Letting Our Power Glow

Activities to build women’s power
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Readings

Learning to be girls and boys, women and men
Violence Against Women and Girls
Gender and Violence
Responding to GBV
Communication – an important and empowering skill
Direct versus indirect communication styles
Talking to your partner about sex and sexual health
There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women

The purpose of this resource book Letting Our Power Glow is to enable and afford shelter residents the opportunity to grow emotionally and psychologically while simultaneously living in an environment safe from intimate partner violence so that the shelter residents are able to plan and prepare themselves for their lives after the shelter experience.

The exercises in the manual are also aimed at inspiring women to develop a greater understanding of themselves through introspection and thereby creating a more profound process of change.

The rationale for this resource manual developed when the National Shelter Movement (NSM) executives were visiting shelters for abused women in various provinces. We realised that in several shelters women were not fully occupied during their residence/stay at shelters and were also not presented with opportunities to heal and find closure. Ultimately the experience of sheltering needs to provide holistic healing and preparation for their lives ahead.

The conceptualisation and planning for the resource book began in 2017. It was initially envisaged that all nine provinces would be included but due to funding constraints we had to limit it to four provinces, namely KwaZulu Natal, the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Mpumalanga.

The process of the manual development included hiring a consultant who prepared the first draft. Following this, members of the NSM were invited to review the manual and make their input, after which a session was held with women at a shelter to test out the manual. Thereafter facilitators were trained in all shelters in the four provinces.

We would like to thank all the shelter representatives in different provinces for availing themselves for the training. We would also like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the National Department of Social Development for availing the funding to the NSM. We also thank Shamim Meer for her consistent commitment in assisting us to further the empowerment of women whose lives have been affected by intimate partner violence.

Zubeda Dangor, Joy Lange & Fisani Mahlangu
Executives: National Shelter Movement of South Africa (NSM)
Getting Started

Please read this section before you start!

In this section we cover:
• The aim and content of this book
• Guidelines on the role of the facilitator
• Guidelines for planning a session
• Taking care of Mind-Body-Spirit
The overall aim of this resource book is to build the power of women in shelters to take charge of their lives so that they may lead happy and healthy lives.

Who the book is for

The book is written for shelter staff with the expectation that they will facilitate the activities with groups of women or individual women in shelters. A group may be as few as five women, or as many as twenty. Group engagement with the activities allows women to share, support and learn from each other. Individual women may complete the questionnaires, read the stories, and engage in reflection on the questions posed in each activity, with the facilitation of shelter staff. The role of the facilitator is important in creating and holding a safe space for reflection, and is elaborated on in the following pages.

The activities

The activities in this book are drawn from a range of sources which are acknowledged separately under each activity. The activities do not have to be done in the order in which they appear in this book. A facilitator can choose from the list of activities depending on the needs of the group or individual and on what will interest and inspire the group or individual. The activities are grouped into four sections.

The four sections are:

Building the power within me

Often when we experience difficulties in our relationships we are made to feel that we are nothing and we need support to realise we are each unique, special and have the power within us to take charge of our lives. These activities focus on building inner strength, self-confidence, self-esteem and encourage self-care.

The power of knowing what I value and want in my relationships with others

The majority of women come to shelters because they have experienced difficulties in their relationships with intimate partners. These difficulties may have their roots in earlier forms of relationships and they can negatively affect how we relate to other important people in our lives. Often we may have been placed in situations
where we respond to the needs of others and don’t ask what it is we want in a relationship. The activities in this section encourage women to reflect on what they want in their relationships with family, friends and with romantic partners. They encourage reflection on what one wants in a romantic partner, and whether one wants a long-term partner in the first place. They encourage reflection on what one is prepared to accept in a romantic relationship and how to deal with problems in a romantic relationship.

The power to communicate clearly and assertively

Especially because women are expected to meet the needs of others and are not expected to have needs of their own, we do not learn to say or even think about what we need. Women may often find it difficult to say clearly what we want - for example, that you want a cup of tea when you arrive at a relative’s house. It may also be difficult to say what you do not want, for example, that you do not want to eat what someone prepared for you. This is carried through into relationships where speaking up can be difficult even when our physical or emotional safety is threatened. The activities in this section help women to appreciate and practice assertive communication, that is communication which is honest and direct, making yourself clear but without aggressiveness.

The power to have healthy and happy sexual relationships

Sex in particular is something most of us find really difficult to talk about. Not being able to communicate clearly about sex with a sexual partner can lead to a woman giving in to her partner without thinking of her own needs. The activities in this section encourage reflection on the joys and problems with sex. The activities encourage practicing ways of starting conversations about sex with a sexual partner in order that we can enjoy sex that is pleasurable and free from infection, unwanted pregnancy and abuse.

Mind–body–spirit

We have included mind-body-spirit care practices which can help to release difficult emotions such as sadness, pain, and anger which can surface as women reflect and share experiences. Facilitators are encouraged to draw on these practices in their sessions.

The readings

We have included a few readings for the facilitators to draw on as they engage with women in the shelters. The readings provide a broader view of violence and abuse and highlight that these are not just the problem of one woman alone. The readings highlight that these problems are linked to a system which sees women as inferior and subordinate and men as superior and in power over women. We learn our place as women and men from an early age. As individuals we can unlearn these messages through things such as assertive communication. We can build our power as individual women and we can work together with other women to claim our place in the world as full human beings and equals.

The Guidelines

Before starting on any of the activities it is important to read through:

Guidelines on the role of the facilitator
Guidelines for planning a session with a group
Taking care of Mind-Body-Spirit
Guidelines on the role of the facilitator

The activities work best when there is a facilitator to lead the group through the activities. In most cases the facilitator will be a social worker, auxiliary social worker or manager at the shelter.

The facilitator prepares for the session ahead of time. Preparation would involve

- choosing the activity or activities the group or individual will work through on a particular day
- reading through the activity to become familiar with its aims and steps
- making sure the materials needed are available – such as pens, paper or photocopies

The facilitator helps the group or individual to work through the steps and to keep focused.

When working with a group the facilitator encourages all group members to participate and learn from each other. The model of learning in this resource book is based on the idea that each group member brings knowledge and experiences that she can share with the group, and that all are equals. This is the opposite of the model of learning based on the idea that a teacher has all the knowledge and that the students are empty vessels to be filled.

The facilitator makes sure that seating is arranged in a way that enables people to relate to each other easily as equals. Sitting in a circle where all can see each other, and are on the same level is a good arrangement.

The facilitator helps create a safe, caring non-judgmental space where people listen deeply to each other, support each other, and help build each other. The facilitator should make clear that whatever is shared stays in the group. An important ground rule should be confidentiality among group members.

The facilitator takes care to set this tone in her opening session – the welcome, introductions, setting the ground rules, and throughout the session.

The facilitator helps to keep time, while allowing each person in the group to share their ideas. The timings suggested for the steps in each activity in this book are estimates. With a small group, you may need less time than that estimated. If you have a large group you may need more time. The time a group needs will also depend on whether
group members are reluctant to share or more willing to share.

It is important for the facilitator to make sure that all in the group are following the discussion and are gaining from each step of an activity. The facilitator tries to keep in touch with the emotions that surface in the group. While the activities are meant to build power and strengthen the women in the group, they will also bring up difficult emotions. The facilitator needs to be aware of such feelings if and when they arise. Group members should not be pushed to share experiences if they are feeling emotional. The facilitator can stop the activity at any time to release emotions through some of the mind-body-spirit activities which are included in this section.
Before planning a session the facilitator needs to get agreement on the length of time of the session. It may be that a group will meet in the evening after supper for two hours, or it may be that a group will meet during the day for four hours. The facilitator then plans the programme for that session.

