



the sexe ducator

24

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A magazine for educators who conduct sex education
activities with high-school students

Counteracting the trivialization of sexual exploitation:

Encouraging equal relationships between girls and boys

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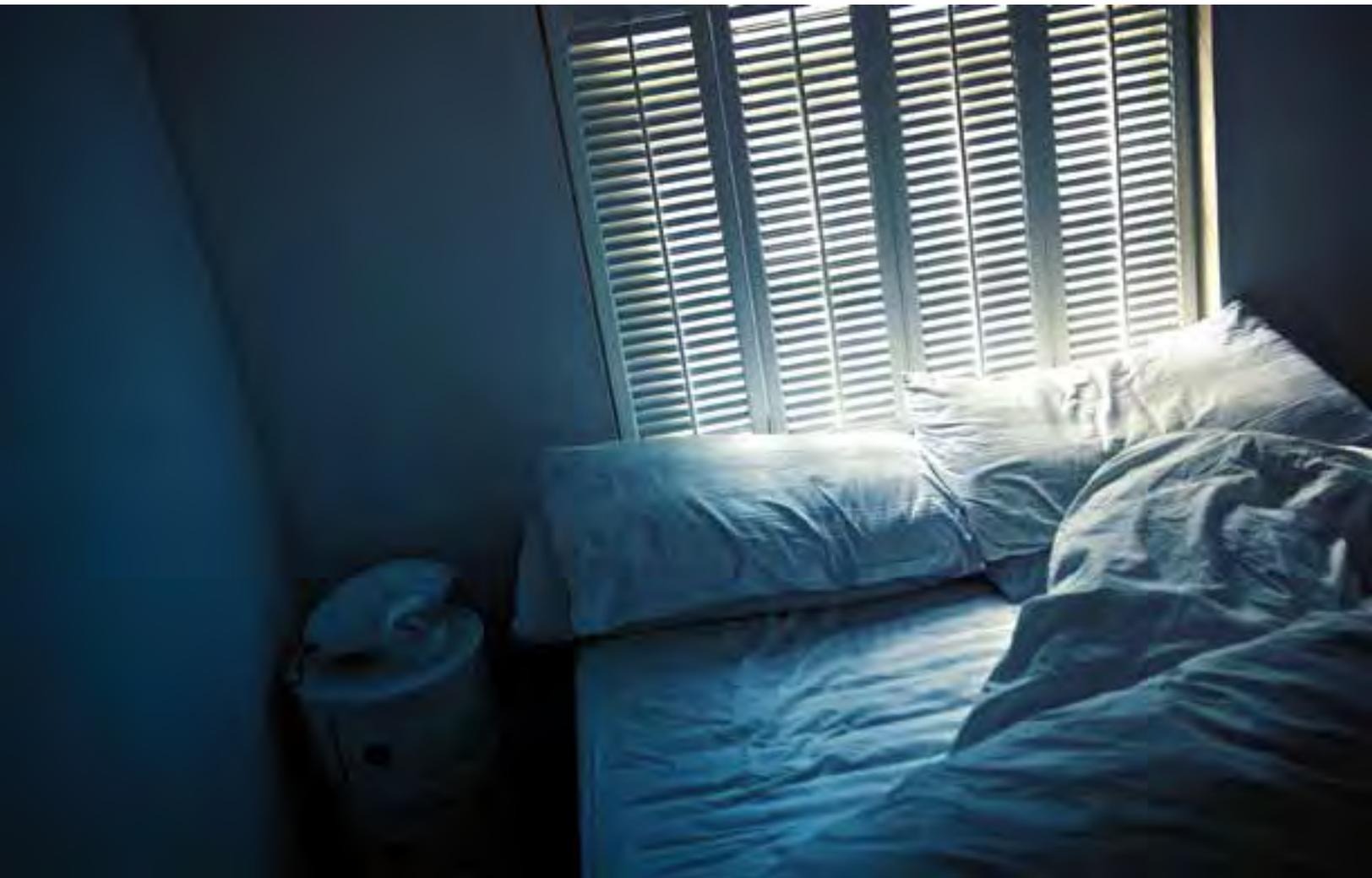
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"Hi! I recently found out that one of my friends [...] gives
blow jobs behind the school and gets paid in money or in pot.
I knew she wasn't doing very well, but I didn't know that her
problems were that big. She's 16 and I can see that she's not
happy with how things are. What could happen to her?
Is it normal? How can I help her?"

Boy, 16 (Tel Jeunes)

Sexy girl all around the world just shake your hips;
And put that ass to work
When you hear my song, don't just bob along
Girl show me that thong and put that ass to work
We got sir rock and patron on ice, If you want another shot,
then put that ass to work [...]
Let me see you shake it til you make it in my phonebook
And maybe I get you naked

Put that a\$\$ to work (Song by LMFAO)



National and international authorities are concerned about the issue of sexual exploitation (Geadah, 2003) because commercial exploitation of youth for sexual purposes is one of the most hidden forms of violence (Brawn and Roe-Sepowitz, 2008).

Because of the various forms it takes and criminal activity that can be associated with it, sexual exploitation is complex and difficult to define. Sexual exploitation is associated with situations where one individual sexually abuses another person or uses this person for sex in exchange for goods or services (Ministère de la Sécurité publique du Québec, 2013). In most cases, when children or adolescents are involved in situations of sexual exploitation, power imbalances characterize the relationships between exploiters and exploited. In Québec, juvenile prostitution and procuring are forms of sexual exploitation of minors that are generally associated with street gangs (Ministère de la Sécurité publique du Québec, 2013). In this context, the sexual exploitation of minors is marked by absence of consent or consent that is not valid: the law does not recognize consent given by a minor in a situation of exploitation (Éducaloi, 2014b).

