



LESSON 7. OUTLINE
INFLUENCE: Friends, Culture, the Media, and Sex

OBJECTIVES:

- Define “influence” and list things that influence young people about sex
- Describe some positive influences of your culture
- Identify examples of influence from the media, and classify them as positive or negative
- Describe how to resist negative influences about sex

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Chalkboard, or Newsprint tablet, Markers, and Easel
- One or both of the following:
 - Ads from magazines that appeal to teens
 - A CD of a popular song (and a CD player or boom box)
- Ground Rules Newsprint Sheet from LESSON 1
- “KEY MESSAGES” Poster from LESSON 1

ACTIVITIES:

- 7.1 -- What Influences Young People about Sex? - 10 minutes
- 7.2 -- The Influence of Culture - 10 minutes
- 7.3 -- Magazine Ads and/or a Song/CD - 10 to 15 minutes
- 7.4 -- FRIENDS: Adriana and the Party - 10 minutes
- 7.5 -- Wrap-up - 5 minutes

MATERIALS & RESOURCES INCLUDED:

FACILITATOR RESOURCE for ACTIVITY 7.2: The Influence of Culture

FACILITATOR RESOURCE for ACTIVITY 7.4: FRIENDS: Adriana and the Party

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 - A CD of a popular song (and a CD player or boom box)
- Ground Rules Newsprint Sheet from Lesson 1
- “KEY MESSAGES” Poster

[Note to Facilitators: This lesson requires preparing ahead of time to bring current and relevant materials. Depending on the amount of participation and discussion generated by the exercises, there is often time to consider only either the magazine ads or the song/CD. If there is time, both ads and songs can be used.

Magazine ads from publications that appeal to young people can be cut out and glued or stapled to construction paper, so that they can be passed around the class or held up in the front of the class. A CD of a popular song and a way to play it for the class are also important to bring. You may want to discuss with students ahead of time which magazines and songs they like, and which they want to discuss.]

ACTIVITY 7.1 -- What Influences Young People about Sex? - 10 minutes

Let the class know that, in this session, they will consider what influences young people as they make their BIG DECISIONS about sex. Remind them that the messages about sex that this curriculum is trying to get across are:

- Having sex is a BIG DECISION
- ABSTINENCE is the healthiest choice
- Teens who have sex must TAKE ACTION:
 - Use CONDOMS correctly, EVERY time
 - GET TESTED for STDs

Write on the board the word “INFLUENCE” and ask the students to say what it means. Help the class to come up with several synonyms (e.g., affects you, makes you think or do something, pressures you, sways you, manipulates you).

Ask the students what they think influences young people in their community in how they think about sex—especially when it comes to what is *normal* and what is *cool*. To answer this, they might think about how young people learn about sex, hear about sex, or see people in sexually-related situations.

Write their suggestions on the board or newsprint, and help them to come up with the following categories, among others:

- Parents and family
- Friends or peers
- Movies and television
- Commercials and advertising
- Songs on the radio
- Partners (someone a person is dating)
- Religious organizations and beliefs
- Culture (e.g., being part of an ethnic, racial, or other group)

Explain that all these people and things can influence young people in how they think about sex and how they make decisions about sex. These influences can affect how young people understand what is right, what is normal, what is cool, and what they should do.

Ask the students to give specific examples of how each of these people or things might influence young people in their decisions about sex. For each category, try to elicit at least one idea for a positive influence, as well as an example of a negative influence.

Use the students’ examples as much as possible. If you need to suggest examples, they might include:

- Parents and family
 - Parents may talk to their children about abstinence, and about being responsible when they become sexually active. (Positive)
 - A cousin might be sexually active without protection and accidentally get his girlfriend pregnant. (Negative)
- Friends or peers
 - A friend might encourage you to stand up for yourself and say no to a partner who is pressuring you for sex. (Positive)
 - Friends may tease someone for being a virgin. (Negative)
- Movies and television
 - A movie can show a couple who spend time and have fun together, but do not have sex. (Positive)

- A TV show can show people having sex on the spur of the moment, and not using condoms. (Negative)
- Songs on the radio
 - A song can talk about why someone said no to sex. (Positive)
 - A song can describe having sex (but not caring about the partner). (Negative)
- Commercials and advertisements
 - A commercial can promote parents talking to their kids. (Positive)
 - A commercial can make it seem that everybody is having sex. (Negative)
- Partners (someone a person is dating)
 - A partner may support your decision to choose abstinence. (Positive)
 - A partner may pressure a person to have sex, or pressure them to have sex without condoms or contraception. (Negative)
- Religious organizations and beliefs
 - A religion may teach that sex should happen only when people are adults in a committed life-long relationship. (Positive)
 - A religion might make it difficult to be ready to prevent STDs and pregnancy when a person does become sexually active. (Negative)
- Culture (shared values of a racial, ethnic, or other group)
 - A culture (e.g., some Latino or Hispanic cultures) might teach that men should protect their families, and women should take care of their families. (Positive)
 - Another culture might make it too uncomfortable for parents to talk to their children about sex at all. (Negative)

