Session 8.7

Peer Pressure and Avoiding Risky Behavior

Session Overview:

1. Review Session 8.6.
2. Pass out blank question cards.
3. Lead the kisses activity.
4. Discuss the three ways to respond to peer pressure.
5. Facilitate participant refusal/negotiation scenarios.
6. Collect completed question cards.
7. Pass out Parent/Trusted Adult Connection Form Session 8.7: Peer Pressure and Avoiding Risky Behavior

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will identify communication styles that are effective in dealing with peer pressure.
- Participants will understand how giving in to peer pressure can lead to unhealthy decisions.
- Participants will discuss concepts of self-control and delayed gratification as it relates to peer pressure.
- Participants will practice refusal and negotiation skills.

Materials Needed:

- Computer, projector, and speakers
- Jar of Now and Later Candy
- Kisses Candy
- Delayed Gratification Video (8.7.2)
- Limits PowerPoint (8.7.3)
- Big 3 Review Video (Session 8.7)
- Handouts:
  - Refusal Skills (Handout 8.7.4)
  - Parent/Trusted Adult Connection Form Session 8.7: Peer Pressure and Avoiding Risky Behavior
- Question cards
- Question bag

Classroom Planning:

- Review Session 8.7 curriculum.
- Review Self-control video and Limits PowerPoint
- Make copies of handouts.
- Provide a calendar to parents/students so they know the date that this unit is taught so that students can choose to opt out for an alternative activity or lesson. Engage the support of a school counselor or mental health specialist to support the diverse needs of students as appropriate.

The Standards:

- See Appendix E for a list of state and national standards met in this session. Individual State Standards by Request.

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Educator states:
Before we start today's session, let's review the Big 3 we learned about during the last session:

The BIG 3:

- A healthy relationship is one that builds up both people emotionally and physically.
- It is important to know the characteristics of a healthy relationship so that you can know if you are in one.
- Choosing a healthy relationship can help you avoid risky behaviors and achieve your goals and dreams.

Notes:

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Educator states:
Who in here is hungry? At Healthy Futures we love to use food to prove a point. If you're hungry, you are in luck. Today we are going to give each of you a kiss…I mean a Hershey's Kiss. Once you get it, please do not touch it or open it. Just let it sit on your desk.

Now pay attention to these instructions, because they are important. If at any time during the class you want to eat your candy, raise your hand and let us know you want to eat it. Then you can open it up and eat it. But, before you raise your hand and eat your candy, I am going to make you a deal. If you don't eat the candy now and you wait until the end of class, I will give you three more. Again, if you want to eat it now, just raise your hand first.

For our first activity today, we are going to watch a video and discuss it as a group. Now, I know I love a snack during a movie so I am going to have another piece of candy anyone want to join me?

[Show the Delayed Gratification video.]

Let's discuss the video we just watched. It talked a lot about delayed gratification. Does anyone know what that term means?

[Take time to hear participant answers.]

What about the term self -control?

Delayed gratification means to put off something fun or pleasurable now to wait for something better or more satisfying in the future. What were the children in the video told would happen if they waited?

[They would get more candy.]

What were you told would happen if you waited to eat your candy?

[Get more.]

Now we are not saying that you are exactly like the children in the video. We know that you are much more mature than them, but the point of this activity is that there are times when you will need to exercise self-control and practice delayed gratification in order to get what you really want. There are times where you have to wait in order to get something better.

Can you give some examples of having to wait for something? Or a time when you needed to practice self-control?

[Take time to listen to participants responses. Examples may include saving money so you can buy something better later or practicing playing a sport instead of watching TV now because you know it will pay off later.]

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Educator states:
This idea can also be applied to relationships. Having sexual feelings is a normal part of life and at some point in your life you're going to want to become sexually active. But it is not always the best thing to act on our feelings, is it? For example, being angry is also normal but it would not be good to act on your anger every time you felt it, would it?

Did you know that self-control is like a muscle?[6] The more you use it, the stronger your willpower gets. For those of you who chose to eat your candy you might need to work on exercising that self-control muscle a little bit more to build it up. For the rest of you, you all showed that you have self-control and can delay gratification.

