environmental protective and risk factors related to sexual health.
- 2. Develop healthy solutions to common sexual health challenges youth face.
- 3. Apply sexual health knowledge and skills to their lives, now and in the future.
- 4. Identify ways to create a supportive school culture for everyone.

Activities Introduction		Minutes	Materials and Preparation Checklist Notecards and pens for each student. Clock or stopwatch to keep time. 	
		5		
Α	Two Seconds Optional: The video and worksheet can be assign as homework, with the debrief done in class.	45 ed	 Preview the <i>Two Seconds</i> video, found on: https://vimeo.com/81207661 Prepare audio visuals to show the video in class. Easel paper or whiteboard and markers. Make copies of the <i>Two Seconds</i> worksheet, one for each student. 	
В	<i>Words of Wisdom</i> Advice Column	15	 Write a list of strategies for Making Decisions on a piece of easel paper or on the board. Copy the Words of Wisdom Advice Column, one page or one letter for each small group. 	
С	Reflection & Closure	10	 Internet access and student devices, or journaling option. Ensure access to the futureme.org website, if using. 	

LESSON SUMMARY



Say,

In past lessons, we have learned: ways to use assertive communication and practice affirmative consent; how to reduce the risk of STIs; information about birth control and barrier methods; and how to resolve conflict in relationships. Now, we will use the information and skills you've learned to identity risks and protective factors related to sexual health situations and apply the skills needed to create healthy futures.

- Give each student a notecard or ask them to take out a piece of paper and a pen/pencil.
- Make sure you have a stopwatch or clock with a second hand to time 10 seconds.
- Explain the activity:

I'm going to give you a scenario and ask you to write down as many ways you can think of to respond to the situation. You will have 10 seconds to write down your possible responses.

• Read the following scenario. (You can also choose a similar scenario of your own.)

You are at a party and people have been drinking. Someone you met at the party asks you to go upstairs to be alone. You don't feel comfortable going with them. What do you do?

• After 10 seconds, ask the class to share their responses.

Possible responses:

- Say you need to find your friends.
- Tell them your parents are texting you to go home.
- Say 'no thanks, I'm going to hang out down here instead'.
- Tell them you are really thirsty and need to get a drink of water.
- Say you don't want to be in that kind of situation.
- Say you have to use the bathroom.
- Ask, How many solutions were you able to come up with in just 10 seconds?

You might think that 10 seconds isn't enough time to make a decision, yet even a short pause can give us enough time to check in with our gut feeling, get out of an uncomfortable situation and give you (or a friend you may be with) the chance to make a healthy decision.





SHOW TWO SECONDS (25 MINUTES)



Note: If you are assigning the *Two Seconds* video and worksheet as homework, provide the following instructions ahead of time. Use the following questions to debrief together in class after they've watched the film.

Introduce Two Seconds by saying,

Two Seconds shows how a quick decision can change your life. Pausing for a few seconds can give you enough time to think and act to prevent unintended pregnancies and STIs, and to think about how our actions and words can promote healthy relationships rather than causing harm.

Two Seconds explores three different relationship situations. As you watch, fill out the *Two Seconds* worksheet and identify how taking time to pause could have changed the outcomes for the different characters.

As you watch the film, also take notice of how risk and protective factors can affect health and decision making.

Risk factors are conditions that contribute to negative health outcomes. Examples may be having friends or family that are not supportive, not having enough resources (like money, a safe home, food) or access to health care or being discriminated against or bullied because of your gender, sexual orientation, race or income level.

Protective factors are aspects of someone's life or environment that support a person so they can overcome challenges. Examples may be having supportive adults in your life, being part of and connecting with school or community groups or activities, having a sense of purpose or self-esteem or using assertive communication skills to advocate for yourself or others.

As we discussed in Lesson 9, protective factors can help people overcome the negative effects of risk factors in making healthy decisions.

- Pass out the *Two Seconds* worksheet to each student to take notes while watching the movie.
- Show *Two Seconds* (20 min) which can be accessed here: https://vimeo.com/81207661.

