Let’s Talk
About Sex and Relationships with Guides

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with *Let’s Talk About Sex and Relationships: Advice for Leaders*.

**Background**

Guides are at an age when they are likely to be increasingly aware of how they are growing and changing as individuals, and of their relationships with others. They will be becoming more mature and self-confident and will increasingly be talking, listening and thinking about their feelings and relationships. At school, most Guides will cover a range of topics through SRE (Sex and Relationship Education) and PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education). However, it is worth remembering that Guides of different ages will have access to different information depending on whether they are attending primary, middle or secondary school. Also, young people can be opted out of sex and relationships education at school, so don’t assume they all have a similar level of knowledge.

Guides are likely to learn about sex and relationships issues through a number of sources. These may include:

- parents and carers
- sisters and brothers
- school - SRE and PSHE
- peers and word-of-mouth
- the media - television and magazines
- the internet including social media
- actual life experiences and experimentation.

Some of these sources, such as school education, will provide factual information. However, others (such as the media, their peers and perhaps parents and carers) may provide inaccurate information. Because of this, Guides may be unsure and confused by the amount of often conflicting information that is available to them. As a Leader, you may be approached to explain information or may have to challenge incorrect information that is discussed. It is therefore important that you are able to explain or direct girls to the correct information.

**What can I talk about?**

- Puberty and how the body changes at this time.
Healthy lifestyles, including the benefits of exercise and healthy eating, what affects our mental health and self-esteem and how to make informed choices.

Different types of relationships, including those between families, friends, and married and unmarried heterosexual and same-sex couples.

Sexual orientation, gender identity including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT).

The value of respect, for others and yourself.

Managing emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively.

Resisting pressure to behave in a risky way or pressure to act the same as your peers.

How to ask for help and ensure you are making decisions that are right for you.

How to recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Recognising risks in different situations and then deciding how to behave responsibly, for example judging what kind of physical contact is acceptable or unacceptable.

Understanding of the law, the age of consent and what consent means.

Where and how girls can go about accessing services or providers who can offer advice on contraception - please refer to Girlguiding’s contraception policy in Let’s Talk About Sex and Relationships: Advice for Leaders for more advice on this area.

The emotional and physical effects of pregnancy and abortion - what effect having a child would have on your life, and understanding the responsibilities involved in caring for a child.

Your role

Ask the Guides to set their own rules for a discussion or activity before you begin; examples could include to listen to each other, respect each other, avoid personal comments, and not gossip outside of the session or on social media.

Use the Guides’ existing knowledge as a starting point for your discussions and do not make assumptions about the levels of knowledge or accuracy of information among the group.

If you are unsure about, or do not know the answer to a question, say that you will find out the answer so that you can provide it at your next meeting.

If you are uncomfortable answering a question or providing information on a certain issue, consider referring the Guide or Guides to another trusted source of information. This could be another Leader, or you may want to keep a book or leaflets from reputable organisations and charities on hand for such occasions. Refer to the list of organisations in Let’s Talk About Sex and Relationships: Advice for Leaders.

Guides are likely to have different levels of knowledge or experience and some Guides (and Leaders) may be more sensitive about issues than others.

Consider arranging a 4 (peer-education) session covering topics such as healthy relationships or body confidence which can provide a different positive environment for girls to explore these issues.

Activities

Letting off steam (from Looking at Me)

This lets Guides think about the pressures that we face in everyday life and develop ways to tackle them in a proactive way.

What you need

- Open space
- Sports equipment

What to do

Ask the group to think of different activities that could help deal with strong emotions. These could include:

- doing sports
As a group, choose your three favourite activities and gather any equipment you will need. One at a time, take a minute to think about a time when you really needed to let off steam - how did you feel? Immediately have a go at one of the activities. Keep going until you have all had a chance to try each of the activities. How did you feel and which was the best stress-buster for you?

Discuss with the group what types of pressures they may face in everyday life. How could they use these activities to cope with these pressures?

**No! (from Right Now!)**
This looks at the effects of other people’s actions on happiness and examines unhappy situations caused by them, and ways of dealing with these.

**What to do**
In small groups, act out a set of mini-plays about peer pressure. Choose situations in which the main character would rather say ‘no’ to her friends, boyfriend, girlfriend or partner, and explore how she can or cannot do this. What are the difficulties? How do the friends try to persuade her:

- not to work hard at school
- to watch a scary film
- to give up a friend the group doesn’t like
- to condone or take part in bullying
- to take drugs, drink alcohol or steal
- to engage in sexual activities?

**Talking points**

- Did the characters manage to say ‘no’? If not, why did they let themselves be persuaded?
- Does the group think they would be able to say ‘no’ in a similar real-life situation?
- Who can help them when things get difficult?
- How can our actions make us unhappy?

**Take it further**
After exploring these situations, consider whether the group could do anything to address them - for example, an awareness-raising campaign.

**Roots of Happiness (from Right Now!)**
To help girls think about unhappiness and how it can relate to individual choices.
What to do

Girls work in small groups. Give each group two pieces of paper and ask them to draw a large tree on each piece. Their drawings should show the roots of the tree, the trunk and the branches. On the roots of the first tree, the group should write or draw things they could do that might make them unhappy, such as not taking any exercise, being selfish, smoking or being nasty to people. For each root they should draw a piece of fruit on the tree that shows the result of their behaviour - lack of exercise might make them unfit, smoking might make them ill, being nasty or selfish might result in not having any friends, treating a girlfriend or boyfriend badly may have consequences.

Explain to the groups that they have an opportunity to move to a new behaviour tree. On the roots of the second tree they should write the things they could do to avoid the unhappiness found on the previous tree - keeping fit, being kind and so on. Once again they should draw fruit showing the outcomes of the behaviour.

Talking points

- Can people control their own happiness through the life choices they make?
- Are there times when it is not possible for a person to control their happiness? What would be a positive way to respond to such a situation?
- Are certain aspects of people’s lifestyles determined by families and friends? Do the girls think they influence the lifestyles of their families and friends?

Take it further

How do individual choices affect other people’s happiness? Link these to relationship choices and issues.

Other activity ideas

- Good friends (Me in Mind, www.girlguidingshop.co.uk, order code 6033)
- I’d rather not (Me in Mind)
- Who do I call? (Me in Mind)
- HIV at work (Together We Can, www.girlguidingshop.co.uk, order code 6542)
- Girls in Action: Change the Story has activities around healthy relationships suitable for Guides (www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members’ area > Activities > Activity packs > Girls in Action)
- Family stars (Together We Can)