We are discussing the topic of self-control and delayed gratification because it is important for you to think about all the choices you will have to make as 8th graders and into high school. We really want you to think of self-control as an important tool for helping you delay sex. We want to equip you with what you might need to make the healthiest choices for your life.

As we discussed yesterday, the couple in All Falls Down decided to wait to be sexually active and that set them up for having a healthy teen relationship. Both the young man and the young woman were dealing with their own feelings and peer pressure but exercised self-control.

For those of you who waited to eat your candy, we have three more for you.

[6] Muraven, Mark and Baumeister, Roy F. Self-regulation and Depletion of Limited Resources: Does Self-Control Resemble a Muscle? Psycological Bulletin.Vol. 126, No.2, p. 255. Psychological Bulletin Copyright 2000 by the American Psychological Association, Inc. 2000, Vol. 126, No. 2, 247-259

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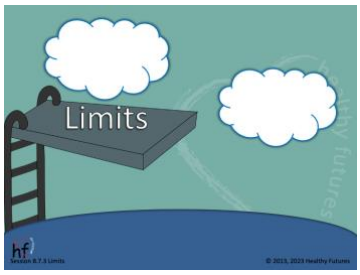
Educator states:
Now, we want you to think back to your goals and dreams you mentioned the first day. We're going to talk now about steps you can take to make sure that you accomplish those goals, specifically goals you have around relationships and delaying sexual activity. You need some practical steps that will help you and will need to exercise self-control to use these steps.

[Show and discuss the Limits PowerPoint.]

PPT Slides: Limits



[Slide 1]

How many of you have ever been on a diving board? What's it like as you start walking towards the edge of the diving board?

Does it get more or less bouncy?

[More bouncy.]

Can you walk all the way out to the very edge of the diving board and not fall in?

[Maybe/No.]

You probably can, but you can lose your balance pretty easily, right?

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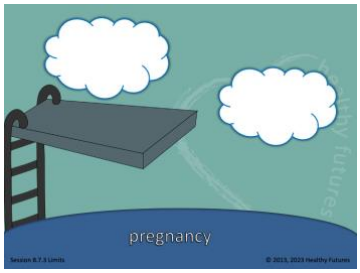
[Slide 2]



[Slide 3]

Educator states:
This diving board is an illustration about sexual activity as a teen. In this scenario going off the diving board represents being sexually active before a faithful lifelong relationship.

As we have discussed in 7th grade and earlier this week, there are three risks associated with sexual activity outside of a faithful lifelong relationships. Can someone name the three risks?

[Slide 4]

[Pregnancy/Fathering a child, STIs, emotional heartache.]

So, thinking about this illustration more, as physical contact progresses in a relationship, does it get easier or harder to stop and say no to sexual activity?

[Harder.]

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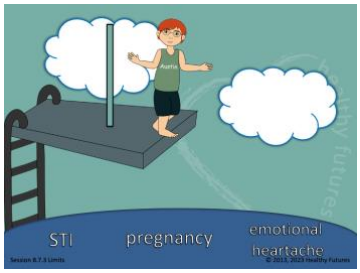
[Slide 5]



[Slide 6]

Educator states:
Harder, exactly. That's like walking out on the diving board. The further out you are, the easier it is to go into the pool. Now, if you're on a diving board, if you lean out, can you still stand back up and walk away from the edge?

[Yes but it can sometimes be hard.]

Right. You can always stand back up, no matter how close you are to the edge. The same thing is true for sexual activity. You can always stop and go back to a place where you're less likely to lose control.

What happens if you stay out on the edge? You may get tired of balancing or start to think how nice it would be to be in the pool with your boyfriend/girlfriend.

[Slide 7]

At Healthy Futures, this is what we recommend: set a limit for yourself.

Is it going to be more or less bouncy there?

[Less bouncy.]

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Educator states:
Setting limits in relationships help you stick to your goal and delay sexual activity. The limit represents your personal limit for sexual activity (the new edge of the diving board that you won't cross).

You have to set your own limits. No one can do it for you. This limit is different for everyone and is influenced by your parents, your values, your spiritual beliefs, and your friends. Choose your limits carefully and remember the further out you are on the diving board, the more bouncy it's going to be.