Whatever the length of time each programme should have the following:

- An opening with welcome and introductions to create a space where everyone feels welcome and safe. This could take 20 to 30 minutes depending on how many people are in the group.

- One or more activities, which the facilitator will choose, based on the facilitator’s view of what the group needs, what may interest and inspire the group, and on the time available. The aim and an estimated length of time is given for each activity. If the group is meeting for two hours it might be best to choose one activity of around 60 minutes. If meeting for four hours you could choose three activities one of 90 minutes, one of 60 minutes and one of 30 minutes. It is better to overestimate your time than to run out of time. If you finish early this also gives time for the group to spend the extra minutes chatting informally and getting to know each other better.

- A closing session for which you should leave around 30 minutes.

Here are some ideas for how to open, run and close a session.

**Opening: Welcome, introductions and creating a safe space**

The purpose of the opening is to create a safe and caring space. The facilitator makes people feel comfortable so that they can share in a relaxed manner, and where no one feels judged.

**Welcome and Tai Chi**

The facilitator welcomes group members and takes the group through ten minutes of Tai Chi. These movements help to relieve stress and bring the group together. They are part of mind-body-spirit healing work and have many benefits, as we explain on page 16-19.

**Introductions, expectations and concerns**

The facilitator then asks each person to share

- her name
- what she expects from the session and any concerns she may have about the session
After listening to all group members the facilitator summarises the expectations and concerns, and says if these can be addressed in this session.

**Ground Rules**
Next, the facilitator asks group members to suggest ground rules (e.g. confidentiality, turning cell phones off, to be supportive of each other, to appreciate each other’s point of view, not be judgemental)

**Leading the group through an activity**
The facilitator leads the group through the activity. She helps the group keep time, while being aware that each step might take the group more or less time than the time estimated. Some participants might be quick, others may be slow, and the quicker may need to wait for the slower to complete. All need to be given a chance to get into the activity and benefit from it.

**Closing**
How group members leave an activity or session is important. While our aim is to build their power and capacities the activity might surface difficult emotions and we don’t want to have people leave in an unhappy state. Ways of closing can include summing up, asking people how they are feeling, singing a song, or closing with finger holds, or Tai Chi movements in the mind–body–spirit activities on the following pages. Examples of session plans include:

**Example of a three-hour session**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Session</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>Tai Chi (10 mins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.10</td>
<td>Opening: Welcome, Introductions, Ground Rules, Creating a safe space (30 mins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.40</td>
<td>Body Mapping (90 mins) (page 26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.10</td>
<td>The power within that keeps us safe and strong (30 mins) (page 28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.40</td>
<td>Assess the session and closing (20 mins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>CLOSE followed by lunch or snacks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example of a two-hour session**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>Tai Chi (10 mins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.10</td>
<td>Opening: Welcome, Introductions, Ground Rules, Creating a safe space (30 mins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.40</td>
<td>My Relationships (60 mins) (page 38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.40</td>
<td>Assess the session and closing (20 mins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>CLOSE followed by snacks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tai Chi sequence before the opening of the session

Regular practice of tai chi can bring healing and harmony to the body, mind and spirit. Tai Chi helps to release stress and rebalance energy while helping us let go of tension, negativity and body pain. Relax during the movements. Allow your body to move freely and fully. Enjoy the beauty and grace of your body.

Side to side

Swinging gently from side to side about five times, breathe in the energy of the earth and breathe out and release stress trauma, negative thoughts and negative body feelings. Gently come back to Stillness. Place your hands beneath your navel. Breathe in. Rest for a moment in that spacious place deep within yourself. Feel connected to your centre.

Rocking movement

Let your hands go to your sides. Bring your hands up to shoulder height, palms up, and come onto the tips of your toes. Rock back on your heels while turning your palms down and gently stroke the air as you bring your hands down to your side. Feel that your feet have long roots and are solid. Do this around five times.
Giving and Receiving Circle of Light

Left foot forward, knees slightly bent, back straight, move your hands in a circle from left to right, giving and receiving a circle of light. Fill yourself up so you are able to give. Do this four or five times then come back to centre. Right foot forward, hands from right to left in a circle filling ourselves and connecting to those we are with, family, friends, people around the world giving and receiving. Do this four or five times.

Globe of light

Form a globe of light and like a child toss that globe and receive it. Play with people in the group. Feel the lightness of your own spirit as you toss and receive the ball from people around you with graciousness and joy.

Shower of light

Left foot forward, hands raised to the heavens, bring healing energy into your body, mind and spirit. Open yourself to be healed, breathing out and letting go of the past. Do this about five times. Come back to centre. Right foot forward, bring healing and blessing and renewal to the larger world – our family, friends and community, places in the world where there is war and violence. As I heal my own being I am able to bring a greater sense of healing to those around me. Do this about five times.
Wise being – Honouring our gifts

Left foot forward, hands at eye level, moving in circles in front of your face. Go into your heart and remember who you are. There is no one like yourself. You are a unique being. Honour your gifts and your joys. Also honour your challenges and things you don’t like about yourself. This teaches us so much wisdom. Do this about five times. With your right foot forward look at your friends and those you are practicing Tai Chi with, we truly honour the gift of each person and we try to strengthen and empower the challenges for each person around us.

Letting go

Left foot out. With your hands push away as you breathe out all that is stuck or wounded within you. Breathe in and with your hands bring towards you peace and healing. Breathing out release and open your heart to be healed. Do this about five times. Right foot out, thinking of your family and friends, people around the world where there is so much suffering and dying. Push away what wounds us and bring in what heals. Do this about five times.

Capacitar Tai Chi: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8QgW7-xXxg&t=0s&index=10&list=PLgZ-faPmTW-YatlhKb1NpT-exinzFbNkzz
**Finger Holds (10 Minutes)**

Emotion is like a wave of energy that moves through the body. Often with strong emotions the energy of the body becomes blocked. Through each finger runs a channel of energy that corresponds to the different emotional states (see image below). The finger-holds are a helpful tool to use in daily life. In difficult or challenging situations when tears, anger or anxiety arise, the fingers may be held to bring peace, focus and calm so that the appropriate response or action may be taken. You may also do this before going to sleep to release the problems of the day and to bring deep peace to body and mind. The practice may be done on oneself or on another person.

Gently hold each finger with the opposite hand for two to five minutes until you feel a steady, rhythmic pulse. This will help move and drain blocked energy, and bring back a sense of balance and harmony to the body. They can work with either hand. Deep breathing while holding each finger can also help to bring the body-mind-spirit to a state of peace and harmony.

As you hold each finger, breathe in deeply; recognize and acknowledge the strong or disturbing feelings or emotions you hold inside yourself. Breathe out slowly and let go. Imagine the feelings draining out your finger into the earth. Breathe in a sense of harmony, strength and healing. And breathe out slowly, releasing past feelings and problems. Often, as you hold each finger, you can feel a pulsing sensation as the energy and feelings move and become balanced.

This is something that you can do at any time, when you feel stress, anger, anxiety, or any other strong emotion. It only takes a few minutes. This is a simple tool for self-care, and helps us realise that we carry the tools for self-care within ourselves. This exercise can be very useful following a challenging or emotional session, to help release emotions and shift the group into a space where they feel more hopeful and empowered.

