

HELP! I NEED ADVICE!

Abstinence
Sex
Assertive
Sexual activity
Sexual rights
Sexual health
Intimate partner violence

- ✓ 1. For learners to understand why people may **abstain from sex**.
- ✓ 2. For learners to practice using assertive **communication techniques**.

45-50 Minutes

Comic Strips 'Help! I Need Advice!' (provided)
Teacher notes on Abstinence (provided)

PROCEDURE

- 1 Review with the class what **abstinence** means, and the reasons that someone may decide to be abstinent (see teacher notes).
- 2 Remind learners that communicating one's preferences about abstinence or engaging in sexual activity relies on using respectful, assertive communication skills. An **assertive** person sees their needs and feelings as important, and is able to share them in a clear, confident and respectful way. This includes asking for what you want, or giving an honest 'no' to things you don't want. Being assertive is not the same as being aggressive. In conflict situations assertive people do not intentionally hurt others emotionally or physically, instead they encourage others to share their feelings in a respectful way.
- 3 Explain to learners that their friends and peers may be an important source of information and advice. Friends can be an important support for anyone who needs to communicate a decision around **sexual activity** and abstinence.
- 4 Acknowledge that it is often hard to resist peer pressure, or pressure from a person who wants to have **sex** with you. In high pressure situations it can be hard to know what to say if you haven't practiced doing it before.
- 5 Hand out one worksheet per learner.
- 6 Explain to learners that this exercise provides them with the opportunity to practice how they may give support to their friends via text messaging. This exercise not only encourages learners to think of why someone may choose to be abstinent, but also gives them the opportunity to role-play the dialogue without having to do so face-to-face.
- 7 Remind learners that the messages that they send should be positive messages about relationships, safe sex, **sexual rights** and sexual choices.
- 8 Ask learners to share their text dialogues by reading out their messages with a partner. Discuss with the class what kinds of techniques were used by the characters to explain their decision to be abstinent, and to overcome the obstacles they encountered in sticking to their decision. Ask learners to suggest other alternative scripts that could also be used in each scenario.

TEACHER TIPS

General

This exercise builds upon other exercises on abstinence by moving the discussion forward. This is a more practical exercise that encourages learners to apply assertiveness skills they have learned to communicate their preferences around abstinence. It is useful in that it draws together a number of different topics from the curriculum, for example decisions to have sex, sexual rights and sexual health.

Teachers should circulate and actively supervise while learners are working on their scenarios, to ensure that they stay focused on abstinence-focused messaging. Teachers can also substitute the text in the comic frames with their own texts which may be more context-relevant.

Making the Link with Gender & Violence

This exercise teaches learners to apply acquired skills for negotiating safe sex, and making choices on sexual behaviour. Respectful communication can assist in avoiding intimate partner violence.

Assessment Ideas

Learners could hand in their scripts/scenarios for marking, or could be provided with a blank comic frame to allow them to suggest their own scenario.

Learners could also be tasked to write the script for a talk show, TV episode, or cartoon strip to educate about abstinence - the reasons why people may choose abstinence, and how to communicate their choice to a partner.

Variation

Learners could act out their scenarios rather than using the text message format.

