

Lesson plan: What is 'Fair Sex'?

Overview:

Our culture and media often claim that 'sex between consenting adults in private doesn't harm anyone else.' With few exceptions, no one is allowed to criticise other people for their sexual choices without being accused of intolerance – 'it's none of your business'. Sex and Relationships Education tends to focus on the biology of sex, contraception and STIs. This lesson plan and the accompanying three short public information bulletins are designed to encourage thought around some wider aspects of sex and relationships that are not usually discussed, particularly the idea that sex is an issue of justice.

Learning objectives:

- Sex is never neutral or irrelevant in terms of its effects on relationships.
- Sex has implications beyond the couple immediately involved.
- Common messages about sex and relationships are not always correct or helpful.
- Marriage offers a range of benefits for couples and their families.

Time:

One 45 minute class period

Materials:

- The three one-minute video bulletins from the Sex & Families playlist on the Jubilee Centre's YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/jubileecentre).

Directions:

1. View first video bulletin: 'Warning: Passive Sex'

The first film highlights problems with the common idea that sex between 'consenting adults' doesn't harm anyone else. Clearly, many single parents do an excellent job despite finding themselves in difficult circumstances, which they may not have wanted. Nevertheless, both adults and children from separated relationships are often worse off in a number of ways than when the couple were together. For instance, it costs more to maintain two houses, so the parents may end up working more, and spend less time with any children.

Additional data:

- Even if there aren't children, experiencing the break up of a relationship can be hard (it is said to be as stressful as bereavement or redundancy) and can lead to difficulties at work and other areas of life.
 - 20% of divorce petitions are granted on the grounds of adultery, although these are only the ones where adultery has been proven. Although approximately 30% of first marriages end in divorce, cohabiting relationships tend to break up far more often and after less time.
2. Discussion questions for first video
 - ❖ The film uses passive smoking as an analogy of the harm that might be caused by the man's affair. How are the two – smoking and the affair – similar? How are they different?
 - ❖ The man in the film is exercising his right to freedom. Legally, he is doing nothing wrong, but do you think this is fair, and if so, why – or why not?
 - ❖ 'Sex between consenting adults doesn't harm anyone.' Are there any circumstances when a sexual relationship *doesn't* affect someone else in some way?

3. View second video bulletin: 'Paying for Sex'

The next film is a 'MasterCard' style film that uses 1950s comic strips to look at the different costs and benefits to relationships, both financial and emotional. Some people say that marriage is 'just a piece of paper', but research suggests that the commitment of getting married can make a fundamental difference to the nature of the relationship. As a result, married couples are on average wealthier, have better long-term health, are happier and have better sex lives.

Additional data:

- Although a lot of people think that living together before marriage improves their chances of avoiding divorce, the opposite is in fact true. Allowing for the extra time living together, those who cohabit before marriage seem around 20% more likely to divorce.
- Just 8 per cent of married couples split up within five years of the birth of a child, compared with 25 per cent of those who marry after the birth and 52 per cent of cohabiters.

4. Discussion questions for second video

- ❖ How does an explicit long-term commitment change the nature of a relationship – what might be different between the couple in practice?
- ❖ Why do you think people sleep around or, after getting married, have affairs?
- ❖ Most people would agree that they want better health, wealth, happiness and sex. Is marriage a worthwhile 'price' to pay for this? Why, or why not?

5. View third video bulletin: "'Sticky' Sex"

The final film uses plasticine figures to suggest that sexual relationships cannot be made and broken without consequences as easily as many people like to think.

Additional data:

- Many cohabitations are intended to be easy to break up. The habit of a lack of commitment can be carried across to marriage and make divorce more likely.
- Only 35% of cohabiting couples stay together until their children turn 16, compared to 70% of married couples.

6. Discussion questions for third video

- ❖ Our culture can often treat relationships as disposable. Can you think of some of the ways in which a relationship that has ended might continue to affect one or other of the couple?
- ❖ Why do you think people claim that sexual relationships don't have any wider significance?
- ❖ Do you think sex should be thought of in terms of justice and morality? Why, or why not?

Additional information:

For further details about the 'Fair Sex' Movement, visit the Jubilee Centre website at www.jubilee-centre.org

Please send any feedback to info@jubilee-centre.org