The holds

This practice of simple energy holds may be done on oneself or on another person for anxiety, emotional or physical pain, traumatic memories, strong emotions, such as anger or fear, insomnia and for deep relaxation. Through the energy of our hands we have the power to bring peace, harmony and healing to body, mind and emotions. Hold in mind and heart a deep sense of peace, light and spaciousness as you do these holds. Each hold can be done for several minutes, accompanied by deep abdominal breathing to promote greater release. The touch is very light, and if someone fears touch because of pain or their history of abuse, the holds may be done off the body working in the energy field. Always ask permission when you do any practice involving touch of another person.

Halo Hold
Hold your hands on either side, a few centimeters away from the head.

Head Hold
One hand lightly holds the head high on the forehead, the other hand holds the base of the skull. The energy of the hands connects with parts of the brain related to memories and emotions.
To finish, Lightly brush off the energy field with the hands. The tops of the feet may also be held to ground the person.

Crown Hold
Thumbs of both hands together touch the crown center at the top of head. Fingertips softly touch the area across the forehead. Along with deep breathing this hold is used to promote emotional release.

Shoulder Hold
The hands rest lightly on the shoulders, the place in the body related to anxiety, excess baggage or the burdens of life.

Heart Hold
One hand rests across sternum high on chest. The other hand touches the upper back behind the heart. The heart area often holds emotional pain, wounds of the past, grief and resentment. Breathe deeply and imagine the heart pain draining down into the earth. You can also do this hold several inches off the body respectful of the person’s boundaries.

To finish, Lightly brush off the energy field with the hands. The tops of the feet may also be held to ground the person.

from the Capacitar Emergency Kit: http://www.capacitar.org/emergency_kits.html
Activities to build the power within yourself

Note: You can do these activities in any order

The main aim of these activities is to build your power through building your confidence and your self-esteem.

The activities aim to help you realise that you have the power within yourself to keep yourself strong.

A big part of building your power is taking care of yourself and making sure you make the time to rest and do the things you enjoy.
1. River of life: Sharing important moments in your life

Aim: To share important moments of your life
To reflect on your own life and get to know others in the group

Method: Drawing and discussion

Materials: A large piece of paper, crayons, markers or pens in different colours

Time: 90 minutes

1. The facilitator introduces the activity (5 mins)
The facilitator explains that the aim of this exercise is for participants to share important moments of their life, and reflect on their own life through a drawing of their life’s journey. Participants will have 15 minutes to do the drawing. The facilitator asks participants to think of their lives as a river. The facilitator notes:

A river starts up in the mountains and makes it way to the sea
Along the way there are islands, rocks, sand banks, in the river
On the side of the river are shaded areas, grassy areas and dry areas
In parts the river moves fast, there may be waterfalls and rapids
In parts the river moves slowly, it may form ponds and off shoots
In times of heavy rain the river may overflow its banks
Along the way the river is joined by other streams
There may be the danger of snakes, crocodiles
There may be beautiful birds and fish

2. Participants draw their river of life (15 minutes)
Each participant works on her drawing showing important moments in her river of life.

3. Participants share their drawings and journeys (40 mins for a group of 5)
Each participant shares with the group the key moments in her drawing. Each is given 5 to 8 minutes to share.

4. The facilitator leads a discussion with group members (10 minutes)
The facilitator asks the group to note similar and different experiences shared. The facilitator notes that life experiences may include pain and joy – they show our strengths in overcoming difficulties. We often learn of strengths we did not know we had.
5. Close (20 minutes)
The facilitator invites group members to each say how they are feeling about this sharing. The facilitator then introduces finger holds (see page x) and shows participants how to do these holds to help ease difficult emotions.

Adapted from trainings.350.org https://trainings.350.org/resource/river-of-life/
2. Body Map: Sharing emotions and experiences

**Aim:** To reflect on and share emotions and experiences

**Method:** Drawing and discussion

**Materials:** Felt pens and a large sheet of paper – one sheet for each participant, large enough for an outline of each one’s body. (This can be brown paper or trestle paper)

**Time:** 90 minutes

1. **Introducing the activity (5 minutes)**
   The facilitator explains that the aim of the activity is for each participant to share her emotions and experiences through making a life size drawing of her body. Participants will help each other in pairs – one lies down on a large piece of paper and her partner traces the outline of her body on the paper. Each participant will then draw symbols on the places in the body where they feel deep emotions. Include positive emotions such as love, joy, happiness, thankfulness, and negative emotions such as anger, pain, emptiness – it is up to the participant to choose the emotions she wants to share.

2. **Participants draw life size outlines in pairs and fill in emotions (15 mins)**
   Participants help each other in pairs to draw a life size outline. Each then fills in the emotions in her drawing.

3. **Participants share their drawings in the big group (40 minutes for a group of 5)**
   Each participant shares her drawing, the emotions and the experiences linked to the emotions she felt (hurt, anger, love, happiness). Other participants listen but should not comment on the presentations.

4. **Participants share in pairs (10 mins)**
   Participants share in pairs one thing that hurts them and one thing that makes them happy. The person who is listening should not offer opinions or advice, but simply listen openly and with compassion. This is an opportunity to engage in deep and focused listening to someone else – and to understand how even a little support is enough to release pain.

5. **Summing up and close (20 mins)**
   The facilitator asks group members:
   How they you feeling? What was helpful about this activity? What was difficult?
   To ease difficult emotions that might have surfaced the facilitator could get the group to practice the finger holds on page 19. This activity could also be followed by the activity on page 28 “We all have the power within us to keep us strong and safe,” to help build positive energy.
3. We all have the power within us to keep us strong and safe

Aim: To recognise that we all have power within us to keep us strong and safe
Method: Individual reflection and group discussion
Time: 30 mins
Note: Doing this activity at the end of the day is a strong and positive closing exercise

1. The facilitator introduces the aim and asks about the powers within (5 mins)
The facilitator explains that we all have the power within us to keep us strong and safe, but we don’t always recognise our powers. She asks each participant to spend a few minutes thinking of 3 to 5 powers she has within herself, and that she has been able to use in overcoming difficulties she has faced.

2. Participants reflect individually on their powers (5 mins).

3. Participants then share their powers with the group (15 mins)
The facilitator asks participants to share their powers.

4. The facilitator notes it is important to remind ourselves we are strong and have power within us (5 mins)
When all participants have spoken, the facilitator explains that this exercise is: to remind you of how strong you are, and how much you have within you. So often we hear about power that is scary and destructive; this exercise is about the power to keep ourselves strong and safe.

http://www.integratedsecuritymanual.org/exercise/i-have-the-power
4. What stops me doing things that bring me pleasure?

Aim: To help us to think about activities we enjoy, and what we need to do to make and take time to experience these activities in our daily lives
Method: Filling out a questionnaire, reflection, discussion
Materials: Questionnaire copied or written on large sheet of paper, pens, paper
Time: 40 minutes
Note: Doing this activity at the end of the day is a strong and positive closing exercise

1. The facilitator asks participants to fill out the questionnaire individually (15 mins)
Participants take ten to fifteen minutes on their own to fill out the questionnaire. If you are not able to photocopy the questionnaire, write up the questions on a large piece of paper so that all can see this. Then each one writes down the answers on a sheet of paper.

