

Think Before You Act

A Simulation about Sexual Health



www.grspeldatabas.se

About the Simulation

Design:
Carl Heath
Anders Pettersson

Texts and Material:
Carl Heath
Karl Alfredsson
Anders Pettersson
Åsa Bjerling

Layout:
Kristin Rådesjö

Version 1.0

Background

There is currently a negative trend in Sweden and the rest of the world when it comes to sexually transmitted infections. Chlamydia infections have increased by over 100 percent since the mid-1990s. In 2004, the trend has changed, making Chlamydia more common among female teenagers than in the group of age 20-24, whereas the reverse was previously the case. The number of cases is also increasing among young males. The developments of the HIV epidemic is very serious, and the fastest increase in the world is happening in Estonia. Heroin has been a gateway for the epidemic there, and the victims are mainly people below the age of 25.

This makes preventive efforts through sexual health education especially important. Changing the attitudes of high school students is vital for eventually putting a stop to this negative trend.

Think Before You Act is an educational simulation dealing with viewpoints, attitudes and values around sex and sexually transmitted infections.

The simulation is intended for 8-32 participants and will require 1.5-2.5 hours of time.

Objectives

The general objectives of this simulation are:

- To give participants an understanding and a knowledge of how to protect themselves against STIs.
- To bring up and discuss common attitudes toward this subject.
- To inspire participants to adopt a healthy perspective.

Materials

Before beginning the simulation, you should have prepared the following materials.

- Problems for each group (Supplement 1).
- Viewpoint Cards for each group (Supplement 2).
- Fact sheets (Supplement 3)
- Discussion materials for the reflection phase (Supplement 4).

The participants should have pens and writing paper.

Instructions - Step by Step

The simulation will be executed through a number of steps, as follows.

1. Icebreaker.
2. Background information and dividing participants into groups.
3. Handing out Viewpoint Cards.
4. Discussing the Problems.
5. Break.
6. Considering and processing arguments.
7. Presentation of processed arguments.
8. Reflection.

1. Icebreaker

Before you begin the actual simulation, you should perform an icebreaker with the participants. The purpose of this is to prepare them for the exercise and make them focus on the upcoming task. There are a number of different icebreaker activities, and if you need suggestions, feel free to read the GR Education folder on icebreakers which you can download at www.grul.se. [Gäller detta även för engelskspråkiga användare?]

2. Background Information and Groups

Explain to the participants that they will take part in a simulation about sex, and sexual behavior. They will be divided into groups of four (in some cases three), where they will discuss various problems. However, they will not act based on their own views, but will be assigned viewpoints which they have to follow. After that, their arguments will be reviewed by another group.

Then, divide the participants into groups of four and have them sit around tables at different spots in the room. If the group can't be evenly divided by four, some groups will have three people.

Explain to the participants that they will be given a note, stating how they should feel about all issues they discuss (before the break). There are two extreme cases and one or two more moderate ones. One extreme viewpoint is to think that what someone has done is completely right. The other one is to think it was totally wrong. You always need to give a reason for your opinion.

Next, hand out Viewpoint Cards to the participants. In groups of four, use the cards intended for groups of four, and for groups of three those intended for groups of three (see Supplement 2). The participants may then practice on a made-up example. For example, “What do you think about the fact that your teacher decided to do this simulation on a Wednesday?” (If it is a Wednesday.) Let everyone in the group try out their viewpoint on this practice issue by reasoning from the viewpoint they have been assigned.

4. Discussion of Problems

Explain to the participants that they will be given a number of cases, scenarios. Each group will get its own scenario to discuss. First, everyone around the table should get to express their viewpoint and present their arguments to back it up. Their opinions will be decided by the attitudes they’ve been assigned through their Viewpoint Cards. After this, they can have a brief discussion around the issue. Finish the case by letting one group member write down the views of each person in the designated spaces on the Argument Card.

Let the participants deal with 1-2 problems per group. When choosing problems, make sure to pick a wide selection. Some problems are mainly of a moral kind, while others are intended to provoke a more knowledge-based discussion. It might be good to choose problems that you think will resonate personally with the participants.

