

Through program participation in Taking Charge, students will deepen their understanding of sexual health and gain knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help them integrate healthy sexuality into their lives. Taking Charge will focus on healthy relationships by helping students to focus on their personal identity, boundary setting, communication, exercising personal rights, and navigating interpersonal relationships with a special emphasis on healthy and safe relationships characteristics. Students will also learn how the reproductive system works and information about factors that contribute to the risk of sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy and how to make decisions to reduce these risks.

Taking Charge is intended for students in grades 9-12.

Session 1: Introduction/Healthy Relationships/Media

Purpose: to promote healthy relationship qualities in participants' personal lives and to increase awareness of how relationships are portrayed in common movie and television genres

Objectives:

By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- Describe five qualities of a healthy relationship (honesty, equality, respect, responsibility, communication)
- Identify two ways in which television and movie genres portray relationships

Key Messages:

- Honesty, Equality, Respect, Responsibility, and Communication are five core qualities of a healthy relationship. It is important that any relationship you choose to have has these healthy qualities.
- Knowing what is healthy and unhealthy can help you make choices for your health and safety in relationships and in the future.
- Television and movies present many types of relationships and relationship behaviors, ranging from very unhealthy to healthy.
- Portraying healthy aspects of characters' relationships may not be a central plot point in television or movie genres. Ideally, real-life personal relationships include honesty, equality, respect, responsibility, and communication.
- Television and movies can make relationships look as if they take no effort. In real life, they require that partners make a commitment to honesty, equality, respect, responsibility, and communication.

Session 2: Reality Check: Communication, Conflict, and Interpersonal Relationships

Purpose: To discuss differences between passive, aggressive, and assertive communication and explore ways communication impacts interpersonal relationships

Objectives:

By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- Correctly identify examples of passive, aggressive, and assertive communication
- Describe behaviors that can contribute to conflict and that can resolve conflict
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to communicate assertively by using a three-part message

Key Messages:

- People communicate their thoughts, wants, needs, and likes or dislikes in relationships in different ways.
- Being assertive is a critical aspect of healthy communication. Assertive communication demonstrates that each person in a relationship matters.

When communicating assertively, especially to resolve conflict, it is important to focus on behaviors that are problematic rather than saying a person is bad.

Session 3: Anatomy Academy Review

Purpose: to increase comfort using the medical names for the sexual and reproductive anatomy and to familiarize students with the functions of the sexual and reproductive anatomy

Objectives:

By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- Identify and name body parts of the sexual and reproductive system using medically correct terms
- Describe the functions of the body parts of the sexual and reproductive system
- Explain the process of the menstrual cycle, pregnancy, and seminal emission

Key Messages:

- Learning about sexual and reproductive anatomy is normal and healthy.
- Knowing the names and sexual and reproductive anatomy helps you communicate any questions, concerns, thoughts, and/or feelings about your body.
- There are certain parts of the body that make reproduction possible. Your body is changing to accommodate the possibility of reproduction, but it's recommended to wait, if possible, until you are older so that your body and mind is better able to handle pregnancy and nurture the developing fetus.
- Having sexual intercourse, getting pregnant, and parenting are personal decisions and no one should be pressured or forced into making any of the decisions.

It is important to communicate with a parent or caregiver, or trusted adult, and medical professional if you are being pressured to have sexual intercourse, or become pregnant.

Session 4: Parenthood

Purpose: enable students to think about their future and understand how the responsibility of becoming a parent may positively or negatively impact their future plans

Objectives:

By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- Identify goals for the future and discover how becoming a parent could affect those goals.
- Understand that becoming a parent at a young age could greatly impact their career/education goals, their friends/social life, finances/money, and daily routines/leisure time.
- Understand that abstinence is the only way that one can be positive that an unplanned pregnancy will not occur.
- Understand that even while using protection, there is still a possibility that unplanned pregnancy could occur.

Key Messages:

- Parenthood is a job that demands a lot of ability and responsibility and a decision that requires careful thought and consideration.

Having an unplanned pregnancy will drastically affect the life of the mother and father, and also possibly friends and family of both.

Session 5: STIs

Purpose: to provide basic facts about Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) including modes of transmission, types of STIs, and prevention options (abstinence)

Objectives:

By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- Name sexually transmitted infections and possible symptoms
- List ways STIs can be transmitted
- Identify behaviors that can put a person at risk for a sexually transmitted infection

Key Messages:

- Sexually transmitted infections are very common among teens. It's important to know the facts to prevent transmission and contraction of sexually transmitted infections.
- Often, there are no symptoms of STIs. Getting tested is key for your health.

Abstinence is the only sure way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

Session 6: Consent

Purpose: to define consent and explore ways consent is put into practice

Objectives:

By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- Define what it means to give consent
- Identify how it might feel to give or deny consent
- Identify how it might feel when someone does not ask for your consent
- Explain the difference between consent, non-consent, and coercion

Key Messages:

- Consent requires ongoing check-ins and attention to a partner's sometimes changing needs, with partners renegotiating consent whenever it's necessary.

Communicating with parents or caregivers, trusted adults, and other resources is an important step in getting support for experiences of sexual violence.

Session 7: Abstinence

Purpose: to clarify attitudes and beliefs about abstinence in order to make informed decision when setting sexual boundaries with others.

Objectives:

By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- Define sexual abstinence
- Clarify personal attitudes and beliefs about abstinence
- Consider reasons for using and not using abstinence

Key Messages:

- The decision to abstain can be made throughout a person's life.
- Abstinence is a far more complex concept than is often portrayed.
- Being successful in abstaining involves knowing one's own personal boundaries and definition and being able to clearly communicate those boundaries and definitions.