

Touch and Abstinence

Grades 7 and 8, Lessons #12 and 13

Time Needed:

One Class period without a film, or two class periods with a film

Student Learning Objectives:

To be able to...

1. Explain, that touch is a basic human need.
2. Distinguish healthy, constructive touch from risky or destructive touch.
3. Distinguish among “nurturing,” “affectionate,” “sexual,” “violent,” and “exploitive” touch.
4. Define abstinence and list four reasons for choosing it.

Agenda:

1. Explain the relevance of today’s lesson and how it relates to what you have studied so far.
2. Optional: Use an AV tool.
3. Lead a discussion, using open-ended questions.
4. Have volunteers read aloud the “Touch Reference Sheet.”
5. Explain the relevance of today’s lesson and how it relates to what you have studied so far.
6. Optional: Use an AV tool.
7. Lead a discussion, using open-ended questions.
8. Have volunteers read aloud the “Touch Reference Sheet.”

Materials Needed:

Classroom Materials:

- **OPTIONAL:** AV tool and equipment

Student Materials: (1 per student)

- *Position Paper: Touch and Abstinence*
- *Touch Reference Sheet*
- *Touch Worksheet 1*
- **OPTIONAL:** *Touch Worksheet 2*
- **OPTIONAL:** *Family Homework Exercise: Touch and Abstinence*

Activities, Day One

1. **Explain the relevance of today's lesson and how it relates to what you have studied so far:**

Yesterday we looked at two ways people make decisions. (Ask the class to refresh one another's memory: by choosing, by letting things happen to you.) One decision we all have to make over and over throughout our lives — is what kinds of touch we want, when, with whom and under what circumstances.

You all learned about sexual abuse when you were younger but as you get older, touching can get harder to figure out. That is what this lesson is about.

2. **Optional: Use an audio visual tool to personalize the issue.** Questions for discussion: What's the main message of the film? Does the film say touch is always good? - always bad? What does it say about guys? - girls? - relationships?

3. **Raise these issues for discussion:**

- *Some people think all touch is sexual. What are some non-sexual kinds of touch?*
- *Some people are uncomfortable touching friends. Why? How can that feeling hurt them in the long run?* [Some answers: It means they can't be as close to their friends as other people can be. It deprives them of endorphins – nature's pain-killing hormones. It might make them more likely to seek those feel-good chemicals through risky sexual touch.]
- *Some guys feel like the only OK kinds of touch are rough-housing (like tackle football) or sexual touch. Why might they feel that way? How can that feeling hurt them in the long run?* [Some answers: It means they can't be as close to their friends as other people can be. It deprives them of endorphins – nature's pain-killing hormones. It might make them more likely to seek those feel-good chemicals through physically violent, risky sports or fights or through risky sexual touch.]
- *Some girls feel like all they have to offer a guy is sex. Why might they feel that way? How can that feeling be changed?*
- *If you wanted to hug a child and he or she turned away, would it be OK to ask? What kinds of asking would be fair persuasion and what kinds would be unfair pushing?*
- *Are there some kinds of touch that are never OK under any circumstances?*
- *What kinds?*
- *If an elderly person lives alone and chooses abstinence, how else can he or she get touch needs met?*
- *If a teenager's family does not touch much, and he or she chooses abstinence, how can he or she get touch needs met?*
- *How could a person's age make a difference in whether some touch was risky or healthy?*

Activities, Day Two

4. **Hand out, and have volunteers read aloud the Touch Reference Sheet.**
5. **Have students, individually or in small groups, fill out Touch Worksheet 1.** Allow five minutes. Then have each student mark the ones he/she believes are good reasons for touch with an up arrow, and the ones he/she believes are unhealthy or destructive with a down arrow, . Allow five more minutes. Collect them. Shuffle them. Read examples aloud. For those “some people consider unhealthy or destructive” ask what else the person could do instead of touching, to meet that need (e.g. “In order to prove they’re grown” ...healthier ways might be to get a job, act mature, learn a new skill).
6. **Hand out Position Paper: Touch and Abstinence.** Have volunteers take turns reading paragraphs aloud. You should read the quotes aloud, so no student appears to be speaking for him or herself.
7. **Answer students’ verbal and written questions.**

Homework

Students’ options:

- **A Family Homework Exercise: Touch and Abstinence** (Students will need to take home their copies of the **Position Paper**, and the **Touch Reference Sheet**, to complete this Family Homework.)
- **Touch Worksheet 2.** (Students will need at least a week to complete this one. Then they will turn in a poem, song, or paper ... but not their confidential “touch diaries.”)
- Make a book of “hug coupons” and give them to someone who needs them: a grandparent, a friend, a step-parent. This person can redeem them with you whenever they need some good touch. Bring in a photo or drawing of their smile.
- Write a children’s story, explaining the difference between various kinds of touch.