5. Break

When all groups have written down their arguments on the cards, explain that this part is over and that they will have a five minute break. They will no longer follow their assigned viewpoints. Ask them to tear up their Viewpoint Cards and throw them in the trash on their way out. This is a straightforward way to communicate that they do no longer apply.

After a five minute break, call the participants back in.

6. Considering and Processing Arguments

Once the participants are back from their break, each group will give their Argument Card to another group. Every group should have an Argument Card filled out by another

group, with a problem which they haven't dealt with themselves. Instruct the groups to review the arguments and decide which of them are valid and supported by the facts of each issue. The groups should write down their conclusions when reviewing the arguments, since they will present them to the whole class in the next phase. It's important to give the groups enough time to gather information, and evaluate and discuss the arguments. Depending on the class, the amount of time needed may vary.

Information may of course also be gathered from other sources, such as the internet, education materials etc. The facts in the supplement come from www.smittskydd.se and from the Västra Götaland Disease Prevention Unit.

7. Presentation of Processed Arguments

Once the groups have had enough time and enough information to evaluate and process the arguments they have been given in the previous step, it's time for them to present their conclusions. Place the groups in a "segmented circle," where each group is still seated together, but all groups are simultaneously gathered. Let one group at a time first present the problem they've reviewed and the arguments concerning the issue. Then, let the group account for the arguments they find valid in relation to laws, facts, attitudes and so on. When this presentation is over, the other groups get the opportunity to ask questions and add their thoughts. During this phase, it's important for you as a simulation supervisor to take an active role, question viewpoints and maybe add new facts that the participants may have missed.

When you are finished with this, gradually move on to a phase of more general reflection.

8. Reflection

When the simulation is over, it's time for the reflection phase. If the participants seem tired or you have been working for an extended period of time, a short break first might be a good idea. Then, make sure that all participants are seated in a way that makes it easy for everyone to take part in the discussion. If possible, a circle is good for promoting an open and inclusive conversation setting. Keep in mind that tables create a distance between individuals, so make sure this circle is made up of only chairs.

The reflection is one of the most important parts of the simulation. The recommended timeframe is at least 30 minutes, but more time is even better. One good way of capturing the experience of the whole class is to start the discussion with each individual's impressions of the simulation. For each question, it is of course important to

ask follow-up questions and talk about the things participants say or what they did during the game. If, for example, their opinions differ on a certain issue, you will have to consider why that might be, and if you can make a comparison to other issues.

It's important that all participants get to speak in this discussion, and get to describe their impression of what happened. It's also important not to "hurry along" the discussion to get your points across. The participants just had an intense experience, and this often leads to a need to "talk through" these experiences before addressing the more specific points of the simulation.

One simple way to structure the discussion is to first look at "what happened in the simulation," and to then look further to examine corresponding examples in "real life." Is it possible to relate the problems of the game to real life events?

Questions Around the Simulation to Discuss in Class:

- What did it feel like, to represent an assigned viewpoint in a group, and not express your own opinions?
- Did you disagree with the decisions of the group at any point?
- Did you experience a large difference between your assigned viewpoint and your own opinions?
- Why is it a good idea to use assigned viewpoints to make these choices instead of letting people express their own opinions?

Questions Around STIs to Discuss in Class:

- How do you protect yourself from STIs?
- Is it important to be responsible and use a condom when having sex?
- Why is it so common for young people not to use a condom when having sex?
- Whose responsibility is it to use a condom?
- Why is it important to use a condom even in a committed relationship?
- Is it important to get tested for STIs?
- Why are so few guys getting tested in comparison to girls? (Research shows that only 15% of males have taken STI tests.)
- Why don't young people talk to each other about STIs?
- The most common factors for people catching STIs are having unprotected sex, anonymous sex, and sex under the influence of alcohol. Does this correspond with the lifestyle of young people? How would you change this kind of behavioral pattern?
- The behavioral pattern for how Chlamydia is transmitted corresponds to how HIV is transmitted in countries with a large number of HIV-infected people. The only difference is that HIV is not nearly as common in Sweden. This means that if HIV should start spreading in Sweden to any larger extent, we could very quickly arrive at a large increase in infected people. Do you think HIV could spread as quickly in Sweden as Chlamydia?