The quote on the previous page shows that some young people are attracted, amongst other things, by money or goods in exchange for sexual favours. Today's consumer society can cause more adolescents to perceive this type of exchange as a way of satisfying needs that are otherwise out of reach (Conseil du statut de la femme, 2012). Some youth see that world as exciting and glamorous, while others tend to trivialize this activity and don't necessarily consider the risks involved (Mitchell, Finkelhor and Wolak, 2010).

This issue of the *SexEducator* aims to define the notion of consent to sexual activities and its components, and to expose the absence of consent in situations where minors are sexually exploited. It also provides tips for interventions with adolescents to counteract trivialization of sexual exploitation in the media and help vulnerable youth, some of whom risk involvement in prostitution.

Sexual exploitation: Absence of consent

There can be no consent in a context of sexual exploitation. Section 273.1 (1) of the *Criminal Code* defines consent as the voluntary agreement to engage in a sexual activity. This means that consent must be given in a free and enlightened manner; moreover, it must be given by the person herself or himself and not merely inferred from this person's words or actions.

Sexual consent refers to the desire to have sexual relations and to feeling ready and confident rather than to wanting to have sex because others are doing it or of not wanting to displease or disappoint (Duquet, Gagnon and Faucher, 2010). Sexual consent signifies respect for yourself and your body.

Consent is not possible in some situations. Consent given by a third party—a friend, parent or anyone else—is not valid. Let us repeat: **Consent must be given by the person herself or himself.** There can be no consent, for instance, when a person has sexual activities under threat, out of fear, under pressure or under the influence of someone in a position of authority, or when unconscious or under the influence of drugs or alcohol (Éducaloi, 2014a). **Even if a minor voluntarily takes part in a sexual activity, consent is not valid if the young person is being exploited** (Éducaloi, 2014b).

It's possible to change your mind at any time: a person can decide not to continue with the sexual activity and take back her or his consent. (Éducaloi, 2014b).



The commodification of sexuality in video clips and songs: Forms of sexual exploitation that must be talked about

Images and messages that glorify prostitution

Over the past several years, images or messages linked to the commodification of sexuality have appeared in video clips and song lyrics. This is particularly true in the case of rap music (Arnett, 2001, cited in Bryant, 2008; Weitzer and Kubrin, 2009) but also in pop songs played on the radio such as *Sexy Bitch* by Akon, and *Ayo Technology* by Milo. Robin Thicke's *Blurred Lines* is another example of a song that evokes and trivializes sexual exploitation (Lamallice, 2013).

The infiltration into popular culture of a prostitution code and other forms of sexual exploitation is of concern because of the influence this can have on young people's perceptions of gender relations as well as on their views on sexuality, seduction and sexual relations.

Adolescents gradually come to see themselves as men or women, using the gender roles presented to them. They find role models in the music they listen to and videos they watch. During adolescence, these two activities take up much of their time (Bryant, 2008). For young people, rap music and videos are important vehicles through which identities are expressed (Arnett, 2001, cited in Bryant, 2008).

Some artists who are popular with young people use the vocabulary or the idea of prostitution. In videos, just as in pornographic films, a woman's body parts are often presented suggestively, singled out and separated from her as a person. Women are depicted as sexual objects, alone or in groups, scantily dressed—sometimes only wearing underwear—walking or dancing suggestively around a man (Arnett, 2002, cited in Kistler and Lee, 2009). They are often portrayed as prostitutes, nightclub performers and servants (Grabe and Hyde, 2009). Male singers are not the only ones to exploit sexuality in their songs. Some female artists portray themselves as sexual objects, especially Rihanna (*SM, Rude Boy*), Nicki Minaj (*Starships*) and Shakira (*Rabiosa*). In addition to directly referring to the world of prostitution, some of their lyrics trivialize or even eroticize sexual exploitation and sexual violence.

Consequences of trivializing sexual exploitation in songs and videos

When sexual exploitation is trivialized, the capacity to develop equal relationships is compromised for both men and women (Geadah, 2003). Yet, it is very important for girls and boys to develop reciprocal fulfilling romantic and sexual relationships (Bryant, 2008). Widespread dissemination of gender stereotypes in videos affects young people, who can come to believe that these images and messages reflect a reality in which these are the models to emulate (Media Awareness Network, 2009a). **Although a majority of teens say they are uncomfortable and disagree with the way women and romantic relationships are portrayed in videos, many of them nonetheless internalize or reproduce the attitudes and behaviours they see.** Reducing women to objects in these cultural products encourages teens to trivialize sexual behaviour and normalize behaviours that rest on sexual exploitation: the girl is used to arouse males and exists only for men and their desires (Lavoie et al., 2010; Dorais et al., 2006). In that context, free and informed consent to engage in sexual activity can easily be confused with a desire to please, be noticed or be of service, and even lead some young people to agree to perform certain sexual acts that they don't really want to do (Duquet, Gagnon and Faucher, 2010).



The more videos young people watch, the more they tend to accept the stereotypes presented in them and to trivialize gender violence (Bryant, 2008; Kalof, 1999).



Girls...

Depictions of women's bodies as objects in videos with sexual content can induce girls to allot greater importance to their physical appearance and to view themselves as sexual objects (Grabe and Hyde, 2009). Girls who watch these videos are more accepting of dating violence, due to the stereotypical sex roles conveyed in those images (Johnson et al., 1995).



Boys...

Boys are influenced by the power that men in sexual videos seem to feel (Orange, 1996). More specifically, boys who view highly sexual hip-hop music videos express greater acceptance of the sexual objectification of women and develop more stereotypical gender attitudes; this style of video even encourages certain rape myths (Kistler and Lee, 2009). Hip-hop culture suggests that boys should adopt this image of pimps constantly looking for girls to satisfy their sexual needs (Media Awareness Network, 2009a). The pimp chic culture, which depicts men as excelling in attracting women and able to offer their riches to women (Weitzer and Kubrin, 2009), contributes to the trivialization of sexual exploitation (McClain and Garrity, 2011).