2. Share with the group (20 mins)
In a group participants share
• How they felt answering the questions.
• Were they surprised by their answers?
• What surprised them?
• Was it easy to come up with 10 things that give you pleasure?
• Did many people find that they no longer do the things that bring them pleasure?
• What were some of the things that kept them from doing these things?
• What can they do to make sure they take some time out for pleasure in their lives

3. Summing up (5 mins)
The facilitator notes: making time for pleasure requires each of us to make an effort. There are often obstacles in our way. At times, it could be that we put work before pleasure. And that our time is taken up by so many things we have to do for others that we have little time for the things that give us pleasure. It could also be that you yourself and others around you do not think these things that give you pleasure are worth spending time on. We may also need to change our perception of our self, to see oneself as someone deserving of pleasure. Never forget pleasure is a key strength.
Things that give me pleasure

List 10 different activities that you enjoy and that give you pleasure:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

When was the last time you did or enjoyed something that gave you pleasure and how often do you do so?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

What prevented you from enjoying these pleasures more often?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

List three practical, achievable changes you can make to increase pleasure in your life:

1. _______________________________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________________________

3. _______________________________________________________________________
5. What stops me resting more and what can I do about this?

**Aim:** To assess the quality and quantity of rest in our daily lives

**Method:** Filling out a questionnaire, reflection, discussion

**Materials:** Questionnaire copied or written on large sheet of paper, pens, paper

**Time:** 30 mins

1. **The facilitator asks participants to fill out the questionnaire on the next page.** (5 mins)

2. **Each participant fills out the ‘Right to Rest’ questionnaire individually.** (10 mins)

3. **Participants share in the group (15 mins)**
   The facilitator invites participants to share how they felt doing the exercise, and some steps they will take to improve their pattern of rest.

4. **The facilitator sums up with the following points (5 mins)**
   Rest is essential if your body is to function properly. Rest helps you develop a different perspective of yourself and the world. When we think of the time we actually spend resting we realise that most of our time is spent working. This leaves us exhausted, stressed and even depressed. We are not able to recuperate the energy we need for our daily living.
Questionnaire

1. Answer the following questions to reflect on your pattern of rest and sleep:

Do you sleep long enough for your body to recuperate energy?

Do you think you could make changes, such as to your routine or habits, that would help you feel more relaxed when you go to bed and help you to fall asleep more easily and rest better?

Do you rest sufficiently when you feel tired, exhausted or sick?

2. What stops you from sleeping more and resting more?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. List three changes that you can make to improve your pattern of sleep and rest.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

6. What I want from life / my goals

Aim: To think about your goals – what you want from life
Method: Reflecting and writing individually, discussion
Materials: Paper and pens
Time: 60 minutes

1. Introducing the activity (5 mins)
The facilitator explains that it is very important to have goals in life. It is also important to think through how we can achieve our goals and what may prevent us from doing so. The facilitator then asks each person to think about their goals in their family life, work life, in relation to their education, and social life and to write these down.

2. Participants think about their goals and write these down (10 mins)
Each person thinks on her own on what she wants to achieve in four areas of her life: family life, work life, education and social life and writes this down.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I want to achieve</th>
<th>What I want to achieve</th>
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<tr>
<td>In my <strong>Family life</strong></td>
<td>In my <strong>Work life</strong></td>
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<td>What I want to achieve</td>
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<td>In my <strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>In my <strong>Social life</strong></td>
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3. Participants share their goals with the group (10 mins)
The facilitator invites each participant to share with the group what she wants to achieve in each area of life. The facilitator writes these up on a large piece of paper (so that all can see) grouping together goals that are similar.

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<tr>
<th>What we want to achieve</th>
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<td>What we want to achieve</td>
<td>What we want to achieve</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social life</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. What will enable us to meet our goals? (10 mins)
The facilitator leads the group in discussion on what will enable them to achieve their goals in each of the four areas. The facilitator writes up the main points on a large piece of paper.

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<tr>
<th>What will enable us to meet our goals</th>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Social life</td>
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</table>

5. What may prevent us meeting our goals and what can we do about this? (15 mins)
The facilitator leads the group in reflecting on the following for each goal:
What could prevent a person from meeting this goal?
How can a person overcome this?
The facilitator writes the main points of the discussion on a large piece of paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal (write up one goal)</th>
<th>‘What could prevent a person from meeting this goal?’</th>
<th>‘How can obstacles be overcome?’</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Goal (write up a second goal)</td>
<td>‘What could prevent a person from meeting this goal?’</td>
<td>‘How can obstacles be overcome?’</td>
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</table>

6. Sum up and close (10 minutes)
Group members share what they learnt from this exercise. The facilitator notes that it is important to have goals and to be clear about how best to achieve these.

Loving and caring relationships give us the nourishment we need to grow and enjoy life. Toxic and troubled relationships do just the opposite. They make us feel like we are worthless. There is no enjoyment, no growth that can come with toxic and troubled relationships.

These activities help us think about

- the things we value in our relationships
- unequal power in relationships
- what to do when we are faced with troubled or toxic relationships.

The power to know what I value and want in my relationships

The power to end a relationship in trouble
7. My relationships and what I value

Aim: To reflect on our different relationships and the things we value in ourselves and in close relationships
Method: Drawing and discussion
Materials: Poster paper, felt pens or crayons
Time: 60 minutes

1. Introducing the activity (10 mins)
The facilitator asks each participant to make a list of the meaningful relationships in her life. The relationships can be family, friends, neighbours, teachers, religious leaders or anyone else. Each one then:
- draws a diagram of four circles from small to large (the smallest circle in the centre and the largest circle taking up the whole page, with each circle an equal distance from each other)
- writes her own name in the smallest circle
- writes the names of those who closest to her in the next circle
- writes the names of those who are not as close in the other circles with the names of those who are the least close to her in the outermost circle
2. Each participant works on her own on her list and drawing (10 minutes)

3. Participants share (15 mins)
Each participant explains her drawing to other members of the group. The group then discusses:
• Did everyone list the same kinds of relationships?
• Were there differences? What was different?
• Did everyone place their family members, friends, neighbours, teachers, religious leaders, or others in the same circle or in different circles?
• What do group members value in the people they feel closest to? (Eg: honesty, respect, sharing, caring, trusting, fun, safe, understanding, reliable, interesting, loving). Write these on a large sheet of paper for all to see.

The group shares the qualities they value in their relationships and which they have written up. Are these also qualities people value in themselves?

4. Participants work on their own (10 mins)
The facilitator asks each participant to work on her own. Each one:
• Chooses one person in her diagram she would like to move closer toward the inner circle. She then picks one word that describes what she values in that person.
• Thinks of one or two words that other people would say describes herself
• Celebrates a quality she values highly in herself or in others, by writing it out with decorative letters
• Thinks about what that quality means to herself

5. Summing up and close (10 mins)
The facilitator invites participants to look at the words people have celebrated in their drawings and take a few minutes to appreciate the drawings and the values celebrated.

8. Learning our place and what to expect as women

Aim: To reflect on how we learn our place and what to expect as women
Method: Individual reflection, discussion, reading
Time: 60 minutes

1. Thinking on one’s own (5 minutes)
The facilitator asks each participant to spend five minutes thinking on her own on:
• When did you first become aware that you were a girl?
• Who made you aware? How did they make you aware – what did they say or do?
• How did you feel about this?

2. Sharing in pairs (10 minutes)
In pairs, each participant has a turn to share her experience while her partner listens.

3. Sharing with all participants (20 minutes)
The facilitator invites participants to share in the group the main things they learnt from sharing in pairs about the following:
• Who made us aware?
• How did they make us aware?
• Did we feel good or bad about ourselves as girls and women?
• Did we feel restricted as girls and women?
• How do our early experiences affect our relationships with boyfriends and husbands.

4. Read the note “Learning our place and what to expect as women” (15 mins)
The facilitator asks someone from the group to volunteer to read out the note “Learning our place and what to expect as women”. If no one volunteers the facilitator reads the note. The group then discusses if it is possible to have a good, happy relationship when women are seen as inferior to men and as people who can be controlled by men? How can we make sure women are treated as equals?