Now, what would happen if this person, in a moment of passion goes further than the limit they had set for themselves?

Do they fall into the pool?

[No.]

They can go back to the other side of their limit pretty easily.

What about the person out here on the edge?

[Point to the person on the end and draw arrows over the limit line into the pool.]

[Slide 8]

Would he/she fall into the pool?

[Yes.]

Right, just like Austin, they'll fall in.

Let's talk about that for a minute. If they're in this pool, do they need to keep swimming around in there?

[No.]

Right. They can get out and rethink their limits.

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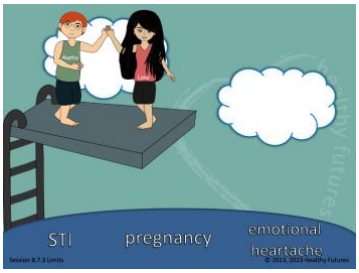

[Slide 9]

[Slide 10]

Educator states:
The exciting news is that if you thoughtfully set your limits as a teen, when you are older and in a faithful lifelong relationship, you'll be standing on the diving board with your partner, ready to jump off together. All of the risks will be gone.

You will be able to fully enjoy sexual activity without the risks of unintended pregnancy (if you are trying to have a child/using contraception), STIs, or emotional heartache!

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[Briefly review refusal skills from 7th grade so participants can apply these skills.]

Educator states:
In order to maintain limits you set for yourself, you may need to refuse pressure to engage in activity you are not ready for. Will someone remind the class of the three steps to saying "no" Healthy Futures taught you in 7th grade?

[Speak up, stand up, and walk away. Briefly review these refusal skills so participants can apply these skills.]

Great!

What do we call it when people your own age are trying to get you to do something that you may not want to do?

[Peer pressure.]

Right!

[If time permits, give a brief example.]

Why is it sometimes hard to resist peer pressure?

[Write responses on board.]

Why is it important to know how to respond to peer pressure in a healthy way?

[So you don't get into trouble. So you don't do something that you regret. So you don't get into fights with your friends, etc.]

Throughout your entire life you will experience peer pressure, sometimes even from people you care about. You need to be able to respond to this peer pressure in a way that is clear and respectful.

This is especially true in romantic relationships. It is important to learn how to communicate clearly what we want and what our limits are. If the other person respects you and cares about you, he/she will respect the limits you set for yourself. If he/she doesn't respect your wishes, then it is not a healthy relationship.

Today we are going to talk about three ways people respond to pressure.

1. **Passive** — Letting the other person get their way with no respect for what you may want. Example: "Ok, I don't want to do it but I guess I can go along."

Notes:

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Educator states:

2. **Aggressive** — Getting your own way without respect for the needs of the other person. Example: "I don't want to go and you can't either! You either do it my way or our relationship is over!"
3. **Assertive** — Respecting your needs and desires while trying to respect the other person. Example: "I am not going to be going this time. Call me when you have something else to do."

Now that you understand what the different types of responses are, we are going to set up some scenarios and see if you can come up with the assertive way to deal with the situation.

[Tell each participant have the person next to them as their partner. They are going to have a few minutes to read over the scene and come up with a skit that demonstrates what the assertive answer in each situation would be. When participants are finished, ask for volunteers to act out their skits.]

Educator highlight: Acting out skits is a great way for participants to develop skills by practicing what they have learned. It is important to refer back to class rules and responsibilities and any other guidelines that might be necessary to keep this exercise orderly and fun.

Remember it is your choice to wait and have self-control, and you know what we say about choices.

The choices you make…NOW will affect you…LATER!

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Educator states:
Let's review The Big 3 from today's session:

The BIG 3:

- It's important to respond to peer pressure with an assertive answer.
- Self-control is like a muscle, the more your exercise it, the stronger you will be. You need to exercise self-control to practice delayed gratification.
- It's important to set limits in relationships so that you stick with your healthy choices. Make decisions about limits before you're in a high pressure situation.

[Remind participants of the question cards and to place them in the question bag. Pass out Parent/Trusted Adult Connection Form Session 8.7: Peer Pressure and Avoiding Risky Behavior and collect completed forms from Sessions 8.6.]

Notes:

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