Touch Reference Sheet

FIVE BASIC KINDS OF TOUCH

NURTURING TOUCH = Comforting touch, mostly for the sake of the one being touched.

Examples: Neck rub, pat on the back, hugs of appreciation, brushing someone's hair, holding a crying person, caressing a sick person's hand, petting an animal.

AFFECTIONATE TOUCH = More equally balanced between the two persons. Shows affection, caring, joy.

Examples: Brief hugs, brief kisses, holding hands, rubbing shoulders, high-five after a winning game, some rough-housing, some dancing.

SEXUAL TOUCH = May last longer, be softer, involve sexual parts of the body, though not always.

Examples: Longer hugs or kisses, sexual intercourse, some massage, some dancing.

VIOLENT TOUCH = Touch that physically hurts someone. Shows anger or power.

Examples: Slapping or shoving someone in an argument, boxing or tackling for sport, spanking a child for discipline.

EXPLOITATIVE TOUCH = Mostly for the sake of the one doing the touching. One person may feel tricked, teased, pushed, threatened, forced, or "talked into" touching. No one deserves to be treated this way.

Examples: Child sexual abuse, being teased into touch by your friends, being pinched on a private part by a person on the street, being touched roughly when you expected gentleness, being forced into sexual touch by someone you go out with.

BELIEFS ... Every family, culture, and religion has its own beliefs about each kind of touch.

Touch Reference Sheet (continued)

SOME SPECIFICS

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE = One kind of sexual touch, when the penis is inside the vagina.

Note: Forced intercourse is rape. It is never fair and it's illegal. Sexual intercourse should be a very close and caring experience.

Fact: Intercourse can lead to pregnancy.

Fact: Most people have intercourse at some time in their lives.

Myth: Everyone is having intercourse now.

Myth: Sexual touch always includes intercourse.

Beliefs: Each culture, religion, and family has its own beliefs about when intercourse is OK and when it isn't.

ABSTINENCE = Choosing not to have sexual intercourse.

Fact: Abstinence is a good way to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections.

Fact: Abstinence is a 100% perfect birth control method (as long as no sperm is released anywhere near the vagina or vulva).

Myth: Only immature children and "nerds" abstain.

Fact: Most people abstain at some times during their lives.

Fact: Abstaining can show strength and maturity.

Beliefs: Each culture, religion and family has its own beliefs about abstinence.

MASTURBATION = A person stroking his or her own genitals for comfort or pleasure.

Fact: Most people masturbate at some time in their lives.

Myth: If you do not masturbate, there's something wrong with you.

Myth: If you do masturbate, there's something wrong with you.

Myth: Masturbating hurts your body, makes you insane, makes you infertile, gives you warts, or causes hair to grow on your palms.

Fact: It does not hurt your body.

Belief: Each culture, religion and family has its own belief about masturbation.

Touch Reference Sheet (continued)

A Bill of Rights

You have a right to like touching one person and not another. (Just because you hugged your aunt, doesn't mean you have to want to hug your cousin.)

You have a right to like some kinds of touch and not others. (Just because you wanted to kiss, doesn't mean you have to want to hold hands.)

You have a right to change your mind. (Just because you hugged your friend yesterday, doesn't mean you have to now.)

You have a right to not have a reason ... just to choose not to touch or be touched without any explanation.

You have a right to need touch even when you are:

- Elderly
- Single
- Disabled
- A teenager
- Married

A Bill of Wrongs

You have a right to ask for touch, but you **never** have a right to:

- **Push** (if he/she says "no" three times, you're pushing)
- **Threaten** ("If you don't, I'll break up with you/slap you/kill myself/tell other people you did it anyway.")
- **Bargain for touch** ("I'll pay for expensive dates. "I'll be your girlfriend/boyfriend." "I'll take you to Homecoming!" "I'll stop teasing you.")
- **Put a person down for saying "no"** ("What's wrong with you?" "You're chicken/a wimp/a baby." "You think you're too good!")

Did you know that...

