

## **Mental Health Programme on Creating Adolescent Awareness in the realm of Sex and Sexuality**

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### **Introduction**

Adolescents comprise 18% of the world's population with 88% living in developing countries. India has the largest adolescent population of 243 million with more than 50% of the adolescents living in urban areas. With such a huge population which will be experiencing adulthood in future lives, we have socio-cultural issues determining the veracity of chains in terms of bodily changes.

As they grow up, young people face important decisions about relationships, sexuality, and sexual behavior. These decisions can impact their health and well-being for the rest of their lives. Young people have the right to lead healthy lives, and society (schools) has the responsibility to prepare youth by providing them with comprehensive sexual health education that gives them the tools they need to make healthy decisions. But it is not enough for programs to include discussions of abstinence and contraception to help young people avoid unintended pregnancy or diseases. Comprehensive sexual health education must do more. It must provide young people with honest, age-appropriate information and skills necessary to help them take personal responsibility for their health and overall well being. Providing young people with the skills they need is key to healthy decision-making.

Sex and Sexuality education is the provision of information about bodily development, sex, sexuality, and relationships, along with skills-building to help young people communicate about and make informed decisions regarding sex and their sexual health. Sex and Sexuality education should occur throughout a student's grade levels, with information appropriate to students' development and cultural background. It should include information about puberty and reproduction, abstinence, contraception,

relationships, sexual violence prevention, body image, gender identity and sexual orientation. It should be taught by trained teachers. Sex and Sexuality education should be informed by evidence of what works best to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, but it should also respect young people's right to complete and honest information. Sex and Sexuality education should treat sexual development as a normal, natural part of human development.

### **Program objectives**

1. Familiarizing learners about the physical changes while adolescence approaches, and thereon discussing openly about them in a congenial environment.
2. To help learners overcome and realize the taboo associated to sex and sexuality.
3. To make the learners understand, accept and appreciate the difference and variety in the realm of sexual orientation and rigid physical manifestation of sexuality.

### **Program rationale**

Entering in the age of puberty, adolescents have many new things and ideas regarding sex and sexuality to explore. These inquisitive concerns of the future adult if left unattended can lead to a lot of complexities within the individual. These complexities can in turn disrupt the optimum functioning and contributing capacity of the individual. It is very crucial to render them a safe and sound counselling to sail smoothly through this phase of physical and mental transition, in terms of sex and sexuality orientations. Adolescents at this stage also enter into a web of confusing and misleading information on varied aspects of 'sex' and 'sexuality'. Rationale behind the program include:

- To help adolescents clearly understand changes in the wake of maturation and thereby

debunk the myths and misconceptions associated to sex and sexuality (e.g. Kissing makes one pregnant, Masturbation weakens the body and many more of such nature)

- A responsible sense of understanding, appreciating and respecting all genders in society.
- To help adolescents in getting comfortable about the physical changes in the body and understanding their happening in a particular sequence and manner.
- To create mental readiness among the adolescent group in general and individually differentiated adolescents in particular. It would thereby help in shaping up more informed adults for all future roles.
- The issues, problems and sexual technicalities become gender fluid, thereby creating greater consciousness and awareness for social issues crippling the psyche of the community at large viz. Menstrual health, Early marriage, Pre marriage pregnancy etc.

**Target-group**

The need to define the target group arose because of the culture and geography specific variance in the age group that is considered in the category of adolescents. While some of the nations range adolescence from 13 years till 16 years of age some others consider the starting point of adolescent years at 11 years of age also. So, for our program purpose we have weighed heavily in favour of WHO prescribed range, which is standard for all the government run programs exclusively for adolescents. This range is from 14 years to 16 years of age, as it is the period which also happens to be the time of maximum transitions and inexperienced massive changes redefining the personality, interests and likes of the adolescents. With reference to sex

and related issues, also this age has telling impact on the impressions that remain for the most substantial part of life. For the reason of malleability in this age it is the right stage to constructively and through dialogue instill a good decision taking and value assessment predicament among the learners in this particular range of age.

