

Session 3_Girls

Learning about my body - Adolescence

Rationale

Pubertal changes begin around 9 -10 years in girls and around 11 years for boys. Acknowledging the mental, emotional, and physical changes that adolescents go through helps put them at ease with themselves, satisfies their curiosity and allays any fears regarding bodily functions.

Materials required

- Cuts of different feelings
- Marker pen
- Any sticking substance (Blu Tac / double sided sticking tape / cello tape / board pins)
- Session worksheets

Objective of session 3

To impart and help children internalize the following messages:

Core Message 1: I am experiencing new changes in my body

Core Message 2: Survival and reproduction are the main instincts of living beings.

Core message 3: Knowing how my body works helps me take better care of my body.

Core message 4: Understanding the reproductive system helps me be healthy and safe. I respect every part of my body; each part is there for a function.

Core Message 1: I am experiencing new changes in my body and mind

Ask children if they feel the same as when they were 6 year olds. What is different now?

Make a list of mental and emotional changes that they have noticed.

Discuss:

Feelings – shy, excited, anxious and happy; self conscious as we are growing up.

Feeling of independence, rebelliousness, courage, confusion, extra awareness and consciousness about our body.

Mood changes: Angry Happy Crabby. Wanting to be a part of a group, teasing

Attraction towards another person.

All of the above feelings are connected with mental, emotional and physical changes in our body.

What causes these changes?

Special chemicals called hormones. Estrogen and testosterone are hormones which are released in the body and cause changes in our bodies. .

What are the physical changes that happen in girls? Ask for responses and list them down.

In girls:

Physical changes: weight, height, hips widen, breasts grow, hair growth (pubic hair and axillary hair), voice changes, pimples, white discharge, menstruation.

Height and Weight increase: To eat iron, calcium and protein rich food rather than junk food.

Pimples: Occur because of hormonal changes in the body, best way to take care of them. Eat a balanced diet, drink lots of water and keep the skin clean

Voice change: child's voice changes to a slightly deeper voice and is in the process of becoming adult voice

Material Required

Marker pen, Blu Tac / Board pins / Double sided sticking tape / Cello tape
Marker pen, Chalk, Duster, Blackboard,

Advance preparation:

Make a chart with different physical and emotional changes

Tips for Trainers

- Session 3 will be conducted separately for boys and girls.
- Put up a chart with the different changes
- Encourage children to speak up and participate by saying "Thank you for bringing that out/ pointing that out. Let us have more response"
- Be aware of your facial expression and body language. Children should not feel intimidated or rejected. Welcome each response, expected, unexpected or inappropriate.
- When answers are inappropriate, these should be discussed such that children realize why they are inappropriate.
- Incorporate hand gestures and voice modulation to capture the interest of the students.
- It would be advisable to keep your language simple and also to intersperse some words from the local language during your session as it will help students feel comfortable and understand concepts better.

Core Message 1: I am experiencing new changes in my body and mind continued.....

Hair growth: feeling of embarrassment: people don't usually talk about it. There is no medical or health reason to remove it.

Smell: comes from bacteria that break down body's secretions that collect on our clothing. Wash with soap and water to keep the area clean.

Breasts: to show that the person has attained puberty. Difference in breast size occurs between the individuals.

Hips: hips widen; some of our old clothes don't fit us anymore: put on weight also. Why does this happen? For easy delivery.

Ask children how do you feel about these changes?

An example of one child getting worked up and anxious because all her classmates have started growing up but her body is not showing much growth.

Discussion: physical changes that happen in a body during puberty vary from person to person. Each person's body is unique. The whole process takes almost around 10 yrs. The body will grow at its own pace. So there is no need to worry if your friend has started growing but you have not, or if you have grown more than others. This is the time to make sure that your body gets enough exercise, sleep and nutritious food so that the changes happen as required for your body.

Tips for Trainers

One of the tasks of growing up is discovering who you are and what that means about what you like. Every person goes through this process of exploration, but what happens when it leads to feeling different, confused or even alone and there is nobody to talk to about it? Hence, give children ample time to raise questions and clear their doubts.

Core Message 2: Survival and reproduction are the main instincts of living beings.

Discuss: Why are these changes happening?

Explain regarding two main functions of the human body: survival and reproduction.

Once the child is capable of surviving on its own, the body gets ready for reproduction.