A stereotype is an idea, a generalized image or a caricature of a person or group that is based on abusive oversimplification of real or supposed character traits (Media Awareness Network, 2009b).

Juvenile prostitution: Understanding it to prevent it

It is very difficult to estimate the numbers of minors who exchange sexual favours for payment or of other individuals involved in the commodification of sexuality, particularly pimps and sex buyers (Flores et al, 2005; Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008). Young people rarely perceive their behaviours as prostitution (Flores et al., 2005) since they are aware of that stigma; they don't want to consider themselves or have others perceive them as prostitutes.

Juvenile prostitution is generally defined as the practice of engaging in sexual activity in exchange for money, goods or services, mainly for reasons other than satisfying one's own sexual or emotional needs (Hanigan, 1990). In most cases, sex is traded for money, but adolescents can also receive other types of payment (Martin, Hearst and Widome, 2010). Offering someone drugs, a roof over their head or a meal are all ways to create a debt that can be paid back in sexual favours. More girls than boys receive objects or clothing in exchange for sex (Martin, Hearst and Widome, 2010). **The notion of free and informed consent is totally absent in these cases. Whether or not force or threats are used and even if a person who trades sex for goods or services doesn't perceive it as so, this is a form of sexual exploitation and it is important to intervene.**

In our imagination, prostitution involves a woman in a short skirt and high-heeled boots who waits for clients on a street corner (Pederson and Hegna, 2003). In fact, prostitution can take many forms: nude dancing, escort service, erotic massage or phone conversations, pornographic photographs or films (Flores et al., 2005).

Young people who prostitute themselves are more often found indoors in strip bars, motel rooms, massage parlours or private apartments, making it less visible and more difficult to define. While street prostitution is increasingly less frequent, it still exists. However, for young people who turn to prostitution, it is often a question of survival since no other options appear to be available to them (Martin, Hearst and Widome, 2010). Young people, especially 17- to 20-year-olds, also increasingly use the Internet and social networks to exchange sexual services online (cybersex) or to find potential sex buyers (Saint-Jean, Roy and Dèque, 2012).

Teens are often coerced into taking part in these activities (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008): they don't freely choose or want to participate, even though most say it was their choice to engage in prostitution. It is important to understand that this is sexual exploitation.



Procuring

Pimps can act alone, be part of an organized network or work within a legal enterprise (e.g. strip bar, massage parlour). Procuring, or pimping, is a significant field of criminal activity for some street gangs; however, they are not the only ones to benefit from this type of lucrative business.

Whether they are gang members or not, pimps use seduction, tricks, false promises and other methods to exploit girls. Seduction is often used to take advantage of a victim's emotional deprivation. Pimps psychologically manipulate their victims and exploit their vulnerabilities, progressively getting these young people to view erotic dancing or prostitution as a positive thing or, at least, as a possibility. Even if girls who have pimps say they *accepted* to engage in prostitution, it is because they feel they are indebted to someone who has bought them clothes or drugs, or gave them a roof over their heads when they were in situations of extreme vulnerability. A girl's relationship with her pimp is complex, especially if she has developed feelings for him, for instance in the context of a romantic relationship.

In general, young prostitutes don't see themselves as victims. They imagine they are loved, have chosen what they do and do it to earn money (Friedman, 2005, cited in Rand, 2009) whereas in fact, they are forced or coerced into it. Girls are hesitant to denounce their situation when they have romantic relationships with their pimps and because of physical, psychological and sexual violence, and control pimps exercise over them. Degree of exploitation and control varies among pimps; however, in all cases, victims are sexually exploited and the person exploiting them usually grabs most the profits made. As we said earlier, while pimping is part of some gangs' culture, it is not exclusive to gangs. Sometimes a girl might participate in recruiting other young girls. She might do it to assist a gang at her pimp's request, for herself or to improve her own living conditions (e.g. free herself from the grips of her pimp, or obtain gratification for bringing him one of her friends).

Male juvenile prostitution

In general, boys act alone, without pimps and often in circumscribed areas such as gay neighbourhoods and parks (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008). Some engage in prostitution for survival purposes or for the additional income, that is, they use the money or goods obtained to meet their basic needs or buy non-essential items; for others, prostitution is a way of having sexual experiences. More often, boys in the latter category are homosexual (Dorais, 2003). As is the case for female juvenile prostitution, male juvenile prostitution has consequences.



Young people at risk for or directly affected by juvenile prostitution

It has been estimated that in Canada, 10,000 young people are involved in prostitution (Hodgson, 1997, cited in Geadah, 2003). In Montréal, about 4,000 young people aged 12 to 25 are engaged in this life (Durocher et al., 2002).

In Québec City, a study of 15- to 18-year-old students revealed that 4% of them had offered to have sex in exchange for money or other goods—for instance, drugs, food, clothing or a place to sleep (Lavoie et al., 2010)—and that 3% admitted having paid for such services. The study also showed that girls more often offered sexual services whereas boys more often purchased them.

On average, teens first begin selling sex at 14 or 15 years of age (Conseil du statut de la femme, 2012). In Québec, most victims of juvenile prostitution are vulnerable young girls between the ages of 13 and 16 who are looking for love, money or adventure (Dorais et al., 2006; Conseil du statut de la femme, 2012). It is estimated that three times more girls than boys engage in prostitution (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008).

For these young people, the first exchange of sexual services often occurs during adolescence. This is why it is important for educators and other professionals to promote uncoerced sexual involvement that respects both partners' desires and consent (Lavoie et al., 2010). Educators and professionals should also be critical of the act of trading goods or money for sexual services (Brawn and Roe-Sepowitz, 2008; Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008; Mitchell, Finkelhor and Wolak, 2010) and of images in the media that convey stereotypes that trivialize sexual exploitation, an issue fraught with consequences.