HELP! I NEED ADVICE! PART 1

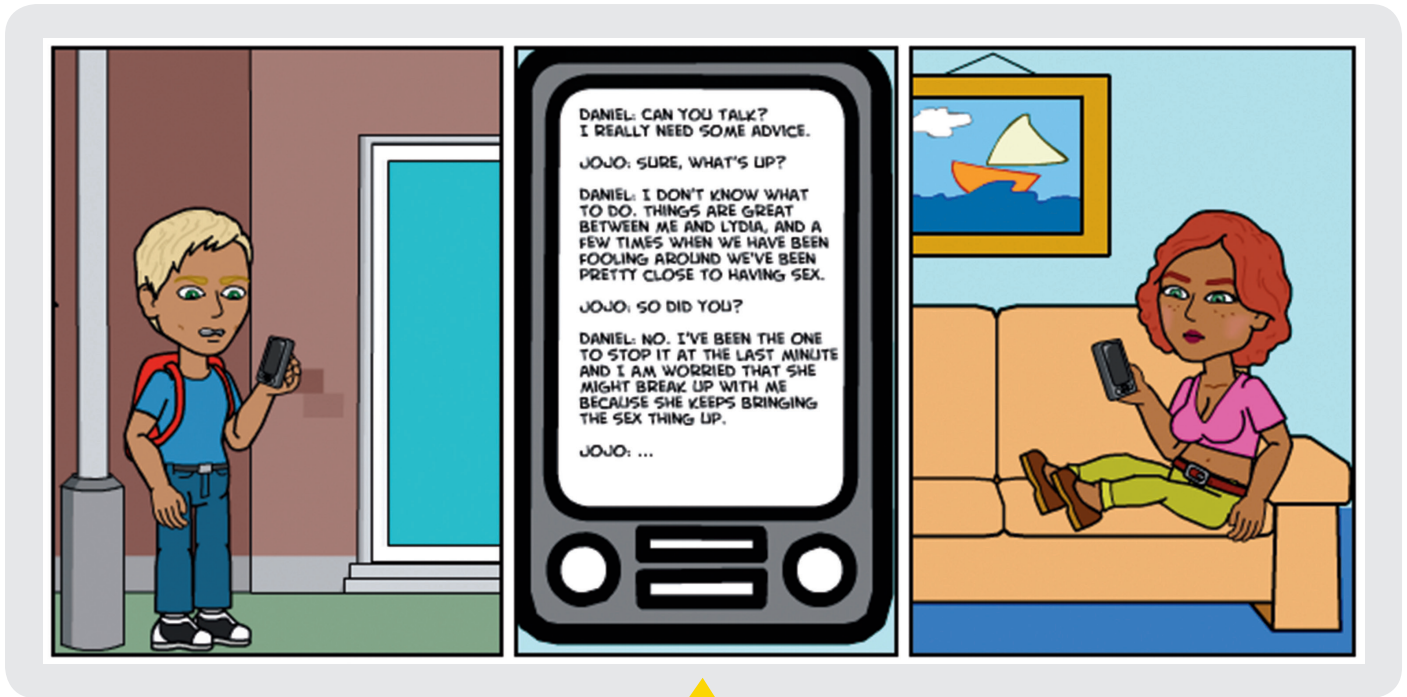
Complete the text messages below.



TSITSI REPLIES:

HELP! I NEED ADVICE! PART 2

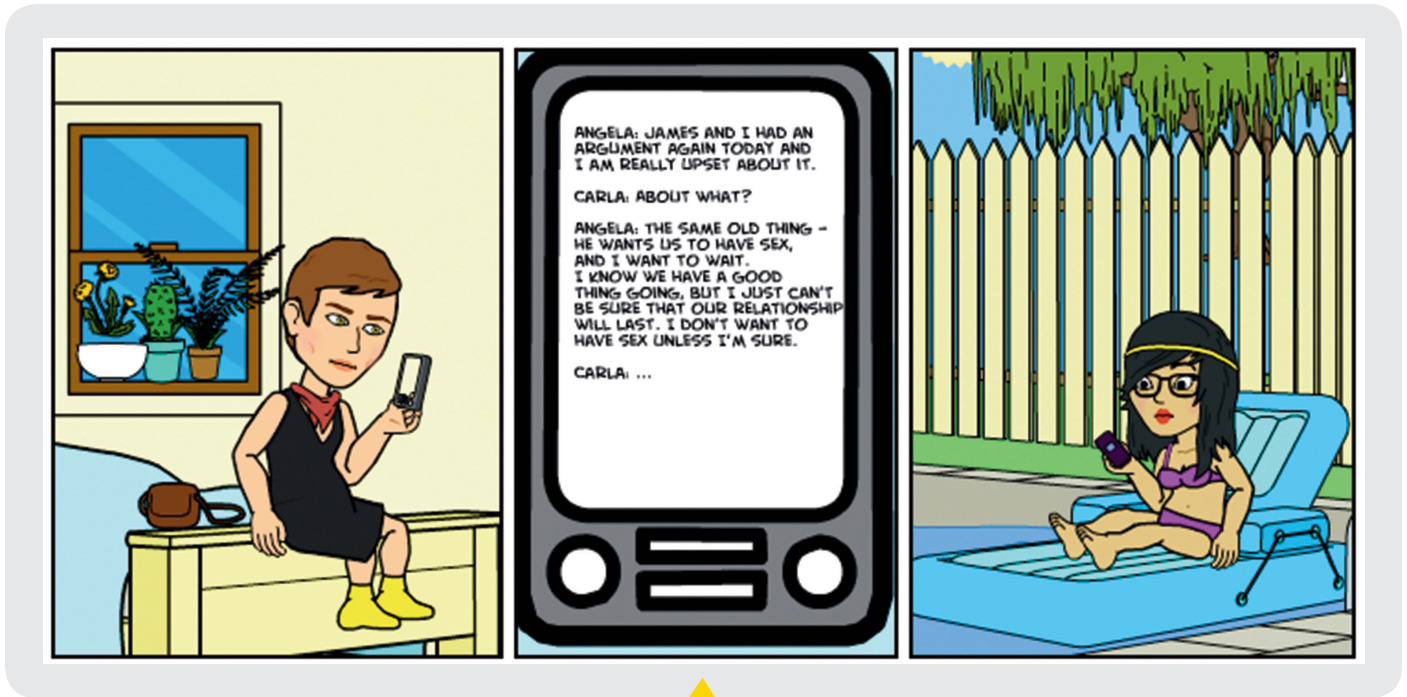
Complete the text messages below.