ACTIVITY 7.2 - The Influence of Culture - 10 minutes

[Note to Facilitators: This activity is designed to focus the discussion on cultural influences that may be important in the students' decisions about sex. While it is difficult to generalize about any racial, ethnic, or geographic group, the intent is to help the students focus on the strengths and positive influences that their culture may provide. Classes may have students from several different cultures or racial/ethnic groups, and some students may come from multiple cultures. The Facilitator should strive to identify as many positives from the cultures represented in the class, with the help and feedback from the students themselves. Some possible cultural influences and strengths, and how they might affect sexual decisions, are listed in the FACILITATOR RESOURCE for ACTIVITY 7.2: The Influence of Culture.]

First, write "CULTURE" on the board or newsprint, and ask what the word means. Help the class to come up with the definition: shared values of a racial, ethnic, or other group. This means that there are some things, or ideas, that the group believes to be important.

Ask the students to identify which cultures are important in their lives. Examples might include Hispanic, Latino, or Mexican-American culture; urban, inner-city, or African-American culture; middle-class American culture; youth culture; Texas culture; and others. Acknowledge that most people have more than one cultural influence.

Ask the students to think about what messages their culture gives them. On the board or newsprint, construct a list of positive influences from the cultures represented in the classroom.

Next, referring to the list of positive influences, relate them to decisions about sex. For example, the importance of family and protecting one's family would mean that a person should avoid getting STDs or HIV. That would mean abstinence, or using condoms correctly, every time. The FACILITATOR RESOURCE for ACTIVITY 7.2 lists possible messages about sex that students may get from their culture.

Summarize by pointing out how students have lots of positive influence from their culture(s)—and lots of healthy messages to listen to about sex.

ACTIVITY 7.3 -- Magazine Ads and/or a Song/CD -10 to 15 minutes

Depending on the amount of participation and discussion generated by the exercises, there is often time to consider only either the magazine ads or the song/CD. If there is time, both ads and songs can be used. Before the Lesson, the Facilitator will have chosen to use either the Magazine Ads or a Song/CD (or both) for this Activity, and selected examples for the class to focus on.

For Magazine Ads: Show the collection of magazine ads to the class and ask them:

- How might these ads influence how a person thinks about sex or abstinence?
- Do you think this influence is positive, or negative?
- Why do you think these ads are giving out this message?
- Do you think young people should accept this influence, or resist it?
- If a person wanted to resist this influence, what suggestions would you give them?

In the discussion, help the class to focus on the underlying messages the ads give about sex, about what is normal and what is desirable. Encourage them to identify these messages as positive or negative ones. Help them brainstorm ways to resist negative messages and influences, while accepting positive influences and messages.

For example, an ad for clothes might show a female wearing very little, or in a pose with a male that suggests they are having sex. This could influence young

people to think that all young people are having sex (they're not), and that females have to show their bodies to be attractive. These could be seen as negative messages in that they might encourage young people to have sex when there is no long-term commitment to a person.

For a Song or CD: Play the CD, and ask the students to call out or write down the words that they hear. Pause the song, if necessary, to clarify for the class what words are in the song. When the song is finished ask the class:

- What is the message this song gives about sex?
- How might this message influence young people?
- Why do you think this song is giving out this message?
- Do you think this influence is positive, or negative?
- Do you think young people should accept this influence, or resist it?
- If a person wanted to resist this influence, what suggestions would you give them?

In the discussion, help the class to focus on the underlying messages the songs give about sex, about what is normal and what is desirable. Encourage them to identify these messages as positive or negative ones. Help the class brainstorm ways to resist negative messages and influences, while accepting positive influences and messages.

For example, a song might have a male talking about how he had sex with a female. This might make it seem that having sex makes him important, and a man. It could be that songs with sex might sell more, and make more money for the artist and the label. The message could be seen as negative by making it seem like everybody is doing it, or that people should have sex so they can brag about it.

ACTIVITY 7.4 - FRIENDS: Adriana and the Party –10 minutes

Read the story in the FACILITATOR RESOURCE: "FRIENDS: Adriana and the Party".¹ Ask the students to help answer the questions, and lead a discussion that includes the following points:

- **Who might influence Adriana, and how?**
Influences include:
 - her friend Carlos (it's his party)
 - her friends (who she thinks would call her a coward)
 - her grandmother, who she does not want to disappoint
 - her culture, which values family
 - Other influences could be movies, television, songs, and ads that make it seem important to go to parties and do risky things

¹ Facilitators should point out that these scenarios are not about actual students. Even if there is a student with the same name as a scenario character, the story is not about them.

