

# What Is Sexuality?

**Time:** 90 minutes

**Activity Objective:**

Become familiar with a comprehensive framework for sexuality and recognize how such a framework can enhance HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support responses.

**Materials:**

- Flipcharts and markers
- Flipchart printed with the Circles of Sexuality diagram for each small group
- PPT: Gender, Sexuality, and HIV: So What? Part I
- Facilitator's Resource: List of Illustrative Program Examples
- Handout of the (6) circles with definitions

## Part 1: Brainstorming 'Sexuality'

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Activity:**

1. Ask the group to brainstorm all the words they can think of that are associated with sexuality. Have two people write down the words on large sheets of paper as the facilitator probes for more words. This should be done quickly.
2. Probe for missing words: Any positive associations? What part of sexuality does society not like to talk about openly? Try to pull out the hidden aspects of sexuality. What are some negative actions related to sexuality?

Kissing	Rape	STIs	Self-esteem
Massage	Hugging	Ovaries	Orgasm
Caring	Sexual harassment	FGM	Sexual attraction
Infertility	Loving/liking	Contraception	Withdrawal method
HIV	Abortion	Vasectomy	Getting pregnant
Touching	Date aggression	Need to be touched	Lesbian, gay
Fantasy	Masturbation	Pornography	Body image
Sharing	Passion	Sperm	Petting
Child spacing	Impotence	Bisexual	Anal sex
Communication	Emotional vulnerability	Flirtation	Incest
Unwanted pregnancy			

3. Once a list is brainstormed (a sample list is provided, above), solicit a couple of responses to the following questions:

- What strikes you about this list?
- Any surprises?

## Part 2. Circles of Sexuality

**Time:** 75 minutes

**Activity:**

1. Using the Powerpoint presentation, show participants the Circles of Sexuality diagram, which represents one definition of sexuality. Most aspects of human sexuality can fit in

one or more of these circles. Explain the definition of each circle and ask for examples of sexuality concepts, thoughts, or behaviors that would fit in each circle.

## **Definitions:**

### **Sensuality**

Awareness and feeling with one's own body and other people's bodies, especially the body of a sexual partner. Sensuality enables us to feel good about how our bodies look and feel and what they can do. Sensuality also allows us to enjoy the pleasure our bodies can give ourselves and others.

### **Intimacy**

The ability and need to be close to another human being and accept closeness in return. Aspects of intimacy can include sharing, caring, emotional risk-taking, and vulnerability.

### **Sexual orientation and gender identity**

A person's understanding of who he or she is sexually, including:

- Gender identity: a person's internal sense of being a man or a woman, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth.
- Gender expression: how one's characteristics and behaviors conform to or transgress gender norms and roles of femininity and masculinity.
- Sexual orientation: whether a person's primary attraction is to the opposite sex (heterosexuality), the same sex (homosexuality), or both sexes (bisexuality).

### **Sexual health and reproduction**

One's capacity to reproduce, and the behaviors and attitudes that support sexual health and enjoyment. This includes factual information about sexual anatomy, sexual intercourse and different sex acts, reproduction, contraception, STI prevention, and self-care, among others.

### **Sexual behaviors and practices**

Who does what with which body parts, items, and/or partners.

### **Sexual power and agency**

Power within sexual relations. This includes:

- Power within, derived from a sense of self-worth and understanding of one's preferences and values, which enables a person to realize sexual well-being and health.
- Power to influence, consent, and/or decline.
- Power with others to negotiate and decide.
- Power over others; using sex to manipulate, control, or harm other people.

This training module was adapted from materials created by the Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG) and funded by USAID. These materials may have been edited; to see the original training materials you may download this training module in its pdf format).

2. Using the Powerpoint presentation, explain the activity instructions. How do the words from the brainstorm fit into the circles? Are there any that don't seem to fit? Ask the small groups to put each word into the one circle where it best fits. Participants will have 15 minutes to complete this task.

3. Divide the group into smaller groups of 4–5 people each. Distribute flipchart pages prepared ahead of time with the circles of sexuality and a handout with the definitions of each word. Each group will need pens or markers and one of these flipchart pages.

4. When the groups are finished, facilitate a discussion with the larger group, asking:

- How was this exercise? Easy or hard?
- Which circle had the most words associated with it? Why?
- Did any other associated words need to be added?
- Is there any part of these five circles that you never before thought of as sexual? Please explain.
- Which of the five sexuality circles feels most familiar? Least familiar? Why do you think that is so?
- Which ones do you think carry the heaviest silence and are hardest to talk about? Why is that? Probe: For women? For men? For people in same-sex relationships? For HIV programming?
- Which circle(s) present the most compelling learning opportunities for a community's men and women? On which circles do HIV programs focus? Are these the same or different? Why or why not?
- Are some circles more important than others to address in the context of HIV programming? Why or why not?

5. Using the Powerpoint presentation, share final concluding points (slides 12–14).

## References

This activity is adapted from the following sources.

Advocates for Youth. "Circles of Sexuality." Retrieved July 24, 2010, from [http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=198&Itemid=129](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=198&Itemid=129).

CARE and ICRW. "Inner Spaces, Outer Faces Initiative Toolkit: Tools for Learning and Action on Gender and Sexuality." Atlanta, GA and Washington, DC: Care and ICRW. Retrieved from <http://www.icrw.org/publications/inner-spaces-outer-faces-initiative-toolkit>.

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