JOJO REPLIES:

HELP! I NEED ADVICE! PART 3

Complete the text messages below.



CARLA REPLIES:

HELP! I NEED ADVICE! PART 4

Complete the text messages below.



JOHAN REPLIES:

TEACHER NOTES: ABSTINENCE

Concepts that may be useful in this exercise:

ABSTINENCE MEANS CHOOSING NOT TO DO SOMETHING.

Abstinence doesn't only refer to sexual behaviours, but could describe many other kinds of choices. For example, vegetarians abstain from eating meat, and some learners abstain from watching TV during the week so that they have more time for their schoolwork.

ABSTINENCE CAN BE TEMPORARY, OR CAN BE A MORE LONG-TERM DECISION.

For example, followers of some religions abstain from eating food at certain times during the year. For others, the decision to abstain from drugs, alcohol or cigarettes may last a lifetime.

ABSTINENCE CAN START AT ANY TIME IN ONE'S LIFE.

You can choose to become abstinent after you have already done something (for example, smokers who stop smoking), or you can abstain without ever having tried it. You can return to abstinence after you have engaged with the behaviour for a while, for example, someone who was sexually active while married, but who returned to abstinence again when they divorced.

ABSTINENCE IS NOT THE SAME AS CELIBACY. Celibacy is the commitment to abstain for life, from sex (and most often, also marriage) – frequently for moral or religious reasons.

ABSTINENCE IS A PERSONAL DECISION, AND PEOPLE'S DEFINITIONS OF ABSTINENCE ARE THEREFORE DIFFERENT.

For some people abstinence means not engaging in any sexual activity at all (including things like petting, kissing, and masturbation), while for others abstinence means choosing not to have oral, anal or vaginal sex. For some people, practising abstinence means that they abstain from relationships as well as sex, while for others abstinence only refers to sexual activity.

PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO ABSTAIN FROM SEXUAL ACTIVITY. No-one should pressure their partner into having sex if they do not want to.

PEOPLE MAY CHOOSE TO ABSTAIN FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS. More than one of these factors may be part of someone's decision to abstain from sex.

Possible reasons include:

- Don't enjoy having sex
- Religious beliefs and values
- Family values
- Personal values
- Not ready
- Don't feel comfortable with their bodies
- Don't want to be at risk of HIV, STIs, pregnancy
- Focusing on something else right now: school, sports, friends
- Had a previous bad experience
- Want to build relationship based on things other than sex
- Don't feel attracted to anyone



ABSTAINING FROM SEXUAL ACTIVITY - WHAT LEARNERS MAY WANT TO SAY

- MY RELIGION TELLS ME THAT I SHOULDN'T HAVE SEX OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE.
- I DON'T FEEL READY FOR SEX.
- I'D LIKE TO GET TO KNOW YOU BETTER FIRST.
- I WANT TO WAIT UNTIL I'M MARRIED BEFORE HAVING SEX.
- I WANT THE FIRST TIME TO BE SPECIAL, NOT IN YOUR CAR. I WANT TO WAIT.
- I WANT TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH YOU, HANGING OUT AND GETTING TO KNOW YOU, BEFORE I DECIDE IF I WANT TO HAVE SEX.
- IT DOESN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE IF YOU CALL ME NAMES, OR WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK OF ME. THIS IS MY DECISION.
- I DON'T FEEL READY TO TAKE THAT STEP YET, BUT THERE ARE LOTS OF OTHER THINGS WE CAN DO.