Reasons for which young people are driven to prostitution

There are a number of reasons why young people—both boys and girls—turn to prostitution. The reason most often cited in the context of street gangs and prostitution is a need or desire to make money after running away from home: prostitution becomes a means of survival (Cousineau, Fournier and Hamel, 2007).

A young girl who engages in prostitution in a gang context might feel safe, at least at first, when her “boyfriend” protects her and welcomes her into the fold, if she has been having problems at home (Cousineau, Fournier and Hamel, 2007). Young girls have a great need to be acknowledged and popular (Cousineau, Fournier and Hamel, 2007): this could be the first time they feel popular, appreciated and desired.

Other possible reasons include adventure, thrills or wanting to party—especially for young people attracted to drugs or alcohol and an exciting night life (Cousineau, Fournier and Hamel, 2007; Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008). Indeed, because these reasons are conscious ones, they all figure among the ones young people give most frequently.

Young people don't always understand what brings them to prostituting themselves. Some of the underlying motivations include needing the affection or acceptance of an adult; seeking strength or power associated with arousing a client's sexual desire; searching for a sense of belonging—particularly when it involves prostitution within a street gang or in a closed setting such as a strip bar; and, for some boys, engaging in homosexual activities to confirm their sexual orientation (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008).

Risk factors

Several factors can lead young people to prostitution. Being aware of these factors can help you identify vulnerable teens and offer them support (Lavoie et al., 2010). Young people who have been sexually abused are overrepresented among those who are sexually exploited (Lavoie et al., 2010; Svedin and Priebe, 2007, cited in Lavoie et al., 2010; Conseil du statut de la femme, 2012).

The following risk factors should be taken into consideration:

- Stressful events such as moving, the end of a romantic relationship, or parents separating (Lavoie et al., 2010; Van Brunschot, Gibbs and Brannigan, 2002)
- Deviant peer association (Tyler, Hoyt and Whitbeck, 2000)
- Early sexual experiences (Van Brunschot, Gibbs and Brannigan, 2002; Pedersen and Hegna, 2003; Martin, Hearst and Widome, 2010)

The following predisposing factors should also be considered:

- Dysfunctional family environment (Van Brunschot, Gibbs and Brannigan, 2002; Lavoie et al., 2010; Reid, 2011)
- History of physical or psychological violence (Martin, Hearst and Widome, 2010)
- History of running away (Van Brunschot, Gibbs and Brannigan, 2002; Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008; Martin, Hearst and Widome, 2010)
- History of psychotropic substance abuse (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008; Martin, Hearst and Widome, 2010; Pedersen and Hegna, 2003)

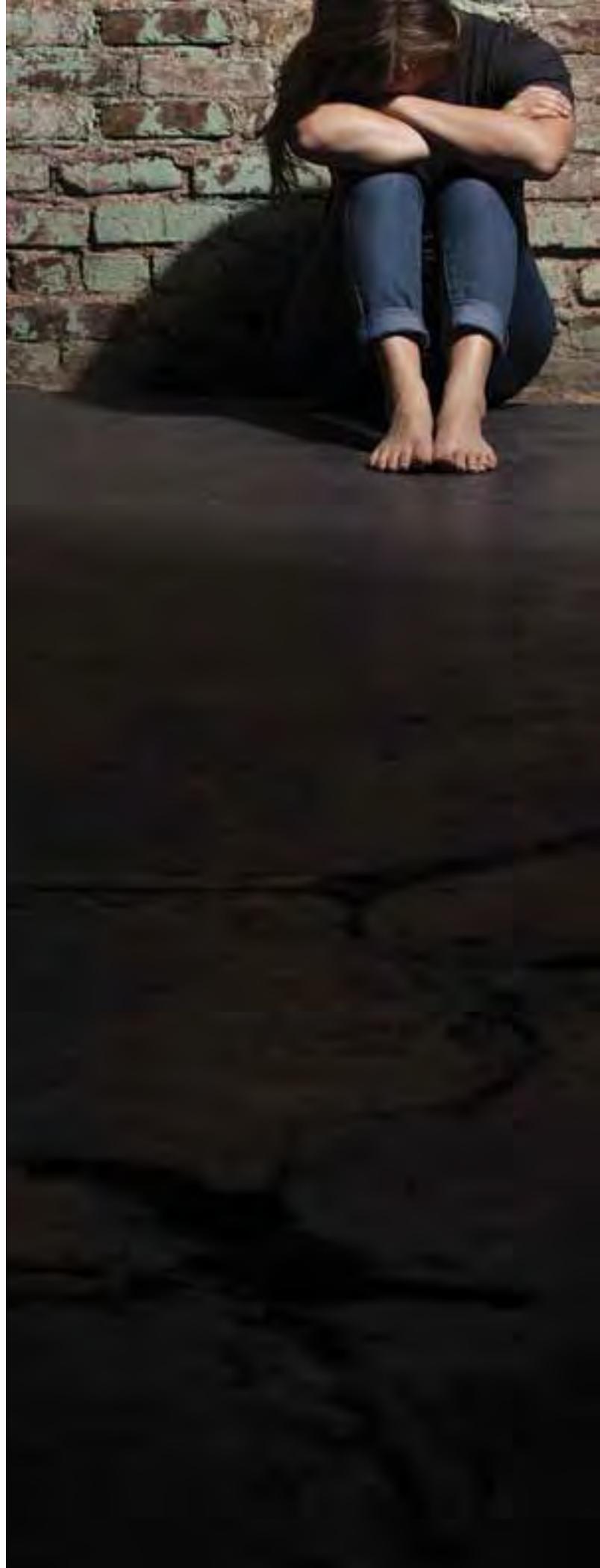
These factors do not all have the same impact, but when they accumulate, a young person is more vulnerable to being recruited into a street gang or engaging in prostitution.