FACILITATOR NOTE

Two Seconds is a short, dramatic film created by Maine teens in partnership with Project AWARE and Maine Family Planning. Project AWARE is a Maine-based organization that uses the creative process of movie making to support youth in having a voice and making a difference.

The film includes three story lines of teens struggling with relationship and sexual health issues. The title, *Two Seconds*, refers to how quickly a person's life can change when certain decisions are made, often at the spur of the moment without thinking about the possible consequences. *Two Seconds* also symbolizes that moment when a person decides to make a healthy change that improves their well-being.

TWO SECONDS DEBRIEF



After watching *Two Seconds* and completing their worksheets, ask students to share their responses to the following questions, using a whiteboard or easel paper to record responses.

1. What are some examples of risk factors the characters experienced in Two Seconds?

Possible answers:

- Chelsea experienced name-calling ("slut"), shaming and gossip based on her sexual activity and negative stereotypes about being bisexual (i.e., saying that Chelsea sleeps around because she is bisexual or asking how they could get an STI from a girl).
- Grace's parents kicked her out of the house for being pregnant.
- Sarah experienced relationship abuse.
- 2. What are some examples of protective factors the characters have in Two Seconds?

Possible answers:

- Josh had supportive parents.
- Chelsea stood up for herself and then volunteered at the local clinic.
- Sarah had friends that said she deserved to be safe and respected in her relationship.

3. What actions could the characters take if they could rewind and pause?

Possible answers:

- Grace and Josh could have made sure they had condoms or birth control before having sex.
- Chelsea and Tyler could have talked about their sexual history, if they'd been tested for STIs recently and used condoms and birth control.
- Sarah and Sean could have talked to friends or supportive adults when the unhealthy behaviors started. Sean could have found ways to deal with his emotions rather than calling Sarah names, threatening her and being physically abusive.

IDENTIFYING ENVIRONMENTAL RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS



Say,

We all have risk and protective factors in our personal lives, but they also exist in the world around us. For example, our school may have protective factors like counselors or a health center/nurse's office we can go to for information and support. There may be risk factors like a culture of bullying people who seem different, or protective factors like supportive groups and policies that promote respect and include the voices of all people. When we can increase the number of protective factors, and reduce the risk factors in our environment, we make it easier for everyone to be healthy, including being sexually healthy.

Ask students the following questions to explore how they might reduce risk factors in their school or community settings.

1. What can you do or say when you see bullying at school (like the example in *Two Seconds* when people were calling Chelsea a slut in the hallway)?

Possible answers:

- Talk to a trusted adult about the bullying.
- Address people bullying directly, for example say "hey, that's not cool, cut it out!"
- Tell the person who is targeted "That is not okay what they said to you." or "I am here for you if you want to talk or tell an adult."
- Start an awareness campaign or support an anti-bullying policy at your school.
- 2. In *Two Seconds*, there are also instances of homophobia and biphobia, for example when people say Chelsea will sleep with anyone because she is bisexual. How can we prevent discrimination and harassment at school?

Possible answers:

- Start a GSA or civil rights team.
- Bring in an educator from an outside organization (like Equality Maine or the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine) to address discrimination.
- Get inclusive curriculum in all subjects including history, English and health.
- Talk to an adult when bullying occurs, get support and discuss ways to make the school a safer place.

3. Why is it important not to gossip and spread rumors?

Possible answers:

- Gossip and rumors are disempowering and hurtful.
- It is important not to share other people's stories and experiences without their consent.
- Gossip and rumors create an unsafe culture, which makes it challenging to have healthy and safe friendships and relationships.

SUMMARIZE

In summarizing the activity, include these key points.

- It is important to take the time to pause, think and have discussions before engaging in sexual activity. It's also important to make informed and intentional decisions so everyone can be safe and sexually healthy.
- Everyone has a responsibility to support healthy relationships, which include healthy friendships and a community of respect.
- We all have a responsibility to make healthy decisions that are right for our own bodies, to be honest and respectful in relationships and to speak out when our community culture is causing harm.
- Remember that this sexual health unit is a foundation of knowledge and skills and that there is more to learn to promote health for yourself as an individual, in your relationships and in your community.