5. Sum up and Close (10 mins)
Each participant shares one thing she has learnt in this session that she will take into her everyday life.
Learning our place and what to expect as women

We learn at a very young age our place as girls and what we can expect from others. We are taught by our families and communities that we must do the housework and that we must serve our brothers. We learn that our brothers can play as much as they like and don’t have to do housework. We learn that we cannot expect our brothers to serve us a cup of tea or a meal. We learn this in our families from those who take care of us when we are young.

Later we learn our place and what we can expect at school, in the community, from religion, from culture, in our workplaces.

We learn women are of less importance than men, that women get less resources than men (less education, less money, less skills, no land, no house), and that the rightful leaders are men.

We learn that our place is to serve others and help others to shine, that as women we should not shine. If we are too intelligent we are told “be careful, you won’t get a husband”.

Girls learn that we should expect to have little control over our own bodies. Many girls are brought up to accept that men are entitled to be violent or that violence is an expression of a man’s love. Some people even blame the victim rather than holding a man responsible for being violent.

Men also get messages from an early age – that they are superior and should be in control of women and that women are there to serve them and take their orders.

We take these messages as normal and natural. We don’t question these messages. But when we become aware that we are human beings just as men are human beings we realise we can do many of the things men do and that we can also be leaders. We realise we have the right to equal wages, to land, housing, and the right to control over our bodies and to be free of violence in our relationships with our husbands and boyfriends.
9. Inequalities such as age and gender affect relationships

Aim: To be more aware about inequalities between people and how these inequalities can affect love relationships.
Method: Reading stories and drawing lessons about power from the stories.
Materials: Photocopies of stories for groups.
Time: 60 minutes.

1. Inequalities in our communities and society (10 minutes)
The facilitator explains that inequality and power differences between people can affect our relationships. She asks participants to think about the forms of inequality that exist in our society among different groups - e.g. racism, gender, age, class, ethnicity, sexual preference, and physical ability. After a brief discussion participants work in groups.

2. Reading a story and reflecting in small groups (20 minutes)
In groups of five participants read one story, and answer the questions below the story.

3. Groups share in the big group and comment (20 minutes)
The facilitator invites one member from each group to read their story and shares her group’s answers to the questions, while members of other groups listen and comment briefly.

4. Summing up and Close (10 minutes)
The facilitator notes some of the key things that came up about how differences in age, gender and other social relations of power affect relationships.
He influenced me a lot

I was attracted to my boyfriend because he was older. He seemed mysterious and exciting. We fell in love and now we spend most of our time together. I am 18 and he is 30. I really like listening to the stories he tells me about his experiences. When we go out, he decides where we go because he pays and because he knows all of these great places. He has influenced me a lot. I was never interested in sports, but because he loves football I spend a lot of time watching football with him.

After we had known each other for a few months, he said that he wanted to make love to me. I hesitated, but I agreed because I thought he might leave me if I refused. He’s older, after all, and experienced. These days, I hardly see my friends. They complain that I have changed. I miss my friends and sometimes I think about how I used to study more and how much I liked reading. But, you know, I just think that’s what happens when you are in love.

Questions:

1. Was there an inequality in this relationship? What was the inequality?
2. Who was more powerful in this relationship? What made this person more powerful? How did this person assert their more powerful position?
3. Who had the less powerful position in this relationship? What made this person less powerful? How was this less powerful situation expressed?
4. How does this inequality affect each of these two people? How does this inequality affect their relationship?
5. What can each of these people do to lessen the inequality in their relationship?
She really does not know much about the world

When I turned 35, I thought I better get married. By now I had completed University, had a job and could support a family. I was working in the city but I wanted a girl from the village. When I went home to visit my mother, I decided to look for a wife. From all the young women I met, the one I really liked was 20, and a quiet person. She had finished primary school, but had never left the village. She agreed to marry me. I told her that she would have to live with my mother until I could bring her to the city. After our first child was born, I did not want her to use contraceptives, so I used withdrawal. I do my best to provide for her and our child. She still lives with my mother and never creates problems or says that she needs anything. I love her, but there are things that I can’t talk with her about. Some things she just wouldn’t be able to understand. She really doesn’t know much about the world.

Questions:
1. Was there an inequality in this relationship? What was the inequality?
2. Who was more powerful in this relationship? What made this person more powerful? How did this person express their more powerful position?
3. Who had the less powerful position in this relationship. What made this person less powerful? How was this less powerful situation expressed?
4. How does this inequality affect each of these two people? How does this inequality affect their relationship?
5. What can each of these people do to lessen the inequality in their relationship?

The rugby team guy

Last year I started going out with a guy from our village rugby team. Things started getting serious between us. One night at a meeting at the village hall, he signalled for me to meet him behind the hall. My mother and father were there, but I knew that they would think I was with the other girls. So he and I slipped away and went for a walk into the bushes behind the hall. When we went into the bush we started kissing and then he started to feel my breasts. I knew we were going to have sex. I didn’t really want to. I just wanted to talk with him and kiss and nothing else, but he wanted to, and I had gone with him so we ended up having sex. I cried later because I knew I had disrespected my parents and that I had just lost my virginity. I knew about condoms and that they can prevent a girl from becoming pregnant and getting diseases, but at the time I was thinking about other things, like how my parents would feel if they knew what I was doing. I was more worried about the fact that I was losing my virginity. When I got pregnant, my parents were furious and they told me I must not see my boyfriend anymore.

Questions:
1. Was there an inequality in this relationship? What was the inequality?
2. Who was more powerful in this relationship? What made this person more powerful? How did this person express their more powerful position?
3. Who had the less powerful position in this relationship. What made this person less powerful? How was this less powerful situation expressed?
4. How does this inequality affect each of these two people? How does this inequality affect their relationship?
5. What can each of these people do to lessen the inequality in their relationship?
He even became violent

I fell in love with one of the men I was working with in Maputo. When I became pregnant, we decided to marry. My parents were against the marriage because he was from a poor family. They said, “We don’t think you know the implications of marrying someone who is not your equal. Why don’t you just come home and have the baby? We’ll help you.” But we got married anyway. We decided to return to South Africa so that he could get a university degree, while I worked. Because he spoke only Portuguese and Shangaan, he had to learn English before he could get into University. Unfortunately, he found this difficult. He was staying at home with the baby and trying to learn English, but felt very isolated. He got more and more depressed and he began to feel bad about himself. He had to rely on me for money and he felt guilty because we had to send money to his family every month. I didn’t like that he wasn’t studying or looking for a job or working, but I did not want to make him feel even worse. So I did not say anything. He became friends with some men from his country and he started spending time with them. They would hang out in bars, drinking. Once he even became violent toward me. That was a real wake-up call for us.

Questions:
1. Was there an inequality in this relationship? What was the inequality?
2. Who was more powerful in this relationship? What made this person more powerful? How did this person express their more powerful position?
3. Who had the less powerful position in this relationship. What made this person less powerful? How was this less powerful situation expressed?
4. How does this inequality affect each of these two people? How does this inequality affect their relationship?
5. What can each of these people do to lessen the inequality in their relationship?
10. Is it love?

- **Aim:** To reflect about love, infatuation, and jealousy and how these emotions sometimes get confused
- **Method:** Completing sentences and discussion
- **Materials:** Pens and paper
- **Time:** 60 minutes

1. **We often confuse love, infatuation and jealousy (5 mins)**
   The facilitator explains that we can often get confused about feelings of love, infatuation and jealousy. Love is a deep affection that takes time to develop and lasts over time. Infatuation is a short-lived passion for someone. Jealousy is usually caused by insecurity but is often seen as a sign of love.

