

SEX: WHAT IF GOD DISAPPROVES?

PURPOSE OF THE EXERCISE:

The exercise aims to raise awareness about differences in norms and values, set against the guidelines of the organization.

TIMING:

This depends on the depth of the discussion.

NEEDED MATERIAL:

Copies of the case.

HOW TO CONDUCT THE EXERCISE:

Please read the following case description and discuss possible responses.

CASE:

Johanna is 15 years old and after her mother was taken seriously ill her father decided that Johanna and her three younger siblings (two sisters and 1 brother) had to stay with relatives. This would enable her older sister to care for her mother and her father to remain working.

Although Johanna does worry about her mother she is quite pleased to be able to live with her aunt and uncle, mainly because the relationship between Johanna and her father has been strained for a number of years. Her father adheres to a strict Christian denomination that forbids girls to express themselves in ways that could be considered as sinful and an affront to God. Her mother joined the same Church after her marriage much to the surprise of her own family.

Ever since secondary school Johanna has started to rebel against the rules set by her father. In order to be able to go out with friends or come home later than expected she makes excuses and fabricates cover stories. On a number of occasions she has taken a change of clothing with her to school without her parents noticing and she sometimes puts on make up while she is at her sports club. Despite these actions Johanna strongly believes that God is her friend and she ought to live by his rules and that sinful behaviour, especially in relation to the opposite sex, will be punished in the hereafter. This message is also strongly communicated in the school she goes to.

For three months now Johanna has been staying with her maternal aunt, uncle and her niece (16 years old) and nephew (18 years old). She is having a difficult time adjusting to the atmosphere in the house, especially in the way her niece and nephew relate to their parents. They seem to discuss nearly every topic, including sex, and very often Johanna feels embarrassed and ashamed. Of late she has withdrawn even more and her aunt is concerned that she doesn't know how to reach her anymore. Foster parent support is called in.

During your 2nd visit Johanna's aunt asks for your advice. The other night she found Johanna praying and crying in her room. After calming her down Johanna told her that she "had been with a boy" and she was extremely anxious that because of their fondling and touching she might be "with child". She also confided in her aunt that she most certainly would burn in hell as punishment for her sinful behaviour. Her worst fear was that her mother was going to find out and her situation would deteriorate because of it.

Johanna's aunt doesn't know where to begin as Johanna's beliefs are so different from her own. She is convinced that Johanna hasn't had any sex education and probably no knowledge about contraceptives at all. She is also concerned about the effect the situation might have on her relationship with Johanna's parents.

What to do?

Now that you have read the case, consider the following possible responses you could give to Johanna's aunt.

- a) Rate the possible responses from 1 (most appropriate) to 5 (least appropriate).
- b) *(if the exercise is conducted in an organization)* Account for your rating by referring to guidelines set by your organization.
- c) Reflect upon your own professional values and norms on healthy sexual development. Discuss the outcome of your own reflection with your fellow students *(or colleagues)*.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES:

1. "It is in the best interest of your own family and that of Johanna's to find alternative respite care with a family of the similar denomination. The differences between your style of parenting and that of Johanna's parents are too great."
2. "Give Johanna the advice you feel most comfortable with. Follow your own style of parenting even if that is contrary to Johanna's beliefs."
3. "Refer Johanna to your own G(eneral) P(ractitioner) for a pregnancy test and reassure her that her parents will not be informed about the outcome. Tell her that in a case of pregnancy, abortion is always an option."
4. "Question Johanna about the details of her relationship with the boy to find out what she knows about sexual intercourse and whether it actually did take place."
5. "Discuss with Johanna her views on 'sinful behaviour'. What does it entail and why does she feel she will be punished. Introduce the possibility that there may be different ways of relating to God and have safe sex at the same time."

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