- Touch can lift depression, help the body's immune system fight disease, and help a sick person heal more quickly.
- Touch can increase the amount of hemoglobin in the blood, sending more oxygen to your heart and brain.
- Touch can release chemicals called endorphins into your blood and endorphins are a natural pain killer.
- YOU DESERVE GOOD TOUCH!!

Touch Worksheet 1: 15 Reasons People Sometimes Touch

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS PAGE.

Please print. Begin each reason with "Because ..." or "In order to ..."

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

Position Paper: Touch and Abstinence

Name _____

Some people believe that any kind of touch is OK as long as it feels good. Other people believe that the only right kind of sexual touch is intercourse in marriage. Still others believe something in between, but most people agree that touch itself is important.

In fact, we need touch. Babies learn to love, trust and feel safe by being cuddled and caressed. They can even die if they are never touched except to be changed or bathed! Kids, teens, adults and older people all need good touch, too. We can feel very alone and unimportant without it.

Good touch can include cuddling, caressing, hand holding, rubbing someone's back, patting their head, rough-housing, kissing, hugging, and, of course, under some circumstances, sexual intercourse.

Touch is not good; however, if one person talks the other into it, teases or tricks them into it, or forces them into it. It is not good touch if one person is doing it because they feel they "owe" it to the other person, or because they are scared not to. In fact, it is never good touch if:

- one or both people are high or drunk
- they are just touching so they can brag about it later
- they are worried about how the other person feels about it (instead of asking)
- they don't feel right about it themselves (for example if they are doing something they really believe is wrong)

Some touch can make you feel cared about and it can be fun. On the other hand, some touch only makes you feel lonely and it's not fun ... for either person.

Most little kids get a lot of good touch within their families. Some families begin to touch less, as their children become teens. That's too bad ... it leaves a lot of teens "touch-starved." If you are feeling like you could use some touch, a good place to start is at home. Teens can also begin to look to their friends for touch - through contact sports, shared backrubs, braiding a friend's hair, rough-housing and hugs.

Remember, a person learns first how to build trusting, playful, considerate, relaxed friendships, and then how to build love. One has to come before the other ... because love is really the closest of friendships.

Part of growing up also often includes experimenting with touch with a special friend, sometimes a boyfriend or girlfriend. Some of you may not be at all interested in

that at your age. Many people aren't. Others of you may be feeling sexual feelings. You may or may not decide to act on those feelings. Remember, feeling doesn't necessarily equal acting in human beings. For people, there is a step between feeling and acting. That's deciding.

Whether or not they decide to touch with special friends, many teens decide NOT to include sexual intercourse in their touching. NOT having intercourse is called "abstinence."

We asked high school students why they were choosing abstinence. Yes, lots of people decide to wait. They told us:

"Hey, it's the only 100% perfect kind of birth control and I'm really not ready to be a parent."

"We talked it over and, well, abstaining gives us time to really get to know each other ... to become real friends. That's important to both of us. We still touch a lot; we just leave out some kinds of touch."

"It not only prevents pregnancy ... it has no side effects and it's free!"

"My religion says it's wrong to have sex before you're married. I agree. Period."

"I just don't want to take ANY chance of getting herpes ... or any kind of infection for that matter. I'd rather wait."

"I feel waiting can be a test of love. If a girl really cares about me, she won't need to put me down for preferring to wait."

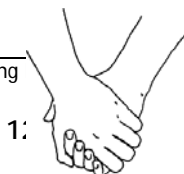
"I heard that the younger you start 'doing it' and the more people you 'do it' with, the more chance you have of getting cancer of the cervix. I don't judge other people, but it's not worth the risk to me."

"I just wouldn't feel right. I had sex once and I felt crummy afterwards. I'd rather wait 'til I'm sure I'll feel good about myself afterward."

"There are plenty of ways to show affection and caring without having sex. You just have fun in different ways."

"I don't want to take time and energy away from my music. That's totally important to me. I just know from when I was in love before, that sex made our relationship a lot heavier. I don't want that now. I'm more important."

"I think people who get all hung up wanting to lose their virginity just don't like themselves very much. I'm not in any hurry."



Did you know that six out of 10 high school sophomores in the U.S. have never had intercourse? Touch, even sexual touch, does NOT have to include intercourse. And most people prefer to wait.

So remember...

Touch is important.