2. **Complete the sentence in small groups (10 minutes)**
   The facilitator asks participants to work in groups of five. Each group has a quick discussion to complete one of the following sentences. One group member writes down the completed sentence:
   - Group One: “The difference between love and infatuation is …………”
   - Group Two: “The difference between love and being ‘in love’ is …………..”
   - Group Three: “The difference between love and romance is ………..”
   - Group Four: “The difference between love and sexual attraction is …………. ”
   - Group Five: “The difference between love and jealousy is …………..”

3. **Share and discuss in the big group (35 minutes)**
   The facilitator invites one person from each group to read out their completed sentence in the big group and people discuss for around five to eight minutes.

Group One reads out their statement about love and infatuation and all participants discuss:
- Does anyone disagree? Does anyone want to comment?
- Do girls and boys have equal permission to experience love and infatuation?
- Can you give an example of when someone confuses infatuation with love?
- What happens if infatuation is confused with love?
- Can infatuation be a part of love?
Group Two reads out their statement and participants discuss:

- Does anyone disagree? Does anyone want to comment?
- Do girls and boys have equal permission to experience love and being in love?
- Can you give an example of when someone confuses being in love with love?
- What happens if being in love is confused with love?
- Can being in love be a part of love?

Group Three reads out their statement and participants discuss:

- Does anyone disagree? Does anyone want to comment?
- Do girls and boys have equal permission to experience love and romance?
- Can you give an example of when someone confused romance with love?
- What happens if romance is confused with love?
- Can romance be a part of love?

Group Four reads out their statement and participants discuss:

- Does anyone disagree? Does anyone want to comment?
- Do girls and boys have equal permission to experience love and sexual attraction?
- Can you give an example of when someone confused sexual attraction with love?
- What happens if sexual attraction is confused with love?
- Can sexual attraction be a part of love?

Group Five reads out their statement and participants discuss:

- Does anyone disagree? Does anyone want to comment?
- Do girls and boys have equal permission to experience love and jealousy?
- Can you give an example of when someone confused jealousy with love?
- What happens if jealousy is confused with love?
- Can jealousy be a part of love?

**Step 3 Summing up (10 minutes)**

The facilitator asks participants to reflect on where we get our ideas about love and romance? Do soapies, movies and romance novels give us a realistic idea of these feelings? If not, how do soapies and romance novels affect our expectations of love and romance? Why is it important that we understand the difference between love and these other feelings?

11. What am I looking for in a partner? Do I want a partner?

Aim: To identify and reflect on what you most value in a long-term partner
Completing sentences and discussion
Method: Individual reflection and group discussion
Time: 80 minutes for a group of five; 100 minutes for a group of fifteen

1. Listing the qualities I want in a partner (10 mins)
The facilitator asks each person to write down five qualities she considers important in a spouse or long-term partner, and to then place these in order with 1 the most important quality and 5 the least important quality.

2. Comparing in small groups the qualities valued in a long-term partner (20 mins)
The facilitator asks people to work in small groups to compare:
   • The qualities that came up as numbers 1 and 2 on their lists.
     (Tip: When people use different words for the same quality the facilitator can group these together for example generous and giving would be the same quality; funny and humorous would be the same quality.)
   • Why are these qualities seen as important?
   • Were there similarities, were there differences? What were these? Why do you think there are these similarities and differences?

3. If there is more than one small group, groups share in the big group (20 minutes)
The facilitator asks one person from each group to write down on a large piece of paper so that all can see, the three or four most important qualities chosen by her group.
The facilitator leads the discussion:
   • Did all the groups come up with similar qualities?
   • Were there differences?
   • Why do you think there are similarities? Why do you think there are differences

4. Create a poem, song or letter (10 mins)
The facilitator asks people to work on their own. Each one chooses from Option One or Option Two below, and writes a poem, song or letter.
Option One: You want a long-term partner
Imagine the kind of person you would like as a long-term partner. Write a letter, poem, or song for that imaginary person. Write about what you are looking for from that person—your expectations, how you would like to be treated, and what you would not tolerate.

Option Two: You don’t want a long-term partner
Write a letter, poem or song about why you prefer not to have a long-term partner.

5. Performance of letters, poems, songs (30 minutes)
The facilitator invites each person to read her letter or poem, or sing her song. If there are more than five participants and not enough time for all to perform, the facilitator asks a few volunteers to read their letters or poems and sing their songs.

6. Discussion after the performance (10 minutes)
Discuss the following after the performance:
• What touched you during this activity?
• What are some of the differences and similarities in what we want in a partner?
• Why do people prioritize certain characteristics?
• Does everyone need to form a long-term relationship to be happy?
• Why do you think it is important to think about what kind of relationship you might want?
• Why is it okay not to want a relationship?

12. Love troubles: Strategies for relationship problems

**Aim:** To identify strategies for dealing with problems in relationships
To identify behaviours one would not tolerate in a relationship
To clarify values about dignity in relationships

**Materials:** Reading, role play, discussion

**Method:** Copies of stories for each group

**Time:** 60 minutes for 5 participants; 90 minutes for 20 participants

1. **Discussion on troubles usually experienced in relationships (5 minutes)**
   The facilitator asks participants to think about some of the troubles usually experienced in romantic relationships. (This could include: family involvement, jealousy, communication, unequal expectations, conflicts over money or decision-making power.)

2. **Participants prepare a role play (30 mins)**
   Participants work in groups of five and each group is given the beginning of a story. The group decides what happens next and prepares to act this out.

3. **Groups act out their stories in five to seven minutes and all discuss (60 minutes)**
   If there is more than one group, each group acts its story and all discuss after each act:
   - What problems does this couple have?
   - How did they deal with their problems?
   - How realistic was the groups ending to the story? Would people do this in real life?
   - Does anyone have another suggestion for how they could have dealt with the problem?

4. **The facilitator leads discussion with all participants (10 minutes)**
   - What are some warning signs of troubles in a relationship?
   - What might keep someone in a relationship that was troubled or violent? (For example, children, economic need, shame about divorce).
   - Sometimes people end relationships, including marriages. Do people treat divorced men and divorced women in the same way or differently from the way they treat married people? [If there are differences, ask: Why are they viewed differently? How do you feel about that?] What would cause you to end a relationship?

5. **The facilitator sums up key lessons from this activity (5 mins)**
Stories of relationships in trouble

Cynthia and Thomas

Read the story below. You will notice that it is not complete. Your task is to complete the story. Imagine what Cynthia and Thomas do next.

Cynthia and Thomas have been married for one year. They often have stormy arguments. Then about a month ago in the middle of a heated argument about Cynthia’s family Thomas slapped Cynthia so hard that she fell down. The next day he apologized. He brought her a present, and he promised he would never slap her again. Cynthia could see he was really sorry and forgave him. But last night during an argument he hit her again. This morning when Cynthia woke up, her one eye was black and swollen. She could not open her eye. . . .

Elena and Thando

Read the story below. You will notice that it is not complete. Your task is to complete the story. Imagine what Elena and Thando do next.

Elena and Thando have been dating for a few years. They used to laugh a lot. They used to talk about everything. They enjoyed an intense sex relationship. But things have changed between them. They hardly talk. They hardly ever have sex. There is no spark between them any more. Elena wonders, “What happened to the love I used to feel?” Elena ………..
Thandeka and Peter

Read the story below. You will notice that it is not complete. Your task is to complete the story. Imagine what Thandeka and Peter do next.