- **Do you think this influence is positive, or negative?**
 - Carlos' influence is probably negative, since he could be seen as pressuring her to have sex when she wants to stay abstinent. Also, Carlos is having this party when his parents are away, and he will probably have alcohol there.
 - Her friends' influence could be seen as negative because they would be encouraging her to do something she really doesn't think is right, and would be making fun of her if she didn't.
 - Her grandmother's (and her culture's) influence could be seen as positive, because Adriana feels close to her and does not want to disappoint her. It sounds like her grandmother wants the best for her.

- **Which influence should Adriana accept, and which should she resist?**

The Facilitator should support accepting positive influences and resisting negative ones. Ask the students to say how they decide which influences to resist. Tell them to imagine that Adriana is their little sister, who they want to protect and take care of. What advice they would give her about which influences to accept and resist?

- **If she decides not to go to the party, how could Adriana deal with Carlos and with her friends?**

Help the students brainstorm how Adriana could cope with pressure from Carlos and with the teasing or disapproval of her friends. Encourage them to consider that Adriana could feel good about her independence, and be able to stand up for herself. She can tell Carlos that she likes him, but she wants to do what she thinks is right for her. She can let her friends know that she needs their support, not their criticism.

ACTIVITY 7.5 -- Wrap-up: 5 minutes

If there is time, the class can consider a television show or movie that they like, and consider how it might influence them about sex.

Congratulate the class for their work on the "INFLUENCE" examples.

Summarize the lesson by indicating that there are lots of pressures and influences on young people, especially when it comes to sex. It is important that the students be able to recognize both positive and negative influences. Recognizing influence is the first step in being able to take charge of the decision of whether to accept or resist an influence. And when it comes to sex, these are BIG DECISIONS.

FACILITATOR RESOURCE for ACTIVITY 7.2: The Influence of Culture

While it is not possible to generalize about anyone's cultural background or their racial/ethnic group's influences, these suggestions may help the Facilitator to highlight and reinforce cultural influences that can positively affect students' decisions.

Latinos/Hispanics ²	
Possible Cultural Values	Possible Messages about Sex
The importance of family	Your decisions about sex are for your family—not just for you
Males should be strong and protect their family	Avoid bringing an STD or HIV into the family
Females should care for and protect their family	Avoid pregnancy as a teen, when risks to the baby are high
The value/importance of virginity	Abstinence is the best choice for teens
Urban/Inner-city/ African-Americans ³ :	
Possible Cultural Values	Possible Messages about Sex
Pride, self-respect	Your decisions show how you respect yourself
Strong sense of community	Don't spread STDs or HIV in your community
Importance of family	Your decisions about sex are for your family—not just for you
Middle Class/Non-Hispanic Whites	
Possible Cultural Values	Possible Messages about Sex
Responsibility	Make responsible decisions about sex
Health	It is important not to get HIV or other STDs
Education	Getting a good education is important for your future
Texas Culture	
Possible Cultural Values	Possible Messages about Sex
Independence (thinking for yourself)	You can resist negative influences about sex
Doing the right thing, even if it is not easy	Stick with your decision, even when under pressure
Strength	Make strong and smart decisions about sex

² These items are derived from cultural strengths highlighted in publications about the "Cúidate" curriculum (Villarruel AM, et al. Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med 2006;160:772-777. Villarruel AM, et al. J Assoc Nurses in AIDS Care 2005;16:23-31.)

³ These items are derived from cultural strengths highlighted in the descriptions of the "Be Proud! Be Responsible!" and "Making a Difference"

FACILITATOR RESOURCE for ACTIVITY 7.4
FRIENDS: Adriana and the Party

Adriana is invited to a party this weekend at her friend Carlos' house. His parents have to be out of town, and there will definitely be lots of people there, not to mention alcohol and who knows what else. Adriana is kind of scared to go because she does not want to get in trouble or disappoint her grandmother. Carlos has let her know that he would like to have sex with her, and he hinted that the party might be "the right time". Adriana really wants to stay abstinent, but she is curious and feels like her friends will call her a coward if she doesn't go.

Who might influence Adriana, and how? Do you think these influences are positive, or negative?

What might be the influence of Adriana's culture? Is this influence positive, or negative?

Which influence(s) should Adriana accept, and which should she resist?

If she decides not to go to the party, how could Adriana deal with Carlos and with her friends?