FACILITATOR NOTE

Students who experience more risk factors and students in minority groups face significant health disparities in Maine. Sexual health is not only a result of individual choices but is also a result of how supportive our environments are.

Activism to create a supportive school and community culture for everyone can help reduce health disparities. For students that want to promote sexual health by engaging in activism in their school or community, the following resources can support their work.

• Youth Activist Toolkit

https://advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Youth-Activist-Toolkit.pdf

- Condom Availability Program Access School-Based Condom Availability Program under Tip Sheets for Educators at: https://mainefamilyplanning.org/for-educators/teaching-materials/
- Starting a GSA (gay-straight alliance) https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/GLSEN-10-Steps-To-Start-Your-GSA.pdf



TWO SECONDS WORKSHEET

Instructions: Fill out the chart with risk factors and protective factors you notice for the different characters. Some characters may have more factors than others. In the last column write in what you think each character could have done differently if they had taken the time to pause in their relationship before acting.

CHARACTER	RISK FACTORS	PROTECTIVE FACTORS	REWIND AND PAUSE
Chelsea			
Grace			
Josh			
Sarah			
Sean			
Tyler			

TWO SECONDS

CHARACTER	RISK FACTORS	PROTECTIVE FACTORS	REWIND AND PAUSE
Chelsea	Experiences biphobia, homophobia and slut shaming.	Has access to a car. High- self-esteem to get herself tested and tell Tyler that it was not okay he didn't tell her she might have an STI. Started volunteering at the clinic.	She could have asked Tyler about his sexual history and if he had been STI tested. She could have said she wanted to use condoms before having sex.
Grace	Family kicks her out for getting pregnant. Is working long hours while she is a student so her family may not have a lot of money.	Josh and his parents are supportive. She has confidence about what she wants to do with the pregnancy.	She could have started hormonal birth control before becoming sexually active. She could have paused and told Josh she wanted to use condoms for sex.
Josh	Not enough information.	Supportive family. Sports involvement. Good emotional coping skills to communicate with Grace and be supportive of her.	He could have stopped and used a condom before having sex, or not had sex until they were using protection.
Sarah	Experiencing violence in her relationship and slut shaming by Sean.	Having a strong community of friends and the skills to reach out to the guidance counselor for help.	It is not Sarah's fault that she experienced abuse. She could have reached out earlier when unhealthy behaviors from Sean started.
Sean	Not enough information.	Sports involvement.	Sean could have talked to supportive adults to help stop his unhealthy and abusive behaviors. He could have walked away when he was upset to process rather than calling Sarah names, threatening her and hitting her.
Tyler	Low confidence – he said he was scared and uncomfortable to say anything about STIs.	Not enough information.	He could have waited to have sex until he was confident to talk about STI/ pregnancy prevention with partners and he could have used a condom.



ACTIVITY10B: WORDS OF WISDOM ADVICE COLUMN



FACILITATOR NOTE

If you have an Anonymous Question Box, before or after this activity may be a good time to answer any last student questions from your sexual health unit. As an alternative, you could compose your own *Words of Wisdom* letter incorporating questions or relevant concerns that have come up during the sexual health unit. As we know, teens often want to hear from people their age who may have similar problems or situations. This activity provides the opportunity to build skills in responding to their peers. Be creative and have fun!

