




ANSWERING SENSITIVE QUESTIONS

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Values and Attitudes Recap

- Teaching about sexuality can bring out our own personal values and attitudes around the topic.
 - We need to be aware of our own biases and how it may affect the way we teach and serve youth.
 - You already teach Universal values in your everyday routine.
 - When it comes to Non-Universal issues, we must respect the diversity of beliefs, values, and attitudes.
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Dealing with Questions from the class and Non-Universal Issues

What can we do to stay confident that we are:

- Remaining values neutral
 - Sharing accurate information and universal values
 - Respecting the diversity of values reflected in your community?
1. Stick to the curriculum!
 2. When questions about topics in the curriculum arise, respond while referencing back to the lesson(s)
 3. When questions about topics that are NOT covered in the curriculum arise, plan your response thoughtfully!


ANSWERING SENSITIVE QUESTIONS



QUESTIONS TEENS ASK

- **Shock** Questions
 - *Can sperm choke you if you swallow during oral sex?*
- **Am I normal ?** Questions
 - *One of my balls hangs lower than the other. Is that okay?*
- **Permission Seeking** Questions
 - *When did you lose your virginity?*
- **INFORMATION SEEKING** Questions
 - *Can you get HIV from sitting on a toilet?*
- **Value-based** Questions
 - *What's the best age to start having sex?*

QUESTIONS TEENS ASK

- Use a question box!
 - Set ground rules (Ex: *no personal questions*)
 - Don't get rattled
 - Don't dismiss the question
 - Treat all questions as information seeking
 - Offer medically accurate information that addresses the question
 - Avoid using the word “you” when possible
 - **If you are not comfortable with a topic you can always refer to:**
 - **Nurse, counselor, or another person on site better suited to answer the question**
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QUESTIONS TEENS ASK

- **Shock:** *Can sperm choke you if you swallow during oral sex?*
 - *Answer with medically accurate information*
- **Am I normal:** *One of my balls hangs lower than the other. Is that ok?*
 - *Answer with medically accurate information*
- **Permission Seeking:** *When did you lose your virginity?*
 - *Refer to ground rules*
- **INFORMATION SEEKING:** *Can you get HIV from sitting on a toilet?*
 - *Answer with medically accurate information*
- **Value-based Questions**
 - *If you choose to answer, use the VQP!*

VALUES QUESTION PROTOCOL

The Values Question Protocol (VQP) is an approach to answering non-universal value questions that permits the educator to appropriately address the question and at the *same* time, respectfully address the spectrum of beliefs related to the topic.

This protocol helps:

- Identify a non-universal question
- Address the facts pertaining to the issue
- Introduce the spectrum of beliefs about the issue, and
- Encourage a conversation with family about their beliefs.

VALUES QUESTION PROTOCOL

The VQP uses the
A.N.S.W.E.R.
acronym as its
formula!

VALUES QUESTION PROTOCOL

A

Affirm the Asker.

N

Note question as values-based.

S

State the facts.

W

What is the range of values/beliefs?

E

Encourage talking to family, faith leaders and/or other trusted adults.

R

Remain available & check if you answered the question.



Let's try out the VQP...

“What's the best age to start having sex?”



Remember...

No matter what your personal belief is, your job is to be values-neutral when answering this type of question with your students!



VALUES QUESTION PROTOCOL

A Affirm the Asker.

“That’s a very interesting question. Lot’s of people your age have that question.”

N Note question as values-based.

“That’s actually a question that depends on someone’s beliefs or values.”

S State the facts.

“It’s not possible to put an exact age on when a person should have sex. But, it is important to note that most adolescents your age* *ARE NOT* having sex”

W What is the range of values/beliefs?

“Some believe that sex is acceptable, as long as there is a mutual agreement between two consenting people, *others* believe that age, maturity level, partner health, commitment or marriage should be considered before having sex.”

E Encourage talking to family, faith leaders and/or other trusted adults.

“This is a great question to ask your parents or other adult that you trust.”

“Eventually, you will have to decide for yourself what you think is true.”

R Remain available & check if you answered the question.

“ I hope I answered your question.”

“If anyone has other questions about this topic, please let me know.”

*Add any facts for your age group and local statistics.

QUESTIONS TEENS ASK

✓ Shock

✓ Am I normal?

✓ Permission Seeking

✓ INFORMATION SEEKING

✓ Value-based

A student asks you a question...



Step 1...

Determine what type of question it is.

Clarify the question if needed to make sure you understand what the student is asking!

Step 2...

Do you need the VQP or can you just answer with medically accurate information/according to a universal value?

Remember, having a question box gives you more time for this step!

Step 3...

Craft an accurate and respectful response 😊

Let's do one together:

“Is it O.K. for me to date a guy who is 20?”

What type of question?

Do you need the VQP?



This may seem like a values-laden question, but depending on the age and your state laws...

- It may require a definitive answer
- If this is a minor, this is an issue that has a **Universal** belief attached
- You should address the question from a legal standpoint
- There is no need for the Values Question Protocol

An Appropriate Response

“This is an interesting question that a lot of teens your age may have. Although, you may feel that this is a safe and healthy relationship, it is illegal for an adult to be in a relationship with a minor. This law is for your protection.”

- You can refer to the Native STAND lessons about healthy relationships and talk about the challenges to making decisions together if one person is much older than the other.
- If you have reason to believe that the minor is already engaged in an inappropriate relationship, follow protocol for your organization and make a report to proper authorities.

Here's another example:

“Are you Gay?”

What type of question?
Do you need the VQP?



This may seem like a values-laden question but...

- It's actually a personal question
- There is no need for the Values Question Protocol

What do you do when you get a personal question?



Personal Questions

- Answering personal questions could result in:
 - Unintentionally providing permission
 - Taking away focus from the youth/discussion/activity
 - Additional personal questions about anything from everyone in the group
- If you choose not to answer personal questions, Include “No sharing personal information” in the Native STAND constitution during lesson one.
- If you choose to share your story, you might consider choosing a specific time to this so as not to continually deter from the curriculum.

Here's one more example:

“What are Blue Balls?”

What type of question?

Do you need the VQP?

This may seem like a shock question...

- It's actually a question that could be addressed with medically accurate information.
- There is no need for the Values Question Protocol.



AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE

“**Blue balls** is a slang term for the condition of temporary fluid congestion in the testicles and prostate region. The medical term is *vasocongestion*. The condition is sometimes accompanied by testicular pain. Only a select amount of males have the condition; it is not a universal condition among males.”

SOURCE: Discovery Health



STILL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THOSE CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS?

Even if a person is uncomfortable, they can still use some elements of the ANSWER protocol

A

Affirm the Asker.

N

Note question as values-based.


E

Encourage talking to family, faith leaders and/or other trusted adults.

YOUR TURN TO PRACTICE!

Break into groups and you will be assigned questions from adolescents.

Determine:

- 1) The type of question (shock, am I normal, information, values, etc.)**
 - 2) Whether or not it would require the VQP**
 - 3) The response you would give to a student**
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Questions?

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