Tips and Suggestions:

- You should consider the best way of setting up chairs and tables for the simulation. Depending on the number of participants, it's good to do the simulation in a space where furniture can be moved around when needed.
- Make sure to take notes on what happens during the game, what participants do and how they reason. This will help you in the reflection phase.
- To make discussions run more smoothly, you might ask the participants to think quietly about their own viewpoints and how to phrase them for a couple of minutes, before starting the group discussions.
- To further enhance focus and anticipation for the discussion, you might play some relaxing music.
- A good follow-up of the game may be to let participants write down the thoughts and ideas they had during the reflection phase. This can later be related to further sex education.

Supplements - Problems

Problem 1

Johan has spent two weeks on the Greek island Corfu. There, he had a temporary relationship with a Swedish girl. They had sex twice, both times unprotected. When he gets back home and anxiously tells his girlfriend, she agrees to forgive him as long as he'll get tested for STIs at the youth health center. Johan refuses, arguing that there's no risk, because the girl said she didn't have any diseases. But Johan's girlfriend persists, and finally he agrees on going to the youth health center. Once there, he hesitates outside, mainly because he doesn't want to end up in any kind of record and thinks it's too expensive. Instead of going in, he goes home and tells his girlfriend that did take the test, and didn't have any STIs.

Does Johan have a right to do this?

Problem 2

For quite a while, Anna has been in a relationship with Peter, who is a couple of years older than she is. They haven't had sex yet, but they've come pretty close lately. Anna really wants Peter to be her first, but she's also worried about becoming pregnant. Peter has said that he doesn't want to use a condom because it doesn't feel as good, and he thinks she should start using birth-control pills. Anna does as he wants, and they have unprotected sex.

Did Anna make the right decision?

Problem 3

Jennifer's life is all about partying. She goes out to clubs a lot and meets lots of people. She doesn't really have one committed relationship, but prefers to be open to many options. However, she always makes sure to use protection when having temporary sexual relations. She uses birth-control pills and always makes sure the guy uses a condom. One night, she goes home with Jacob. She's had quite a crush on him for a while and has even wondered if he might be the one. One thing leads to another and they end up in Jacob's bed. But Jacob doesn't have any condoms, and Jennifer didn't prepare for this either. They talk about it, and decide that it's probably risk free. They have sex, and later become a couple.

Did Jennifer do the right thing?

Problem 4

Jens and his girlfriend Lisa are both virgins, but have decided to have sex for the first time. During their slightly awkward and nervous foreplay, they realize neither of them has thought of using protection. Lisa says there's no risk of STIs, since neither of them has had sex before, and that's the only way you can catch STIs. Jens is not so sure, and hesitates. But Lisa keeps persuading him, and finally he agrees to have unprotected sex with her even though he doesn't want to. Afterwards, Jens feels unhappy and worried that Lisa might be pregnant or that he might have caught an STI. He wants them both to go to the youth health center and get tested. Lisa refuses and claims that the morning-after pill is a hundred percent effective and that you can't be infected with an STI if you've never had sex before.

Did Jens do the right thing when he agreed to have sex?

Problem 5

Carl is 20 years old and has been out partying a lot in the past years. He's been in a steady relationship for a while now, and has been talking to his girlfriend about moving in together. Carl has been feeling tired and out of sorts lately, and one day he gets a phone call from a girl he had sex with about a year ago, before he met his current girlfriend. The girl says she just found out that she's HIV-positive, and urges Carl to get tested. Carl panics, blocks out the whole thing and goes on with his life as if nothing's happened. He is constantly worried, but tells himself that they only had sex once and that he's probably okay. Also, he doesn't feel any obligation to get tested.

Is Carl doing the right thing?