- Write **Strategies for Making Decisions** on the board using the following list of possible strategies, or add your own. Review these strategies with students and ask if there are strategies they want to add.
 - ✓ Take time to pause.
 - ✓ Listen to your gut.
 - ✓ Assess pros and cons of different actions.
 - ✓ Think about your risk factors and protective factors.
 - ✓ Use assertive communication and check for consent regularly.
 - ✓ Seek help from a valid health resource or trusted adult.
 - ✓ Make a plan ahead of time (for example, to not have sex, use barrier methods and/or a birth control method).
 - \checkmark Show affection in ways that don't put you or your partner at risk.
 - ✓ Get tested for STIs.
- Say, Now use what you've learned to help others sort out some difficult situations. Pretend you are working for an online teen advice column called *Words of Wisdom*. It's your job to respond to questions and give realistic and helpful advice.
- Have students form small groups of 2-4. Give each group one *Words of Wisdom* worksheet. You can either give two questions per group, or cut the sheet in half and give each group just one question, depending on the time you have available.
- Refer to the **Strategies for Making Decisions** and tell the small groups they may want to include some of these strategies when giving advice.
- Give the small groups 5 minutes to form a response to the questions.
- Ask each small group to read the question and their response aloud to the large group.
- After each group has shared their responses, ask if anyone from the other groups has additional advice they would offer. Using the *Words of Wisdom* Facilitator Key, offer suggestions or additions to any of the advice that is given.



Dear Words of Wisdom,

My girlfriend says she would rather have sex without a condom because she doesn't like the way they feel. I am trying to be responsible about pregnancy and STIs, but she seems fine with it. Should I just go for it and assume she's on the pill?

Signed, At-Risk Roger

Dear Roger,



WORDS OF WISDOM ADVICE COLUMN — QUESTION 2

Dear Words of Wisdom,

I was at a party at a friend's house last weekend and their parents were gone. There were a bunch of kids getting high and some couples were hooking up. This weekend there is a party at the same friend's house. I want to go but don't want to do anything that will get me in trouble and mess up my plans. All my friends are going. What should I do?

Signed, Just-Wanna-Have-Fun Ivan

Dear Ivan,



Dear Words of Wisdom,

I have been dating this person in my grade for a year now, but this year they are doing a semester away through an exchange program. We have talked about sexting each other to keep the spark going between us, but in middle school, my best friend had a photo shared with half the soccer team, so I am nervous. What should I do?

Signed, Safer-Sexting Selena

Dear Selena,



Dear Words of Wisdom,

Sometimes, my boyfriend and I use condoms and sometimes we don't. Last month, I thought I might be pregnant, and I was so relieved when it was a false alarm. Buying a pregnancy test at the only drug store in town was nerve-wracking! I thought someone I knew would see me! My boyfriend thinks I should go on the pill. The clinic is so far away I'm not sure I could get there to pick up pills all the time. Are there other ways to prevent pregnancy?

Signed, Don't-Wanna-be-a-Momma Donna

Dear Donna,



Dear Words of Wisdom,

This summer a bunch of us were hanging out at our friend's house since she has a pool. I jumped into the deep end and my top came off in front of everyone – I was so mortified! Then I realized someone had taken a video and posted it to social media. Guys keep cat calling me in the hallway now and their new nickname for me is "Ho-lena." How can I get everyone to stop bullying me?

Signed, Not-a-Hater Helena

Dear Helena,



WORDS OF WISDOM ADVICE COLUMN — QUESTION 6

Dear Words of Wisdom,

A new girl just transferred to our school. She is really cool and fun to hang out with. I think that I am starting to fall for her, but how could I be - I've always thought I was straight?! I've never felt this way before and have only gone out with guys. What's going on with me?

Signed, Wondering Wanda

Dear Wanda,



Dear Words of Wisdom,

Quin and I have been dating for a while now. We have only kissed and made out a little. I want to talk about our relationship and what we both want out of it. I don't know how to begin the conversation. Any suggestions?

Signed, Confused Chris

Dear Chris,



Dear Words of Wisdom,

My boyfriend really wants me to give him oral sex. He knows I've done it before with a previous partner, but the truth is, I didn't enjoy it and don't want to do it again. He says that he is starting to think that I don't like him as much as the other guy I dated, which is not true. I keep making up excuses, like it wouldn't feel good for him because of my braces! But really I just don't want to do it. What can I do?

