**It's All About Choice**

Students will examine the different choices they make as supporting or undermining their intent to remain abstinent, including the affect of substance use on those choices.

**Learning outcomes**

Students will:

* see the importance of setting limits in relationships
* examine their personal limits

Teacher planning

**TIME REQUIRED FOR LESSON**

90 minutes

**MATERIALS/RESOURCES**

* copies of script [A Blank Check](http://www.learnnc.org/lp/media/lessons/ktcrumpler11232004492/Script_for_A_Blank_Check.doc)
* signs and cards for choice activities (see [teacher’s guide](http://www.learnnc.org/lp/media/lessons/ktcrumpler11232004492/TEACHER_GUIDE_for_MATERIALS.doc))
* open space along one wall of the room

Pre-activities

**FOCUS ACTIVITY**

**Option 1**

* This activity is called A Blank Check. Distribute copies of the script to a pair of students. Assign one person to be student A and another to be student B. Read the following scenario to set the stage:
  + “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (person B) has a goal to be the first in his or her family to go to college. This student has washed cars, babysat, and done other odd jobs to earn money for college. He/She started a savings account and made regular contributions to it to help their goal to become reality. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (person B) has been dating \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (person A) for several months. They like each other and enjoy many of the same things. We join them as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (person A) is taking \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(person B) home one night. As they are standing on the porch, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(person A) says.…”
* Students read through the script.
* Ask the class the following questions:
  + How do you think Person B is feeling?
  + How would you feel in that position?
  + What possible risks are involved in giving another person a “blank check”?
  + What is the analogy implied with the blank check? (sexual intercourse)
  + What risks are similar?
  + Why are the risks more obvious with writing a blank check, even though risks of engaging in sexual intercourse may be more serious or life-altering?
* Students are usually offended by someone who would take advantage in a relationship by trying to borrow money. Have them draw conclusions about the comparative risks of pressure to engage in sex and the pressure to loan someone money. Try to create the “ah ha” experience and come to the conclusion that sexual behavior carries unexpected risks.

**Option 2**

* Introduce the lesson by dividing up the class and forming two lines on opposite sides of the room. Try to ensure that each person has a partner across from him or her.
* Ask them to move forward toward their partner. Approach the partner and get as close as is comfortable. Note the approximate distance that most people chose (usually about three feet). This indicates your personal space. Ask questions such as the following. Was different for some people than their partners, in other words, did your partner get closer than you did? What was your or your partner’s reaction? What non-verbal ways do we let another person know what our comfort zone is?

Activities

**REVIEW**

“You have learned in previous sessions what kinds of activities and behaviors put a person at risk for HIV or other STD transmission. Let’s review with an activity by indicating whether a behavior would put a person at greater risk for HIV or STD infection. As I read the behavior, please raise your hand if you think there is an increased risk. If not, simply leave your hand down.”

* Hugging (NO)
* Injection drug use (YES)
* Oral sex (YES)
* Mosquito bite (NO)
* Vaginal intercourse (YES)
* Sharing a meal (NO)

**TEACHER INPUT**

The epidemic of HIV and AIDS has now been in existence in the United States for over twenty years. The first cases were identified in larger cities in 1981. Since then, the disease has spread through society: men and women; older adults and teens; and all races. We now know that it is what a person does rather than who they are that places them at risk. Because there are better treatments, persons infected with HIV live longer and have a better quality of life. That is the good news. Because we hear that fewer people are becoming sick and dying, we have become apathetic. That is the bad news. For the first time in over a decade, increasing numbers of new cases are occurring. Despite better treatments, the consequences of becoming infected are still serious. The treatments are expensive and have many side effects. For most individuals, AIDS will still be fatal. There are also increases in the rate of sexually transmitted diseases among teenagers. Among sexually active youth, one in four may have a sexually transmitted disease. Although theses illnesses are not typically fatal, they can cause serious emotional, physical, and social problems. They can also be passed to future sexual partners and to an unborn child or to a child during birth. Some of these STDs are treatable while others are incurable.

**GUIDED PRACTICE**

**It’s All About Choice**

1. Use the Setting Personal Limits continuum from the teacher’s guide and post it along one wall. Prepare cards with the different steps, enough for every student to select one, omitting sexual intercourse. On the back of some cards place a red dot or select another symbol.
2. Prepare another set of cards with various drugs and some with no use. These could be based on Youth Risk Behavior Survey data.
3. Prepare another set of cards with various places that kids might hang out or spend time together.
4. First, each student will select a card from the Personal Limits cards and then stand under that sign. Explain that, just for this activity, this is the limit they have decided is okay for them at this time in their life. Note that sexual intercourse is not included since we are assuming they intend to abstain.
5. Second, have each student select a card from the choices of hangouts. Discuss what different people chose and if any of these places pose a risk for or might affect their position on the continuum.
6. Third, ask each student to pick a card from the drug cards set. Find out how they think their choice/use might affect their ability to maintain their position or personal limits.
7. Finally, ask students to look on the back of their Personal Limit card and step forward if they have a red dot. This dot means their current partner, girlfriend, or boyfriend is HIV infected. What does that mean given the other information they have about their choices? Allow time for discussion.

Note that for some it won’t be an issue because their sexual limit or avoidance of drug use keeps them safe. For others, their choices may put them at risk. Discuss the different situations presented.

**INDEPENDENT PRACTICE**

Students should reflect on their personal limits, choices about friends and places they go, and use of drugs as factors in their risk for HIV. They should ask themselves, “Are there things I should change?” This is only for personal reflection and not for personal disclosure.

**CLOSURE**

Remind the students, “Today you made three choices during the course of this activity. One was a personal limit on sexual intimacy. Two was where you spend time with other people. The third was related to drug use. These are choices you have to make in the real world as well and as you can see, each one has its own consequences.”

Assessment

Since this was a skill building activity, we want to gauge not just knowledge gained, but more importantly how it may impact student behavior. The healthful living skill of self-efficacy under Behavior Self-Management is important for building confidence in young people to use what they have learned. Use the [Confidence Survey](http://www.learnnc.org/lp/media/lessons/ktcrumpler11232004492/Confidence_Survey_for_Prevention_of_HIV.doc) to use assess self-efficacy around choosing and maintaining abstinence.

Supplemental information

**COMMENTS**

Be sure to allow time for processing after the activities. Most of the critical learning takes place during those discussions.