The child slowly develops into an adult.

Puberty is the phase when the child changes into an adult, for e.g. tadpole to frog, larva to butterfly. In different animals, this phase takes different times.

For the human, this whole change takes around 12 to 14 years; from 9-10 years to 22-24 years.

This is a long time and changes will happen gradually. The body will mature first and then the brain being more complex, will take longer.

Once the child is capable of surviving on its own, the body gets ready for reproduction. Explain that the body has not changed much during the past 45,000 yrs. But we have moved out of the jungles and started living in villages and towns and cities. Here we have to buy our food with money - there are no trees to pluck fruits from! So even though by 12 -14 years of age our body becomes capable of reproducing, our ability to survive in a village or city in a comfortable manner, requires us to learn special skills. Those skills take time to learn. Hence adults tell children "get married and have children only after you can take care of your needs and can earn for yourself."

Tips for Teachers/ Trainers

- First ask the question to a single child and then put it forth to the other children. This helps giving every child an opportunity to answer as well as provides opportunities to clear doubts if necessary.
- If any child gives a different answer from the expected response, do not correct the child; rather ask the child to state the reason and use such incidents as points for discussion.

Making Connections

Understanding that these changes are normal and it's a phase which is unique for each one will have a calming effect on children's anxiety about growing up

Core Message 3: Being a girl or a boy is not a choice. We are born that way.

Question: Why do we have different sexes? Why can't we have only one sex and have asexual reproduction like the amoeba?

Discussion: In asexual reproduction, the offspring are mere clones of the parent. In sexual reproduction, each offspring is different, improving the chances of survival of complex organisms ranging from an ant to an elephant. We need for different sexes.

Methodology: How do you feel about you being a girl or a boy?

Check and see if there are any responses where they feel / they have been told that their gender could have been different.

Or if they feel that due to the way people treat them due to their gender, they wish their gender could have been different.

Discussion:

Explain that our gender is determined by our genes when we are born: XX genes for girl & XY genes for boy. Mother's egg has the X gene. The father's sperms are of two types, half have X gene and half have the Y gene. No one has control over which sperm will fertilize the egg. Saying that a girl or a boy should have been of the opposite sex is like saying that a mango should be a guava. It is like color red saying that it wants to be blue. Both the fruits / colors are beautiful and perfect in their own way, it is not possible to compare the two and say one is better than the other.

But sometimes we can feel upset or sad about being a particular gender because of the way others treat us or comment on us.

Then what can one do? We can think in this manner: If a person is colorblind and can't see red, it is not the fault of the red colour. It does not reduce the redness of the red colour. The person who can't see red is missing something. If a person can't tell a diamond from a stone, it does not reduce the value of the diamond. My value, my skills, my qualities are not reduced because someone else can't see them/ or refuses to acknowledge them.

Tips for Trainers

- Children who have been discriminated on the basis of gender might feel overwhelmed.
- Affirm them and validate their feelings.
- Say that "Sometimes people can't see or appreciate the qualities and abilities of another person, whatever be the person's gender. They may discriminate against people of a particular gender. This shows the nature and shortsightedness of those people – and not of the person they are discriminating against. Each one of us is equally human. Each one of us has equal rights – to be born and to live on this Earth with safety and dignity.
- You may also meet the children after the session

Core Message 4: At this age I experience feelings of attraction towards another person. I can learn to be aware of my feelings of attraction and take responsible decisions.

Methodology: What do you think is the definition of love? Ask for responses.

Discussion: Allow an interacting of ideas and acknowledge every response.

Methodology: Do you think love between teenagers is true love? Ask for responses.

Discussion: Explain that since their body and brain is changing from that of a child to an adult, they are in the process of forming their identity, their ideas, preferences, tastes will keep changing during this stage. Their values are developing. Ask them if there was an instance where a friend they liked very much a few years ago has 'changed' and they don't like that person anymore?

Explain that this is because that friends and their values are developing and may not be matching anymore. You change and so does the other person. You may not like the 'changed' person anymore.

Early relationships are based on emotions – feelings of physical attraction dominate any saner advice or feelings. Also what they may want to do in their life is not certain. They may go separate ways in a few years' time. Making long term commitments are difficult at this stage.

Think of your very close friend. Would you like it if a close friend pressurized you to doing something you do not like to do? Would your close friend put you down or make you feel lesser?