Signed, Reluctant Riley

Dear Riley,

WORDS OF WISDOM

WORDS OF WISDOM ADVICE COLUMN-QUESTION 1

Dear Words of Wisdom,

My girlfriend says she would rather have sex without a condom because she doesn't like the way they feel. I am trying to be responsible about pregnancy and STIs, but she seems fine with it. Should I just go for it and assume she's on the pill?

Signed, At-Risk Roger

Possible responses:

- Roger could say that it's because he cares about her that he wants to use protection against a possible pregnancy and STIs.
- He could suggest ways to make condoms enjoyable by using different types of condoms and using lube; and remind her that the fear of an unintended pregnancy or STI can ruin the mood for sex too!
- Stay true to your boundaries, be responsible-don't let someone, even someone that you care about change them.

WORDS OF WISDOM ADVICE COLUMN—QUESTION 2

Dear Words of Wisdom,

I was at a party at a friend's house last weekend and their parents were gone. There were a bunch of kids getting high and some couples were hooking up. This weekend there is a party at the same friend's house. I want to go but don't want to do anything that will get me in trouble and mess up my plans. All my friends are going. What should I do?

Signed, I-Just-Wanna-Have-Fun Ivan

- Ivan should pay attention to the red flags in a situation that can alert him to possible risky situations, such as parents not being home, people getting drunk or high, or couples hooking up.
- It is easier to avoid a risky situation altogether than trying to get out of one once you're in it!
- Make alternative plans with friends next time. Go out and have fun but do things that don't make you uncomfortable and won't jeopardize your future plans.

WORDS OF WISDOM

WORDS OF WISDOM ADVICE COLUMN-QUESTION 3

Dear Words of Wisdom,

I have been dating this person in my grade for a year now, but this year they are doing a semester away through an exchange program. We have talked about sexting each other to keep the spark going between us, but in middle school, my best friend had a photo shared with half the soccer team, so I am nervous. What should I do?

Signed, Safer-Sexting Selena

Possible responses:

- Being apart from your sweetie is challenging and it makes sense that you would want to find ways to stay intimate even while you are apart.
- It is important to think of both the risks and benefits of sharing sexually explicit photos online. While it may make you feel closer, there is always a risk that your photos could be shared or seen by someone else.
- You may want to think of other ways to keep your relationship interesting and be intimate long distance, such as finding times to video chat or writing letters.
- Whatever you decide, be sure to talk about it together and make sure both of you are excited and on the same page about what you want to do.
- Affirmative consent and respecting one another's boundaries is a large part of safer sexting.

WORDS OF WISDOM ADVICE COLUMN-QUESTION 4

Sometimes, my boyfriend and I use condoms and sometimes we don't. Last month, I thought I might be pregnant, and I was so relieved when it was a false alarm. Buying a pregnancy test at the only drug store in town was nerve-wracking! I thought someone I knew would see me! My boyfriend thinks I should go on the pill. The clinic is so far away I'm not sure I could get there to pick up pills all the time. Are there other ways to prevent pregnancy?

Signed, Don't-Wanna-be-a-Momma Donna

- If you don't want to get pregnant, the "sometimes we do, sometimes we don't method" is not very reliable.
- For people who are sexually active, the dual method of a hormonal method along with barrier methods is the best way to prevent pregnancy and STIs at the same time.
- There are methods like the implant and the IUD that work effectively for 3-5 years. You don't have to think about them every day like you would with the pill, and you don't have to get to the clinic regularly to pick up supplies.
- Make an appointment at a family planning clinic or with your doctor to discuss what method would be right for you.

WORDS OF WISDOM

WORDS OF WISDOM ADVICE COLUMN-QUESTION 5

Dear Words of Wisdom,

This summer a bunch of us were hanging out at our friend's house since she has a pool. I jumped into the deep end and my top came off in front of everyone – I was so mortified! Then I realized someone had taken a video and posted it to social media. Guys keep cat calling me in the hallway now and their new nickname for me is "Ho-lena." How can I get everyone to stop bullying me?