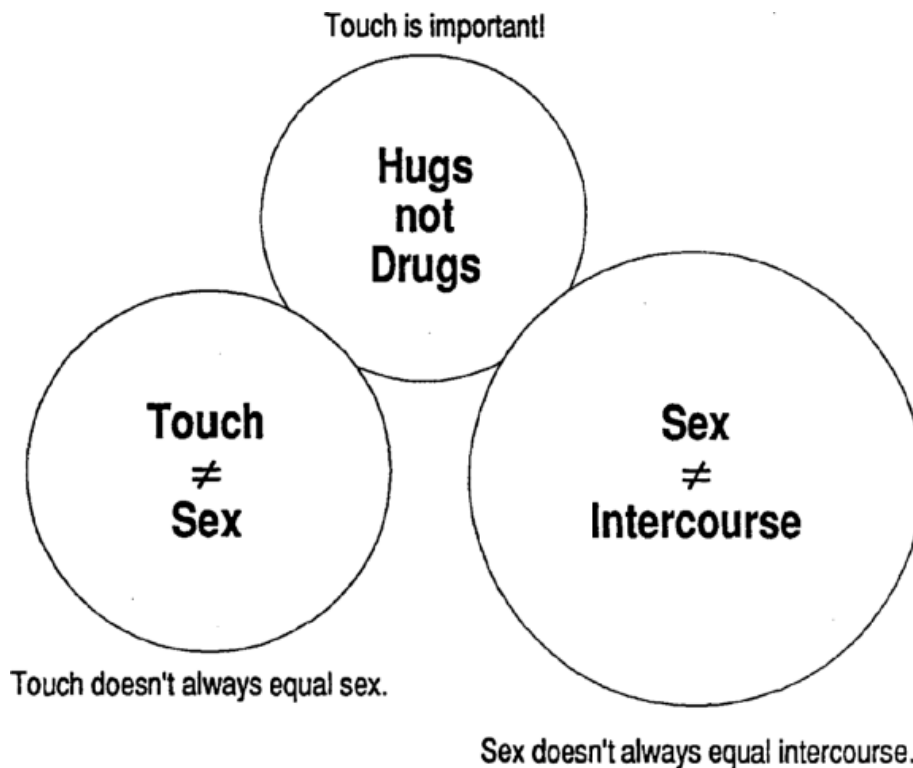
Touch is not always sexual.

Sex is not always intercourse.

Human beings can choose not to act on feelings.

Human beings can choose how to act on feelings.

Human beings can choose when to act on feelings.



A Family Homework Exercise: Touch and Abstinence

ALL FAMILY HOMEWORK EXERCISES ARE OPTIONAL.

Directions: The student has read the Position Paper: Touch and Abstinence and the Touch Reference Sheet in class. The adult should begin by reading them, too.

Next: Discuss together what your culture, your religion, and the two of you believe about some of the questions below. Remember that the idea is to try to understand one another, not to make the other person “agree with you.”

- **Sexual intercourse**
When is it right?
When is it wrong?
What can make it a better or worse experience for both people?
- **Abstinence**
When is it right?
Is it ever wrong to choose abstinence? If so, when?
What are other ways, besides sexual intercourse, that married people can express love and affection?
- **Masturbation**
Is it right or wrong?
Does it depend on the circumstances?
Does it depend on the person's age?
Do you think having masturbated has any effect on a person's ability to love a husband or wife? A positive effect? A negative effect?
- **Other kinds of sexual touch**
Are there other kinds of sexual touch you approve of? If so, why? If not, why not?
- **Violent touch**
When is it right? When is it wrong? Does it depend? If so, on what?

Note: If it's embarrassing to discuss these issues with one another you can decide to:

- Say so, and do the exercise anyway
- Skip parts of it
- Skip the whole thing
- Write your answers and read each other's answers
- Write your answers and throw them away
- Talk with each other with help from your priest, minister, or rabbi; a friend; or a family counselor
- Laugh, giggle, blush, and go right on talking

Finally: Share some affectionate touch with each other ... like a hug!

NOTE: Turn in a Family Homework Confirmation Slip by _____ if you want credit.

Touch Worksheet 2

Name _____ Due date _____

Keep a diary for one week of all touch you give/get. It is private so you will not turn it in. It will help you to learn about yourself.

Example:

Monday

1. Helping touch, put Band-Aid on Chris' knee.
2. Affectionate touch, Mrs. Smith patted my shoulder when she passed my desk.
3. Exploitive touch, a guy on the bus rubbed up against me.

After the week is over, read your touch diary and write a poem, a song, or a one page paper about what you learned. Turn the poem, song, or paper in.