Problem 6

Anders has found out that his friend Sven has been infected with HIV. Sven has lived openly as a homosexual for a long time, and this has never been an issue for Anders before. Since they play on the same floorball team, they've been hanging out like any other teenage guys, but when Sven tells him about his HIV, Anders panics. He's afraid to hug Sven like he's done before. He's even uneasy about touching him when someone scores a goal in floorball. As time goes by, Anders becomes more distant toward Sven. He even quits the floorball team, because he's worried they might physically run into each other and accidentally mix blood or other bodily fluids somehow.

Is Anders doing the right thing?

Problem 7

Per has been in an accident and needs a blood transfusion. His friend Jesper, who is a homosexual, has the same unusual blood type as Per and donates blood to him. A couple of months later Per has recovered, only to be hit by the next blow; he's been infected with HIV. Admittedly, Per is out partying a lot and has lots of one-night stands, but he's convinced that Per's blood must be the source of the infection. Per doesn't bother with telling his previous, temporary sexual partners about his infection, but instead confronts Jesper. Jesper, who insists that he's innocent, feels violated and sad and refuses to get tested just because Per tells him to.

Is Per doing the right thing when he demands that Jesper get tested and ignores his own previous sexual contacts?

Problem 8

Jenny is thinking a lot about the subject of sex and protection, and isn't quite sure of what type of protection to use. She has been in a relationship with her boyfriend, Johan, for almost three months, and he's been talking a lot about thinking they should have sex. Jenny also wants to have sex, if nothing else because she wants to lose her virginity, but if they are actually going to do this, protection is very important to her. Johan is three years older than Jenny, 18 years old, and has been with several other girls. He claims that condoms ruin the sensation of sex, and that she should start using birth-control pills since that's completely safe and less complicated than using a condom. Jenny is uncertain and unable to decide, but after another month's persuasion from Johan, she decides to start using birth-control pills.

Is Jenny doing the right thing?

- Viewpoint Cards

In Groups of Four People, Use These Viewpoint Cards:

Viewpoint Card (Important! Do not show this to anyone - secret!)

YOUR POINT OF VIEW: I think what he/she did was totally right, because...

Regardless of what the person in the scenario has done, you will defend what that person did. However, it's important that you back up your opinion with good arguments.

Viewpoint Card (Important! Do not show this to anyone - secret!)

YOUR POINT OF VIEW: I think what he/she did was partly right, but...

You always support the person in the scenario. However, he or she has not totally done the right thing, because there's always a "but." You need good arguments for your opinion, and one or two "buts."

Viewpoint Card (Important! Do not show this to anyone - secret!)

YOUR POINT OF VIEW: I think what he/she did was pretty wrong, but...

You always support the person in the scenario. However, he or she has not totally done the right thing, because there's always a "but." You need good arguments for your opinion, and one or two "buts."

Viewpoint Card (Important! Do not show this to anyone - secret!)

YOUR POINT OF VIEW: I think what he/she did was totally wrong, because...

Regardless of what the person in the scenario has done, you will criticize that person and say what he or she did was wrong. However, it's important that you back up your opinion with good arguments.

In Groups of Three People, Use These Viewpoint Cards:

Viewpoint Card (Important! Do not show this to anyone - secret!)

YOUR POINT OF VIEW: I think what he/she did was totally right, because...

Regardless of what the person in the scenario has done, you will defend what that person did. However, it's important that you back up your opinion with good arguments.

Viewpoint Card (Important! Do not show this to anyone - secret!)

YOUR POINT OF VIEW: I think what he/she did was totally wrong, because...

Regardless of what the person in the scenario has done, you will criticize that person and say what he or she did was wrong. However, it's important that you back up your opinion with good arguments.

Viewpoint Card (Important! Do not show this to anyone - secret!)

YOUR POINT OF VIEW: I think what he/she did was kind of right but also kind of wrong, because...

Regardless of what the person in the scenario has done, you will think that what that person did was both right and wrong. You need arguments for both, and can't really commit to either.

Case Number:

Person A thinks: Argument:	Person B thinks: Argument:
Person C thinks: Argument:	Person D thinks: Argument:

Write down the opinion of each person, and his or her arguments.