Signed, Not-a-Hater Helena

Possible responses:

- What is happening to you is not your fault and is not okay for other people to do.
- Reach out to a trusted adult who can help advocate for you to get the video taken down and to get adults in your school to step in to stop the bullying.
- You might find help in connecting to an organization that supports people who have experienced sexual harassment.
- You are not alone, there are other people going through the same thing as you and there are counselors and advocates available to help.

WORDS OF WISDOM ADVICE COLUMN-QUESTION 6

Dear Words of Wisdom,

A new girl just transferred to our school. She is really cool and fun to hang out with. I think that I am starting to fall for her, but how could I be – I've always thought I was straight?! I've never felt this way before and have only gone out with guys. What's going on with me?

Signed, Wondering Wanda

- It can take time to know who you are and who you may be attracted to and sexual orientation may develop over time.
- It's perfectly normal for people to have feelings for someone of the same sex and to be attracted to more than just one gender.
- It's okay to be confused, but also important to talk to good friend or a trusted adult, if you have questions or concern.

WORDS OF WISDOM

WORDS OF WISDOM ADVICE COLUMN-QUESTION 7

Dear Words of Wisdom,

Quin and I have been dating for a while now. We have only kissed and made out a little. I want to talk about our relationship and what we both want out of it. I don't know how to begin the conversation. Any suggestions?

Signed, Confused Chris

Possible responses:

- It's good you are taking the time to think about what you want from your relationship.
- You also have the right to take your time and think about your sexual boundaries.
- You can begin the conversation by letting Quin know how you feel and discussing what you both want out of the relationship.
- If you do decide to have sex, be sure to plan ahead and use protection!

WORDS OF WISDOM ADVICE COLUMN-QUESTION 8

Dear Words of Wisdom,

My boyfriend really wants me to give him oral sex. He knows I've done it before with a previous partner, but the truth is, I didn't enjoy it and don't want to do it again. He says that he is starting to think that I don't like him as much as the other guy I dated, which is not true. I keep making up excuses, like it wouldn't feel good for him because of my braces! But really I just don't want to do it. What can I do?

Signed, Reluctant Riley

- Pressuring another person to do something sexually that they don't want to do is never ok.
- Just because you did something before doesn't mean you have to do it again.
- Giving consent should depend on the situation and can be revoked anytime. You always have the right to say no.
- You have the right to decide if or when to have sex, with whom and how.
- Even during a sexual act, a person has the right to stop or say no at any point.
- If you feel pressured or coerced, talk with a trusted adult.





REFLECTION

- Say, Sexual health education doesn't end here. Learning and thinking about what you want in your life and in your relationships is an ongoing process and important for your overall health and well-being.
- Write these reflection questions on the board.
 - 1. How/where will I keep learning more about my sexual health?
 - 2. What's something I learned about myself from this curriculum?
 - 3. What words of wisdom or advice do I want to impart to my future self?
- Say,

Now, you will have the opportunity to write a letter to your future self. As you write the letter, think about the knowledge and skills you learned during these lessons and how you hope to use them now or in the future. What would be important messages you would want to tell your future self? Direct the students to the above questions to use as prompts as they write their letters.

• Have students go to www.Futureme.org. They can create an email to themselves that will be delivered on a future date of their choosing. Make sure they use an email address they'll be able to access on the future date. They may want to keep it within 1-2 years since email addresses may change.

Alternatively, participants can write a paper letter to their future selves in their journal or on notepaper enclosed in an envelope. They can keep the letter in a drawer or another safe place and take it out to read at some point in the future.

CLOSURE

To close the **Best Practices** program, say:

- Throughout the *Best Practices* lessons, you have learned information and developed skills that you can use to make informed decisions around your sexual health.
- You also explored personal boundaries and practiced how to communicate those effectively in your relationships.
- You identified trusted adults, organizations, websites, people and places you can go to for support, guidance and to access valid health information and services.
- Learning about sexual health is an ongoing life-long process as our bodies and relationships continue to evolve. This program has provided a foundation of knowledge for you to continue to build upon.
- Congratulations! You have completed *Best Practices* and are on your way to being sexually healthy.