Protective factors

Conversely, some factors reduce the risks of victimization and increase a young person's capacity to resist pressures and to make informed decisions. Promoting protective factors can bring about positive changes in young people's behaviours and actions.

Some factors are listed here (Ministère de la Sécurité publique du Québec, 2013):

- Good self-esteem
- Healthy and functional family environment
- Positive peer influence
- Capacity to ask for and receive help
- Safe living environment (free from all forms of violence)
- Personal and school success (the teen believes in his or her capacities and is able to project into the future)



Consequences of prostitution

People who engage in prostitution and are sexually exploited are very vulnerable to all kinds of violence and abuse from clients, pimps or homophobic individuals (in the case of male prostitutes). They are at risk of developing post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS). Research shows that 55% to 90% of female prostitutes suffer from PTSS (Farley et al., 1998, cited in Geadah, 2003) and are in a constant state of alert. Even when prostitution doesn't initially provoke negative sentiments, people very often end up feeling depressed and developing suicidal thoughts (Geadah, 2003; Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008).

Usually, prostitution has serious consequences. These can be psychological, for instance, lower self-esteem, depression, and emotional, sexual and intimacy desensitization (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008). They can also be physical: sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBI), unwanted pregnancy, violence, addiction, and exhaustion (Geadah, 2003; Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008; Barnitz, 2001, cited in Rand, 2009; McClain and Garrity, 2011; Damant, Noël and Dorais, 2007; Fleury and Fredette, 2002). Finally, there can also be social consequences: poverty, isolation or dropping out of school (Kidd and Coimbra Liborio, 2011).

Actions for professionals: Recognizing and helping young people at risk or involved in prostitution

You might sometimes suspect that a teen is trading sexual services or seeking help by confiding in you about having those types of experiences.

Youth who engage in prostitution often leave clues about such activities and, if you spot the signs, actions can be taken to help. However, you have to be alert to identify these often well-camouflaged signs. It is important to remember that a sign (e.g. lying about where one goes) does not automatically mean the person is engaging in prostitution or is being sexually exploited. Professionals must

remain vigilant and use those clues as markers that can help them notice other changes likely to be associated with commercial sex work (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008) or discern another problem affecting the teen, with a view to helping and protecting vulnerable adolescents.

Table 1 presents the main warning signs that could indicate a young person may be engaging in prostitution or is being sexually exploited.

Table 1 | Signs linked to prostitution and sexual exploitation in youth

Lies about where he or she goes or gives vague answers (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008).	Adopts a different vocabulary: street talk, crude language (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008; McClain and Garrity, 2011).
Increases alcohol and/or drug use (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008; McClain and Garrity, 2011).	Acquires expensive material items or spends a lot of money when he or she goes out (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008; McClain and Garrity, 2011).
Runs away or spends the night away from home more often (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008; McClain and Garrity, 2011).	Receives gifts without clearly saying who they are from (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008; McClain and Garrity, 2011).
Is often absent from school or drops out (McClain and Garrity, 2011).	If the teen is a girl: dresses more provocatively and projects a more sexualized image of herself (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008).
Changes friends, talks less with old friends, has new, often older friends whose real names he or she doesn't know (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008).	If the teen is a girl: often has extra clothes or underwear hidden in a bag (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008).
If the teen is a girl: has a new boyfriend who is older than her (McClain and Garrity, 2011).	Carries a weapon, boxes of condoms or business cards of places where young people don't usually go (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008).
If the teen is a girl: has a new tattoo, which could mark her as the property of a particular pimp (McClain and Garrity, 2011).	Uses his or her cell phone very frequently, receives many calls and hangs up quickly when someone is likely to hear the conversation. In the Calls received menu, the same numbers show up often (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008).



What you can do to help

Daily contact with teens often enables a teacher or professional to detect changes in attitude or behaviour. If you are convinced or if you see or suspect that a boy or girl in your group is being sexually exploited (for instance, after witnessing recruitment attempts or if a youth has confided in you), you must contact the director of youth protection. It is also recommended to report the event to the police. A response procedure to set into motion is defined in the *Entente multisectorielle relative aux enfants victimes d'abus sexuels, de mauvais traitements physiques ou d'une absence de soins menaçant leur santé physique* (multi-sectoral agreement regarding children who are victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse or neglect threatening their physical health). If you wish to report someone you suspect of being a pimp, you should contact the police.

Different avenues are available if you want to talk with young people you believe or you know are involved in prostitution or in any other situation of sexual exploitation. The advice that follows is also valid for friends or other youth who want to help someone implicated in those kinds of situations.

You should tell an adolescent who is confiding in you that the situation will be reported to the director of youth protection if you think his or her health and safety are threatened.

- **Talk about what you see, but don't judge.** Share your concerns with the teen and make yourself available if he or she wants to talk about the situation, but don't force the person to talk. It is highly likely that a girl whose boyfriend asks her to prostitute herself will not want to tell you about it and will not acknowledge that she has a problem. Rather, she will probably consider that it was her choice and that she wants to do it, but will still be ashamed to talk about it.
- **Listen.** Let the young person involved in a situation of sexual exploitation talk about the drawbacks and, if this is the case, the advantages he or she perceives. Empathetic listening is important if you want to understand the adolescent, even if it makes you react emotionally. In a helping relationship, it is essential to establish trust.
- **Report any situation involving sexual exploitation** to the director of youth protection and, if need be, to the police. You can then help the adolescent get the support he or she needs.
- **Refer the teen to a specialist.** If the teen refuses to get help, or if despite his or her disavowal you are still worried, don't hesitate to report the situation to the above-mentioned authorities.
- **Encourage the friends of the teen you believe or know is involved in a situation of sexual exploitation to talk** about it with an adult they trust (parent, professional), especially if the adolescent runs away, has a drug or alcohol problem, owes money, etc. (Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008).
- **Offer appropriate support and encourage** the youth to get involved in new activities: this can help her or him find a way out. Friends can also provide significant support to an adolescent who is trying to get out of the situation.

