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## **Responsible Choices Abstinence: What's an "Abstinence?" Lesson Objective**

Time: **40 minutes**

New York State Parenting Standard: **Standard 1: Roles & Responsibilities,  
Standard 3: Support Systems and Services**

**Aim: For students to gain a better understanding of decision making in choosing sexual abstinence. To explore local supports available to assist them in their choice.**

Objectives: Students Will:

- 1. Explore how they individually make decisions and what influences their decision making.**
- 2. Discuss abstinence: what it is; how it works; why it is most effective.**
- 3. Brainstorm support systems to help with abstaining from sexual activity and supporting the decision to be sexually abstinent.**

Materials Needed:

**Lesson outline, 4 paper bags, money or candy, distinct smelling item (onion home fragrant item), can of soda, coins or keys. Heart shaped box, small slips of paper. Handouts: "What is Abstinence??" , "The Abstinence Quiz" (available through Journey Works Publishing 1-800-775-1998)**

## **Responsible Choices: “What’s An Abstinence?”**

### **Lesson Outline**

The goal of this workshop is to assist participants in developing skills to postpone sexual intercourse (may not include outercourse) and prevent unintended pregnancy and STI’s.

- I. Introduction – Sensitive topic; recommend to discuss at home prior to teaching lesson.
- II. Icebreaker – Your choice, or move right into Choices Activity (III).
- III. Choices – Set up 4 paper bags, numbered 1 through 4, in each corner of the room.
  - A. In bag #1 place money (don’t place too much b/c it may walk off). You may choose to put candy in the bag instead.
  - B. In bag #2 place a distinct smelling item (i.e. onion, home fragrant item).
  - C. In bag #3 place a can of soda
  - D. In bag #4 place some coins, or keys.

**(Please note:** you may want to change the items around as you go through the different class periods b/c it has been found that students are aware of what is in the bag before class due to conversations with students who previously took part in the class.)

  - E. Participants choose a bag just by observing the bags without touching the bags.
  - F. Participants choose a bag after they have gotten a chance to lift the bags
  - G. Participants choose a bag after they have gotten a chance to touch and explore the outside of the bags.
  - H. Participants choose a bag after they have gotten a chance to look inside the bags.
- IV. After each round, ask participants why they chose the bag they did. Use these questions to further stimulate discussion and self-reflection.
  - A. How were their choices affected by the choices of their friends?
  - B. How did their choices change with the gaining of new knowledge about the contents of the bags?
  - C. Do we make wiser choices if we take time to thoroughly investigate situations, things, people, and places?
  - D. How does information affect our choices in life?
  - E. What choices do we have if we want to prevent pregnancy?
  - F. Did you notice that we all make choices that are unique to us, that we don’t all make the same choices?
  - G. Sexual activity can be a choice, among other options. It takes skills to make choices. Once we learn those skills, we can feel good about the fact that we put a lot of thought and skill into our choices.
- V. Abstinence as a choice.
  - A. Ask participants what is abstinence, how does it work, have you ever seen it?
  - B. Abstinence is what you decide not to do. What things do people abstain from? What are the reasons people abstain?
  - C. What does abstinence have to do with prevention unintended pregnancies, STI’s?
  - D. Show “empty abstinence” (heart-shaped box) – it’s hard to talk about something you can’t see, so I brought one. Heart-shaped to remind us that abstinence doesn’t have to mean lack of love or closeness. Empty abstinence are like empty promises, they don’t work very well.

- E. What makes abstinence work? Write on a slip of paper what tools can make abstinence work for you and put inside the heart. Process each item with the class without identifying the author.
  - F. Abstinence is a choice. What is best for you? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
  - G. What causes abstinence not to work? What if one of the slips of paper is missing?
  - H. Brainstorm: What are some support (where can someone go) to help support their decision to be abstinent?
- VI. Closure – Ask everyone to imagine in his or her minds making JELL-O.
- A. What is the process in making it what are the steps?
  - B. What does it look like when you first add the water to the box of mix?
  - C. What makes it turn into actual JELL-O?
  - D. The maturation time that JELL-O needs is less than the time we need to gel our decisions and choices, but it is a similar process. There are directions to read, we need kitchen skills, time is of the essence.