Thandeka and Peter started going out a year ago. Thandeka is 18 and about to start university. Peter is 25 and working. Thandeka is really excited about going to university. She is looking forward to making new friends, studying hard, and enjoying life on campus. Peter is feeling that he is ready to settle down and start a family. Peter asks Thandeka to marry him. Thandeka looks at him like he is crazy. She says, “I am just starting my studies. I want to enjoy life and focus on doing well. I don’t want to get married!” Peter is stunned. ………

Irfaan and Nomsa

Read the story below. You will notice that it is not complete. Your task is to complete the story. Imagine what Irfaan and Nomsa do next.

Irfaan and Nomsa have been together for more than a year. Last night, they went to a club. Nomsa talked, laughed, and danced with her girlfriends. Irfaan danced with a lot of people and had an interesting conversation with a woman he had just met. He thought he and Nomsa had both had a great time, but when they got home, Nomsa was angry. She said, “I saw the way you looked at that woman. Don’t tell me you weren’t interested in her! And the way you were dancing! Trying to attract the attention of everyone in the place!” ………

Mika and Nobu

Read the story below. You will notice that it is not complete. Your task is to complete the story. Imagine what Mika and Nobu do next.

Mika and Nobu are married and have three children, aged one, three, and six. When Mika’s menstrual period was late, she went to the clinic and learned that she was five weeks pregnant. Mika felt desperate. She and Nobu are barely coping. Money is tight. Mika was also angry. She suspected that she got pregnant the night Nobu came home drunk and did not use a condom. She told Nobu that she wanted to have an abortion. Nobu was stunned. He said, “I know it’s hard, but I don’t want you to do that …”
13. Love for family and friends compared with romantic love

Aim: To reflect on love which does not involve sex and compare this with love in romantic relationships and marriage
Materials: Reflection and discussion
Time: 65 minutes

1. Love for family and friends – Sharing in pairs (10 minutes)
The facilitator asks people to share in pairs three things they do to show love to a person with whom they have a close relationship – this could be a brother, sister, other family member or close friend; and three things this person does to show their love. As each one talks the other one listens.

2. Love for family and friends – pairs share with group and discuss (15 minutes)
The facilitator invites pairs to share with the group the things they do to show love to the person with whom they have a close relationship, and the things they expect from this person.
After pairs have shared, the facilitator leads discussion on the following questions:
• Are the things you do to show love similar? Why do you think there are similarities?
• Are there differences? Why do you think there are differences?
• Would the person with whom you have a close relationship agree with you on how you show your love for them, and on what you would expect from them?
• In what ways would their views differ from yours?

3. Romantic love and marriage - Sharing in pairs (10 minutes)
The facilitator now asks people to share in pairs three things they would do to show love to a partner with whom they are in a marriage or romantic relationship; and three things they expect a partner in a marriage or romantic relationship to do to show their love.

4. Romantic love and marriage – pairs share with group and discuss (15)
The facilitator invites pairs to share with the group what they would do to show love for a romantic partner or marriage partner; and what they expect from a romantic partner or marriage partner.
The facilitator then leads discussion on the following questions:
• Are there similarities in how people show their love?
• Are there similarities in what people expect from the ones they love?
• Are there differences? Discuss the different views further.
• What are the hurtful things partners do to each other?
• Are any of these hurtful things ever mentioned as ways of showing love?

5. Love with family and friends compared with love with romantic partners (10)
The facilitator leads discussion on the following questions:
• Are there differences in the things we do to show love to partners compared with the things we do to show love to sisters and brothers or friends?
• Why do these differences exist?
• How does romance, sex or marriage change the way we show love?
• Do love and sex automatically go together?
• Do love and marriage automatically go together?
• How should each person in a relationship show love and respect to each other?

6. Conclusions (5 mins)
The facilitator asks people to sum up one key learning from this activity.
The power to communicate clearly and assertively

Learning to communicate assertively can help you form better relationships and find new opportunities.

Learning to communicate assertively can also help you to shift the way you think about yourself.

These activities help you think through how you communicate when you are uncomfortable and how you can become assertive in these situations.

**Aim:** To understand different communication styles

**Method:** Reading, writing and reflection

**Time:** 45 minutes

1. The three main communication styles (10 minutes)

The facilitator explains that there are three main communication styles: passive, assertive and aggressive communication.

**Passive Communication**

This is when a person is too nice or weak, gives in to other people’s wishes, avoids eye contact, speaks softly, puts herself or himself down, is emotionally dishonest, and allows others to trample you in conversation.

**Assertive Communication**

This is when a person is firm but polite, meets someone halfway, maintains warm and friendly eye contact and a conversational tone, builds up others and her or his self, is appropriately honest, and stands up for herself or himself.

**Aggressive Communication**

This is when a person speaks in a mean, harsh, or sarcastic manner, takes charge instead of meeting another person halfway, maintains glaring eye contact and speaks in loud or threatening tones, puts others down, is inappropriately honest, and bullies or tramples others.

2. Reading the table on three styles of communication in pairs (10 mins)

The facilitator asks participants to read the table on Communication Styles on the next page.
3. Reflection (15 mins)
The facilitator asks participants: Can you remember a time when you communicated assertively. If you can’t think of such a time don’t worry! You can make that a goal for yourself in the next week. If you can remember a time when you communicated assertively write about this time.

I remember a time when I communicated assertively. It was when ........
Write how you felt afterwards.
After I communicated assertively I felt ........

Communication Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive</th>
<th>Assertive</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>too nice, weak</td>
<td>firm but polite</td>
<td>mean, harsh, sarcastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gives in when conflict arises</td>
<td>meets others half way</td>
<td>pushes own agenda, does not meet halfway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avoids eye contact</td>
<td>warm, friendly eye contact</td>
<td>glaring eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaks softly</td>
<td>conversational tone</td>
<td>speaks in loud, threatening tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puts down self</td>
<td>builds up others and self</td>
<td>puts others down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotionally dishonest</td>
<td>appropriately honest</td>
<td>inappropriately honest - rude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allows others to walk all over you, bullied</td>
<td>stands up for self</td>
<td>walk all over others, bullies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Concluding comments (5 mins)
The facilitator notes that when we compare these styles of communicating we can see that being assertive is very different from being aggressive. Assertive communication is the ability to express your opinions in an open, honest and direct way. It allows us to take responsibility for ourselves without judging or blaming others. Communicating assertively means expressing your ideas in a clear way without being too aggressive or too passive. Assertive Communication improves relationships & self-esteem.

Adapted from Theranest.com: https://www.theranest.com/assets/docs/self-esteem-resources/Assertive-Communication-Worksheet.pdf
15. Appreciating Assertive Communication

**Aim:** To understand aggressive, passive and assertive styles of communication, and appreciate the importance of assertive communication

**Method:** Filling out a quiz in pairs, individual self-assessment, discussion

**Materials:** Copies of the questionnaire and self-assessment or the questions written up on large sheets of paper for all to see

**Time:** 60 minutes

1. **Reflecting on the importance of assertive communication (10 mins)**
   The facilitator explains that in uncomfortable situations we often do not communicate what we want clearly. This can lead to other people misunderstanding what we want. The facilitator asks participants to think of a time when they were not able to express themselves in a clear way. What was the situation and what were some reasons why they not able to express what they wanted in a clear way? (allow five minutes for reflection)

   The facilitator notes that when we do not feel good about ourselves, we doubt our ideas and feelings and it is difficult to share our ideas and feelings with others. Often we do not value our ideas. We don’t trust ourselves. Also when we are unsure, afraid or uncomfortable we may communicate in an aggressive way, a passive way, or indirectly.