**Grouping basis**

We are considering a mixed grouping of adolescent learners with a vertical grouping pattern to be followed. The learners in the session would be around 50 to 60 in total. This would allow for greater latitude to the program conductors with reference to conducting activities and ensuring active participation of all the members. This would increase the total spread of the takeaways to other members in the class effectively and would avoid burnout. The teacher along with our volunteer would conduct a quiz in the class and on the basis of diversity, inclusion, awareness, leadership potential, maturity, understanding of issues we will handpick 12-15 learners from each class (Classes 9 to 12) thus creating a vertical and heterogeneous group for the program. This is favoured because of the given set of reasons as:

- An in-depth and all-encompassing understanding of a critical issue at hand, which can be dealt in with participation of diverse individuals at varied levels improving the overall effectiveness of the program.
- A healthy interaction and common participation with the juniors and seniors could go a long way in improving the treatment dynamics of adolescent issues at hand.
- Misconceptions and misnomers would be dealt with more effectively because of multiple perspectives.

**Plan of the program**

| <b>Two days Workshop on<br/>Sex and Sexuality: Awareness and Concerns among Adolescent learners<br/>Venue: Conference Hall, Department of Education (CIE), University of Delhi<br/>Day 1, Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2019</b> |  |
|---|--|
| Timings   | Details  |
| 9:00-9:30 a.m.  | Introduction of the participants: Expectations from program  |
| 9:30-10:30 a.m.   | Welcome Address by Prof. Namita Ranganathan (Head and dean, Department of Education, University of Delhi) about the Workshop |
| 10:30-11:00 a.m.  | High Tea   |

| <b>Session I</b>                                |  |
|---|--|
| 11:00-12:30 p.m.                                | “Breaking the ice”- Chit based activity<br>Coordinator- Team CIE (Mental Health Group for the program) |
| <b>Session II</b>                               |  |
| 12:30-1:30 p.m.                                 | “Group Talk on a video titled “Sex Chat with Pappu”  |
| 1:30-2:00 p.m.                                  | Lunch  |
| <b>Session III</b>                              |  |
| 2:00-4:30 p.m.                                  | Bol’ Movie Screening followed by a discussion on movie with students                                   |
| <b>Day 2, Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2019</b> |  |
| <b>Session IV</b>                               |  |
| 9:30-10:30 a.m.                                 | ‘SEX & SEXUALITY’ group quiz   |
| 10:30-10:45 a.m.                                | Tea Break  |
| <b>Session V</b>                                |  |
| 10:45-11:45 a.m.                                | Activities and takeover by ‘TEAM TARSHI Talking About reproductive and Sexual Health Issues’           |
| <b>Session VI</b>                               |  |
| 11:45-1:30 p.m.                                 | ‘Sexual Orientation of individuals is socially determined’:<br>Debate (Team CIE will coordinate)       |
| 1:30-2:00 p.m.                                  | Lunch  |
| <b>Session VII</b>                              |  |
| 2:00-3:00 p.m.                                  | DOUBTS & ISSUES: Discussion and clarification  |
| 3:30-4:30 p.m.                                  | Valedictory Session  |
| 4:30 p.m.                                       | Vote of Thanks   |

## Activity description

### *Chit based: Ice breaking activity*

This activity is inclined towards creating familiarity with the topic amongst learners. It will also help in understanding the doubts, confessions and queries of the learners. In this activity we would be asking the learners to write down about the conceptions and doubts, queries or first thoughts when they listen to the word “SEX” or “SEXUALITY”. We would be placing a large glass bowl titled MY THOUGHTS and another large glass bowl titled POST WORKSHOP. Attempt is to understand the anxieties, fears and inquisitions of learners in the adolescent stage of their growth. This activity would also form our basis to gauge the learning and awareness levels with reference to topic of sex and sexuality. We are also trying to dissociate the taboo associated with the topic as prevalent in society.