E.g. If someone says 'If you love me, you will let me ...', 'If you love me, you will show me how much you love me by doing...'. These are all conditions. True love is unconditional. Sometimes the boy/girl leaves the other person after 'getting' what they wanted from that person. Sometimes the boy/girl may judge their partner as 'immoral' or of a 'lose character' afterwards.

Explain: Love is wanting the best for another person. The other person wishes to see you comfortable, happy and considers you his/her equal.

So if someone is making you do or say things that you don't want to do or making you feel lesser than, it is ok to say 'No". It doesn't mean that you do not love the person. It only means that you respect yourself and that you stand up for your values. Some e.g. for values are loyalty, courage, fairness, freedom, truth, friendship, care.

Material Required

Marker pen, Blu Tac / Board pins /
Double sided sticking tape / Cello tape
Marker pen, Chalk, Duster,
Blackboard, Box for collecting
questions, white chits

Tips for Trainers

- As children do not get opportunities to discuss issues related to puberty and reproduction, there might be a lot of questions. In order to streamline it you can do an activity called "WORRIES IN A HAT":
Children are given time to think about questions or doubts. They write these on chits and put in the box that will be passed around.
- Facilitator to ensure all questions are answered in due course of the sessions.

Methodology: When is it a good time to have sex? What are the consequences of having sex?

Discussion: Sex has consequences – physical, emotional, social. It is not just an act.

Also what are the consequences if you get pregnant? Are you at an age to responsibly take care of the consequences of pregnancy?

Explain that during earlier times when men lived in forests, by the time children were 13-14 yrs, they were capable of taking care of themselves and another child by hunting / gathering their own food.

But now, can a 13-14 yr old take care of another child. Not until he / she is 22-24 when he/she is capable of earning well and buying food n shelter with his / her own money.

Refer to Annexure 3:1 and 3:2 for making children understand need for postponing sexual intimacy and ensuring correct decision making process

You can also refer to Session 1 Annexure for conducting ‘Expressing love safely’ in this session.

Tips for Teachers/ Trainers

- One of the tasks of growing up is discovering who you are and what that means about what you like. Every person goes through this process of exploration, but what happens when it leads to feeling different, confused or even alone as nobody talk about it? Hence, give children ample time to raise questions and clear their doubts.
- If you don't have answer to any question it is best to be honest with children. However, make an effort to find out the answer and share during the next session.

Refer to Annexure 3:1 and 3:2 for activities

The activity ‘Expressing Love Safely’ provided in Annexure of Session 1 can also be conducted in this session

Concluding the session:

Ask students to do the blind walk – stand one behind the other with their hand on the other person's shoulder. The first person in the line keeps her eyes open. She walks the group around the room. After a while they stop and open their eyes. Ask how they felt during this exercise.

Summarize and review the key messages:

Ask children to share what they learnt today in the session

Reiterate:

Core Message 1: I am experiencing new changes in my body and mind.

Core message 2: Survival and reproduction are the main instincts of living beings

Core Message 3: Being a girl or a boy is not a choice. We are born that way.

Core Message 4: At this age I experience feelings of attraction towards another person. I can learn to be aware of my feelings of attraction and take responsible decisions.

A. Postponing Sexual Intimacy

Students are divided into groups of 6-8 and asked to list down the benefits and risks of sexual activity during teenage. Responses are briefly discussed in the large group. Facilitator must ensure responses include both physical and emotional risks.

This is followed by individual reflection on personal and career goals and how the risks associated with sexual activity may affect these goals if the individual were exposed to them.

Think about all the personal and career goals that you want to achieve in the next 5 years and list them down in the table below. In the right column, list the potential risks that you may be exposed to through sexual activity. Circle the goals that you think may be affected negatively if any of the above risks came true at this stage.

GOALS	RISKS

Facilitator prompts:

- How would these potential risks fit into your planned life goals?
- In case of negative events like teen pregnancy, which goals would likely have to be cancelled, altered, or postponed?
- What other impact do you think there could be on your physical or emotional health?

B. Postponing Sexual Intimacy

Students are divided into 2 groups and given a mental and a physical task which is likely beyond their current ability, but easier for adults to handle.

1. Lift a heavy suitcase
2. Complex math problem

Their inability to complete the task is used to reflect on lack of physical and mental maturity various other tasks, including sexual activity.

Making Better Decisions