Conclusion

There are many forms of sexual exploitation. Do young people exchange sex for money or other things to attract attention and without really understanding what they are doing? This issue deserves a closer look.

The notion of mutual consent is central to authentic sexual relations, that is, the response to desire on the part of two people who meet and open up to each other, are on intimate terms, and are discovering each others' bodies (Marzano, 2003).

Helping young people develop good social and relationship skills, particularly related to romantic and sexual relationships (Cool, 2004; Table régionale de concertation sur la prostitution juvénile, 2008; Mitchell, Finkelhor and Wolak, 2010) is one way to ensure they can engage in fulfilling relationships. These skills should also enable teens to gain a better understanding of the notion of consent and boost their self-assertiveness. However, this objective should be part of a broader sex education intervention that includes reflections on love, male-female relations, and adolescent sexual relationships (needs, limits, etc.), no matter where the intervention is delivered—at school, in a community setting, in a youth centre.





Resources for adolescents or educators and other professionals concerning juvenile prostitution

For young people

Resources in Montréal and Québec City

- Projet d'Intervention auprès des Mineurs-res Prostitués-ées (PIAMP) : <http://piamp.net> (Montréal)
- Projet Intervention Prostitution Québec (PIPQ) : www.pipq.org (Québec City)

Province-wide

- Neighbourhood CLSC (8-1-1)
- Youth Protection
- Tel-jeunes : <http://teljeunes.com> – 1 800 263-2266
- Sûreté du Québec : www.sq.gouv.qc.ca/adolescents/adolescents-conseils-sq.jsp or municipal police
- CAVAC (Crime Victims Assistance Centre): www.cavac.qc.ca/regions/accueil.html
- CALACS (Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel): www.rqcalacs.qc.ca – 1 888 933-9007

For educators and other professionals

- Cybertip, Canada's national tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children: <https://www.cyberaide.ca>

NOTE for educators and other professionals regarding learning activities

To ensure preventive actions are effective, the activities presented here do not focus solely on sexual exploitation but rather on the promotion of equal relationships and freely given consent in sexual relations. It is important that all young people have friendly, romantic or sexual relationships that are based on equality and that consider needs and desires. The goal of the two proposed activities is to decrease young people's vulnerability by countering the trivialization of sexual exploitation and providing information on sexual consent. It is important to remember that sexual relations during adolescence are not trivial.

Please refer to page 14 for tips on how to respond to a young person dealing with issues connected with prostitution or other forms of sexual commodification or exploitation.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

On the next few pages you will find activities designed to raise the awareness of secondary 4 and 5 students about sexual stereotypes from the world of prostitution presented in the videos, and about the importance of feeling free to consent to or decline sexual acts. Adolescents are asked first to think critically about what they listen to or watch, and then to think about how those images may influence their perceptions of romantic and sexual relationships.

The learning activities can be conducted in schools, youth centres or community groups for young people. To facilitate sex education activities, we suggest following ten ground rules (see Table 2). Other rules suggested by adolescents or the person leading the sessions can also be added.

It is important to inform students about complementary educational services available at school (social worker, psychologist, psychoeducator and nurse). Other resources and references for young people and educators are listed on page 17.

Table 2 | Ten Ground Rules for Sex Education Sessions

1	Be sensitive to and respectful of other people’s feelings, and listen to what they have to say.
2	Don’t make heavy-handed or categorical comments, and don’t insult others or make fun of their comments or questions.
3	Feel free to respond, or not, to a question.
4	Try to use proper terms.
5	Don’t personalize questions or situations.
6	Don’t repeat elsewhere what other people say during the session.
7	Keep in mind that all questions are welcomed and valid.
8	If needed, discuss the issue with your parents*.
9	Use the pronoun “I” to state your opinions and feelings.
10	Let the teacher or session leader know if you’re dissatisfied with the session.

* Or any other adult to whom a youth is close and can trust to talk about sexuality and, in some cases, an adult who acts as his or her guardian.

Source: Gouvernement du Québec (2003). *Sex Education in the Context of Education Reform*, written by Francine Duquet [Québec], ministère de l’Éducation du Québec and ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, p. 39-40.

Possible associations with the Québec Education Program and with Complementary Educational Services

Québec Education Program

Goals of the Québec Education Program

- Construction of Identity
- Construction of World-View
- Empowerment

Broad Areas of Learning

Health and Well-Being

Ensure that young people develop a sense of responsibility for adopting good habits with respect to health, safety and sexuality

Focuses of Development

Self-awareness and awareness of his/her basic needs

Need for self-affirmation; need for respect for his/her physical and psychological well-being; need for acceptance and growth; need for recognition and fulfillment, need to express his or her feelings

Knowledge of the impact of his/her choices on health and well-being

Knowledge of the principles of balanced sexuality; awareness of the influence of behaviour and attitudes on psychological well-being

Media Literacy

Enable adolescents to exercise critical, ethical and aesthetic judgement with respect to the media and produce media documents that respect individual and collective rights

Focuses of Development

Awareness of the place and influence of the different media in his/her daily life and in society

Awareness of the influence of media messages on his/her world-view and everyday environment

Understanding of media representations of reality

Recognition of the positive and negative impact of media messages; distinction between reality, imagination and virtual reality

Cross-curricular Competencies

- Exercise critical judgement

Complementary educational services

Program of assistance services

Help students throughout their studies, with their academic and career choices and with any difficulties they encounter

Program of student life services

Foster students' autonomy and sense of responsibility, their moral and spiritual dimensions, their interpersonal relationships, as well as their feeling of belonging to the school and the community

Associations could be made with other disciplines, other elements of the Quebec Education Program or with complementary educational services programs, depending on the expertise and interest of the individuals called upon to facilitate these activities.