### *Video clipping “Sex chat with Pappu”*

This is a ten minutes snippet talking about the issue of wider understanding of the physiological changes happening in the adolescent years and their implications on the overall growth and understanding. It openly talks about the psychological issues concerning the attainment of puberty. A ten minutes clipping would thus help in forming the base to the changes they are encountering and how it is interpreted normally. The discussion post video would aid in sharing of concerns with ease on a topic that is considered a taboo socially.

### *Movie screening “Bol”*

This activity for movie screening is aimed at creating greater consciousness about the issue of sexuality and exploring alternate sexual identities. The implicit social and greater underpinnings are further explored through the layers showcased in the movie. We will be dividing learners in groups of five members each and thereby discussing the underlying analyses of the movie and its situations. How comfortable

they were and what was the cause of worry for them.

The collected list would be handed over to the TARSHI team in order to accommodate their session accordingly for suitability according to the target audience.

### ***Quiz on sex and sexuality***

This activity of Quiz is aimed at recapitulation of the sessions held on the earlier day. We will also look at the major issues and concerns touched upon, topics of discord, disconnect and dissociation. This will also clarify the ideation of physicality, psychology of sex and greater issues confronting sexuality. We will be noting down the issues on the blackboard and thereby looking at societal and context specific digressions as well.

### ***Team Tarshi***

TARSHI is a registered NGO based in New Delhi, India founded in 1996 and registered under the Societies Registration Act in 1997. The session with TARSHI is intended to provide professional intervention in the sensitive issue of Sex and Sexuality awareness, specifically in Indian context. TARSHI (Talking about Reproductive and Sexual Health Issues) works towards expanding sexual and reproductive choices in people's lives in an effort to enable them to enjoy freedom from fear, infection and reproductive and sexual health problems. TARSHI's work on sexuality is from an affirmative and rights based perspective, a fresh change from perspectives that often restrict sexuality within disease prevention, violence against women, or sexual minorities' framework. This would definitely enhance the perspective of the learners and adolescent to multiple complex issues layered within the context specific location of SEX and SEXUALITY in society. We will peep into the various dimensions of interpretations from a social perspective and try to build up our own narratives through the training program by TARSHI.

### ***Debating Activity***

Through this final activity we are looking forward to instill confidence and openness regarding the stance adolescent learners take up. Now, this stance needs to be rationally justified in the wake of informed choices one looks to go with in their lives. And, thereby it necessitates the need to rationally justify the same in the light of sexual preferences and interpretations. Deciding on conducting a debating session was not all about winning and losing. It has got more to do with the appreciation in the variety of

justifications and rationalisations which can emerge out of differentiated versions of the topic we discussed during the last sessions.

### ***The final understanding activity***

In the final doubts and issues clarification session we would again relook at the gains through the lens of the workshop. We will distribute blank chits and would now ask them to jot down the interpretation of the terms sex and sexuality post workshop. Some of the adolescent learners if they want to come up and talk about the issues and problems will speak about the experience they had in the workshop. The empty glass bowl will be filled with interpretations post the workshop. These interpretations and the transformation can be studied and referred to in order to bring relevant changes in the program design for future purposes.

### ***Methodology***

When we look at the methodology followed in the activity and program design there is a strong tilt towards GROUP BASED and OPEN INTERACTIONAL methodology. The basic intent is to help the adolescent open up about their ideas on sex and sexuality through visual appeal, discussions, video based and expert based experience sharing opportunities. Beyond the normal dynamics of formal program design we look forward to moving from the Sir/ Madam interaction, to a friendly approach wherein the specialised expert through their set of activities listen to these adolescents and sort out the creases set in because of the environmental, social and cultural factors.

### ***Conclusion***

The topic pertaining to the physicality, sex and sexual related issues has a lot of pre conceived notional value attached to it because of the socio-cultural ethos prevalent in the milieu of the entire population.? With special reference to the emerging and juxtaposing value frameworks in the present Indian context the workshop can serve as a small peephole to understand and lead the adolescents towards reflective stance on issues that are more contrived and skewed towards the mere physical aspect of the topic. The multiplicity of views would certainly help the learners to come up with their own versions of interpretations and clarity.