

THE GROWING YEARS SERIES

Overview

MOE's Growing Years (GY) series is the main co-curricular package for sexuality education. GY is premised on the importance of the family as the basic unit of society, and teaches abstinence as the best choice for adolescents. The topics in GY aim to promote healthy relationships based on love and respect, and are categorised under four main themes: Human Development, Interpersonal Relationships, Sexual Health and Behaviour, and Societal Influences.

GY is developmental in nature, spanning the upper primary to post-secondary (JC/CI) levels. The series comprises of the following packages:

- Upper Primary package "Curious Minds"
- Lower Secondary package "The Teenage Years"
- Upper Secondary package "Sense and Sexuality"
- Post Secondary package "Love Matters"

1. "Curious Minds" (Upper Primary) package

The upper primary years mark the onset of puberty. With better nutrition and improved health care, children are reaching puberty at a younger age and have to grapple with physical, emotional and psychological changes in themselves. The implication is that our children are becoming biologically ready for sexual activity sooner without necessarily having the corresponding cognitive or emotional maturity to modulate their behaviours. Easy access to information via the internet also means that unless properly guided, our young may find it a challenge to make appropriate choices on matters of sexuality.

"Curious Minds" is a response to these challenges. It is designed to underscore the importance of character development and health. It consists of a multi-media package with interactive games, role-plays to engage pupils in learning facts about sexuality.

The topics covered include the reproductive system and anatomy, the changes involved in puberty, building healthy relationships, the importance of family, attitudes and values towards physical intimacy, legal issues relating to sexual abuse and exhibitionism, and constructive ways to express affection guided by society's norms and values.

2. “The Teenage Years” (Lower Secondary) package

The values and attitudes of our youth towards sexuality are increasingly being shaped by their peers, exposure to the media, popular culture and the internet. Adolescence is a complex stage in life as the adolescent attempts to find his/her own identity and often struggles with new social relationships.

The focus of “The Teenage Years” for Lower Secondary students is to guide adolescents on issues relating to the building of self-esteem, and to help them understand and value the following:

- a. the underlying value for healthy relationships is respect;
- b. abstinence as the best option for teens;
- c. the possible consequences of sex outside of marriage;
- d. sexual reproduction in human beings;
- e. the legal issues pertaining to sexual behaviour;
- f. how certain public displays of affection can affect others;
- g. the influence of the media and the internet; and
- h. how they can seek help, including professional help, when necessary.

3. “Sense and Sexuality” (Upper Secondary) package

Middle adolescence (generally from 15 – 17 years old)¹ can be a turbulent period for adolescents. The gap between physical and emotional/cognitive maturity may result in a tendency to act on impulse, experiment with various activities (including sexual activities), sometimes without understanding the unpleasant consequences that may arise from such experimentation.

The need for peer acceptance can be overwhelmingly strong, and hinder one’s ability to act responsibly. Given the pressures faced by the middle adolescent from within themselves and from peers, it is important to build a strong sense of self-worth, personal convictions and an understanding of the possible consequences of sexual behaviour.

Through “Sense & Sexuality”, upper secondary students will have opportunity to build character, expand their understanding and repertoire of skills to deal with various issues related to sexuality, which are of prime concern at this age. These include:

¹ Age Limits defined by Department of Health & Human Services. Centres for Disease Control & Prevention.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/child/middleadolescence15-17.htm>

- a. Gender differences between males and females;
- b. A better understanding of relationships;
- c. Setting boundaries;
- d. Commitment in relationships;
- e. Understanding the influence of the media on sexuality;
- f. Communication and relationship building;
- g. Decision-making and assertiveness skills to say no to sex;
- h. Discernment skills; and
- i. Help-seeking behaviour such as coping with break-ups and rejection.

4. “Love Matters” (Post Secondary) package

The focus for “Love Matters” is on issues in relationships.

Relating with peers is a major component in the lives of JC/CI students, who spend an average of half to two-thirds of their waking hours with their peers. The focus of the Post-Secondary package is on Interpersonal Relationships, with themes of Human Development, Sexual Health and Behaviour, and Societal Influences woven into the main focus on relationships.

The main objectives are to challenge students to:

- a. examine their beliefs about relationships, cast off self-defeating and irrational beliefs and embrace healthy ones;
- b. examine their behaviours in relationships in the light of their choices and consequences, and replace negative behaviours with positive alternatives; and
- c. develop personal qualities in themselves that they desire in their friends and partners.

The overall desired outcomes are that students would be optimistic about life and relationships, respect the rights and dignity of others, and consider abstinence as the best option for themselves as teenagers.