ACTIVITY 1

Duration

75 minutes

Educational goals

- Spot the stereotypes that allude to the commodification of sexuality in videos.
- Understand how these stereotypes can interfere with the establishment of egalitarian relationships between boys and girls and trivialize sexual exploitation.

Content

- Images and messages that glorify prostitution (p. 5)
- Consequences of trivializing sexual exploitation in songs and videos (p. 5)

Images and messages alluding to the commodification of sexuality in videos

Scenario for teens*

You are aliens on a mission to Earth and you have to report on ways men and women behave. As part of your study, you watch videos (or movie clips, ads, etc.) that portray sexual stereotypes.

Use the images from the video assigned to your team of four aliens to describe how men and women look, behave and interact. Your description should also include anything else you notice and feel is important. The written report of what you observed will be used again later in this activity.

* Tell the young people that the goal is not for them to express an opinion on a musical style. Rather, you want them to become aware both of the ways men and women are portrayed in clips and lyrics and of the messages explicitly and implicitly conveyed.

1 Discuss each video (which may or may not have been watched in class) with all the young people using the questions below to fuel the discussion. On the board, write the answers the teams give to the first two questions.

- How are girls portrayed in the video? And boys?
- What do the girls do and how do they behave? And the boys?
- How do the men and women express themselves? How do they communicate with one another?
- What did you notice in particular about each gender? What was common to both?
- How would you describe the interaction between men and women on Earth, based on what you saw in the videos?

Potential answers

- Relations between men and women are “sexualized”: they are all about seduction and simulating sexual acts.
- Women use their looks to please men. They are scantily dressed compared to boys. Women are presented as the boys’ objects. Several women often gravitate around a single man.
- Boys act like pimps or players. Their wealth (car, jewellery, clothes) and power are clearly put on display.
- These representations are found in images as well as song lyrics.

-
- 2** The educator or professional asks each team to hand in their report and randomly redistributes them to the teams.

Scenario for teens (cont'd)

You are once again human teenagers and have before you a report on male and female behaviours produced by a team of aliens.

After reading the report and working as a team, write down your answers to the following questions:

- What do you think of the ways the aliens saw relations between men and women on Earth?
- What do you disagree with? What do you agree with? Why?
- How does men's and women's realities differ most in terms of the relations between them (friendly, romantic, sexual)?
- You write back to the aliens to tell them about male-female relations and to give them a more accurate picture. What do you say?

-
- 3** As a group, discuss the thoughts prompted by the analyses of the videos. Suggested questions for discussion:

- There are images (nude dancing, escorts, etc.) and/or messages (e.g. the word "pimp") associated with prostitution. Which ones did you notice?
- Why do you think prostitution is presented as a glamorous activity?
- In your opinion, how can these images influence relations between men and women?
 - How can these videos influence the ways girls see men? The ways boys see men?
 - How can these videos influence the ways girls see women? The ways boys see women?
- How can these representations colour
 - friendships between boys and girls?
 - romantic relationships (seduction, feelings, intimacy between partners, etc.)?
 - sexual relations (desire, pleasure, consent, etc.)?
- What kind of expectations could such views give rise to?
- You tried to paint a more accurate picture of male-female relations. What have you found? Looking at the pictures painted by the aliens and the one you came up with after, how are they similar? How are they different?

4 End the activity by drawing on some of the following ideas.

The adolescents portrayed in the videos analyzed are not like real boys and girls. This is often true of movies and TV shows. These examples of men and women shown in the media suggest that girls have to be seductive and boys, seducers. But the dynamics of seduction should not cast the two in these roles exclusively.

Come back to the more realistic portrait established by the teams and discuss more egalitarian and less stereotyped ways of connecting with someone you like.

Remind young people that it is important to maintain a critical view of the way men and women are portrayed in the media and to think about notions of self-respect and respect for others in relation to ways seduction and sexuality are portrayed. It's okay to seek affection and love and to hope that someone will like you more than others, but to establish an egalitarian relationship, you have to connect with the person you want in a way that is free of these stereotypes and based on who you really are as a person.

Reflections on truly consensual sexual involvement¹

ACTIVITY 2

Duration

75 minutes

Educational goal

- Establish the importance of consent and respect for one's own needs and desires and those of the other person when deciding whether or not to have sexual contact.

Content

- Sexual exploitation: Absence of consent (p. 4)
- What you can do to help (p. 14)

1 Begin the meeting by presenting the topic, that is, notions of consent and respect for one's own needs and desires as well as those of the other person when deciding whether or not to have sexual contact.

2 Suggest working in teams of three or four. Each team receives one of the three scenarios below and has 10 to 15 minutes to discuss and come up with answers to the proposed questions. Tell young people a plenary session will follow to examine and discuss each scenario.

Scenario A

Annie has a crush on Jean-François. She is really excited about the party on Friday because she knows he is also invited. Friday finally comes and the party is in full swing! Suddenly, Jean-François walks up to her with two of his friends, laughing. He tells Annie that he will give her \$20 if she takes off her bra without taking off her shirt. Still laughing, his friends add that they will give her another \$20 if she then shows them her breasts.

- What do you think will happen? Do you think Annie will take the bet?
- What are the implications of each potential choice:
 - For Annie (take off her bra or not, show her breasts or not)?
 - Possibilities: she thinks about the next day, the risk that someone might take a picture or film the whole thing, how she might feel depending on how the situation plays out (pride, shame, guilt, relief, etc.), the fact that she's in love with Jean-François and that she might agree in the hopes of pleasing him or just for the money.
 - For Jean-François (take back his offer, back up his friends in their offer or not, do nothing, defuse the situation)?
 - Possibilities: he thinks about the next day, the risk that someone might take a picture or film the whole thing, how he and his friends might feel depending on how the situation plays out (pride, shame, guilt, relief, etc.), the possibility that he might have suggested this bet to be popular with his friends, the potential stain on his reputation for encouraging Annie to do such a thing.
 - For the friends involved (talk Annie out of doing it or not, argue that the whole thing is simply unacceptable, leave, raise the stakes)?
 - Possibilities: they think about the next day, the risk that someone might take a picture or film the whole thing, how they might feel depending on how the situation plays out (pride, shame, guilt, relief, etc.)
- How could this situation positively or negatively affect the relation between Annie and Jean-François? (Will she still be in love with him? Will he fall in love with her? Other possible outcomes?)

1. This activity was inspired by Duquet, Gagnon and Faucher (2010).

- If you were Jean-François's friend, what would you say to him?
- If you were Annie's friend, what would you say to her? Would knowing that she is in love with Jean-François influence what you say?
- How much could the money issue influence Annie's decision?

Key messages

- Show how each protagonist plays a role in the outcome of the situation. Each one has the power to intervene. Although teens may say that everyone is free to do what they want with their own body, tell them that offering someone money to take off their clothes is unacceptable. Taking your clothes off is an intimate gesture that is not at all trivial.
- When you offer someone money to do something sexual, you put pressure on that person, and there can be no real consent under pressure (with or without money at stake).
- Also, Annie's chances of seducing Jean-François are not likely to increase if she accepts his offer, with or without money at stake.
- Taking your clothes off in public in the hopes of seducing someone will not generate the kind of interest you want.

Scenario B

Marc has basketball training at his school on Wednesday nights. On his way out, he runs into Jonathan, who asks him if he wants to have dinner. Marc is interested in Jonathan and so agrees to go with him. At the restaurant, Jonathan is adamant about paying. Marc is surprised, but accepts. Later, Jonathan drives Marc home. Along the way, he stops suddenly, puts his hand on Marc's thigh and insists on kissing him on the mouth. Marc feels that things are moving too fast. Jonathan persists and reminds Marc that he paid for dinner and that he owes him this kiss.

- How do you think Marc could react in this situation?
 - Possibilities:
 - He refuses, explains to Jonathan that simply accepting his invitation to dinner does not give him the right to demand a kiss in return, then tells someone he trusts what happened.
 - He asks Jonathan to take him home without acknowledging his request.
 - He asks to get out of the car and finds another way to get home.
 - He agrees just to avoid an argument or because Jonathan's attitude is making him uncomfortable.
 - He thinks about the way he might feel depending on the various ways the situation could go.
- You are Marc's friend. The next day, he confides in you about what happened. What do you say to him? (See page 14 for potential interventions to guide teens.)
- What is the problem with the way Jonathan treated Marc?

Key messages

- Anyone can be the victim of sexual abuse, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.
- Paying for a date or a meal or buying things (clothes, cell phone, etc.) for someone does not give the right to demand something sexual in return.
- Just because you agree to go out, have dinner or do something with someone does not oblige you to consent to anything sexual. Giving in is not consenting.
- You are always free to change your mind.
- If you feel the need to, it is important to talk to someone you trust (friend, parent, professional) about a situation like this one, no matter when it happened.

Scenario C

Mathieu confides in two of his friends: Erica, a girl at their school, has repeatedly made it clear that she wants to have a sexual relationship with him. Mathieu is not interested in Erica and does not want to accept her offer. His friends tell him that he's lucky and that he would be crazy not to take advantage of the situation. All the guys want to sleep with her. They question his masculinity. Mathieu doesn't know how to respond.

- How do you think Mathieu feels in this situation?
 - Possibilities:
 - He feels pressured by Erica and his friends.
 - He is surprised at his friends' reaction: he confided in them hoping for support and help finding a solution.
 - He's afraid his friends will tell others and that rumors about him will start going around.
 - He asks himself whether or not he wants this experience with Erica, what the implications are, how he might feel depending on the various ways the situation could play out.
- How do you think Mathieu could react?
 - Possibilities:
 - He stands by his decision not to accept since he's not interested in Erica.
 - He accepts Erica's offer, but worries about his reputation.
 - He avoids Erica at school because he doesn't know how to respond to her offer.
- What do you think about the way Mathieu's friends are acting?

Key messages

- Consenting means freely accepting an offer made to you (Duquet, Gagnon and Faucher, 2010). Responding to a sexual act or doing something sexual under duress or under pressure, out of fear or in exchange for something is not consenting.
- Consent must be mutual and given by everyone involved in any act of a sexual nature. It cannot be given by a third party (friend or other).
- When it comes to consent, the same criteria apply equally to boys and girls.

3 Based on the teens' responses, discuss each scenario with them and complete their answers using the key messages associated with each situation presented.

4 End the activity by drawing on some of the following ideas.

Consenting to a sexual activity or other request of a sexual nature is not a trivial thing. Everyone must be given a real chance to choose to take part in a sexual activity or to refuse. Feeling forced to do something, whether because someone insists, puts pressure on you or offers some kind of compensation like money or things, is not consenting. Respecting your privacy as well as your mental and physical integrity is worth much more than that.

Sexual relations should be seen as something real, the result of a desire felt by two people coming together and open to one another, sharing in the profoundly intimate act of discovering the other physically. Making light of sex could cause you to either do something you don't really want to do or insist that someone—whether or not you are involved with this person—give in to your demands. Insisting or putting pressure on someone to do something sexual is unacceptable. You also have the right to refuse any sexual request that doesn't feel right to you, and you have the right to change your mind when things aren't going as you would like.

It's okay to want to please others and feel desired. Romantic and sexual relations are much more fulfilling when the two partners respect and care for one another.

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