   Making ourselves clear without being aggressive is called assertive communication. Being assertive means being honest and direct, sharing your feelings and speaking for yourself. Learning to communicate assertively can help you form better relationships, find new opportunities, and shift the way you think about yourself.

2. **Filling out the Quiz in pairs (15 mins)**
   The facilitator asks participants to work in pairs to complete the quiz. For each conflict they mark which response is Aggressive, Passive or Assertive.

3. **Completing the Self-Assessment worksheet individually (15 mins)**
   Each person then fills out the “Self-Assessment” worksheet on page 62

4. **Concluding Discussion (10 minutes)**
   The facilitator asks participants to share what they learnt about their own style of communication, and why they think it is useful to learn how to communicate assertively.
Quiz: Analyze The Response in each of these conflicts.

In each case please mark which response is Aggressive, Passive, Assertive.
(Once you’ve completed the quiz you can check your answers on the following page)

A boy and girl are going to have sex for the first time, but they don’t have condoms. One of them says:

a. For all I know, you have HIV! You are a stupid idiot.
b. I also want to have sex, but only if we use condoms. I know where we can get them.
c. Oh. Okay, I guess.

A boy is upset that the girl he is with was talking to another boy at a party. He says:

d. That was a boring party.
e. When you were talking to that guy, I thought you might want to be with him instead of me. That makes me feel bad.
f. I saw that! How dare you talk to that other guy when you went to the party with me?

A boy asks a girl to go out with him. She does not want to. She says:

g. Thank you, but I do not want to. Sorry.
h. Um….. Okay.
i. I would never go out with someone like you. Just get away from me.

A girl is upset that her friend Lulu has been making fun of her to Amina. She says:

j. Lulu, I’m upset that you were making fun of me.
k. Lulu, you’re the dumbest person in the world and I’m going to spread stories about you!
Answer this self-assessment work sheet:

*How do I communicate when I am feeling uncomfortable?*

When I am in an uncomfortable situation with an adult male, I tend to be:

- Passive  
- Assertive, respectful  
- Aggressive  
- Indirect or manipulative

When I am in an uncomfortable situation with an adult female, I tend to be:

- Passive  
- Assertive, respectful  
- Aggressive  
- Indirect or manipulative

When I am in an uncomfortable situation with someone whom I do not view as my equal, I tend to be:

- Passive  
- Assertive, respectful  
- Aggressive  
- Indirect or manipulative
  
  - I cannot answer this because I view everyone as my equal.

For me, expressing feelings of anger is:

- Fairly easy (but I sometimes respond aggressively)  
- Fairly easy (and I never respond aggressively or with violence)  
- Neither easy nor difficult  
- Somewhat or very difficult

For me, expressing when I feel vulnerable or weak is:

- Fairly easy (but I sometimes respond aggressively)  
- Fairly easy (and I never respond aggressively or with violence)  
- Neither easy nor difficult  
- Somewhat or very difficult

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16. Practicing Assertive Communication

**Aim:** To enable more assertive communication

**Method:** Formulating assertive responses, reflecting on what hinders assertiveness

**Time:** 60 minutes

1. **The facilitator introduces the activity and poses questions (5 minutes)**

   The facilitator explains that it is sometimes difficult to say clearly what you want (for example, that you want a cup of tea when you arrive at a relative’s house). It may also be difficult to say what you do not want (for example, that you do not want to eat what someone prepared for you).

   The facilitator asks people if they remember a time when they were unsure how to express what they were wanting clearly? Would anyone like to share? After sharing and discussion the facilitator notes:

   Speaking up can be difficult even when the situation really matters to us, or when real physical or emotional consequences might be an issue. Practicing respectful, but assertive, communication is helpful. Remember being assertive means being honest and direct, sharing your feelings and speaking for yourself, making yourself clear but without aggressiveness.

2. **The facilitator reads out statements and asks people to write a response (30 mins)**

   The facilitator reads each of the statements on the following page and asks participants to think of an assertive response. Participants write individually a response that is assertive but not aggressive. Participants are asked to make sure that the responses are complete sentences.

3. **Participants then share their responses.**

   The facilitator asks participants to share their responses
Statements:

You see your supervisor from work and want to ask for a raise.
Tell your father you wish to continue in college, despite his wishes.
Why don’t you like soapies like everyone else? What’s wrong with you?
I’m the mayor. I hear that you want permission to use one of the city buildings for your women’s group.

Sample responses:

These sample responses are to help the facilitator in case participants have difficulty arriving at an assertive response to the statements above

“I would like to speak with you about a raise. I have worked here long enough to have earned a raise”
“Father, I respect your views, but it is very important to me to continue my education. I want to discuss my reasons with you.”
“Everyone is different. I enjoy reading and music.”
“Yes, Mr. Mayor. We are responsible and will make good use of the space. Would you like more information about our plans?”

4. Think of a situation in your life (10 mins)
The facilitator then asks participants to think of a time when they were unsure how to express what they were wanting clearly, and to write down what they could have said in that situation. Participants will not be asked to share their responses.

5. Discussion and Summing up (15 mins)
Being assertive may seem to be against our culture or as being rude. What is a situation in which a person should be assertive even if such a response is considered rude? [Note to facilitator: for example when a person feels her rights are being violated.] Are girls who are assertive treated in the same way as boys who are assertive? Is someone who is assertive viewed differently if that person is from an ethnic or racial minority group? How can such biases limit people’s ability to stand up for themselves?

Homework: Practice being more assertive at least once in the next couple of days. Write down what happens and how you feel.
The power to have healthy and happy sexual relationships

Sex can be enjoyable, fun, rewarding. None of us would be here if it wasn’t for sex!

Sex can also be a source of problems and can create hurt and pain.

Talking about sex is difficult for most of us. Telling a sexual partner what we want and don’t want is difficult for most of us.

The activities here help us think through how we can make sure we can all enjoy sexual health, that is sex that is pleasurable and free from infection, unwanted pregnancy and abuse.
17. Happy and unhappy sexual relationships

Aim: To explore ‘love’ in sexual relationships and what makes for happy and unhappy relationships
Method: Role plays, reflection, discussion
Time: 45 to 60 mins

1. Preparing role-plays in three small groups (15 mins)
The facilitator asks participants to prepare role-plays to act out happy and unhappy relationships. If there are five women participating they form one group and they prepare to act out all three scenarios. If there are fifteen or more participants they form three groups and each group prepares to acts out one scenario.

Scenario One: A happy sexual relationship. Two of the group will act the part of the couple and the rest of the group guides them on how to show their happy relationship. Other group participants may act out supporting roles - for example acting the part of a woman trying to seduce the boyfriend or husband and being rejected.

Scenario Two: An unhappy sexual relationship where the man is unhappy. Two of the group act the part of the couple and the rest of the group guides them on how to show the unhappiness of the man in the relationship. Other group members may act out supporting roles.

Scenario Three: An unhappy sexual relationship where the woman is unhappy. Two of the group will act the part of the couple and the rest of the group guides them on how to show the unhappiness of the woman in the relationship. Other group members may act out supporting roles.

2. Acting out the role plays (15 mins)
If there is more than one group, each group acts out their role-play.
If there is just one group, skip this step and move straight to discussion.
3. Discussion on the role plays (20 mins)
The facilitator leads discussion on the role plays based on the following questions:

Scenario One: Discussion on the happy relationship:
- What makes this a happy situation? Do you know many examples of happy relationships?
- What advice would you give the woman and man in this role play to improve their relationship from happy to happier?

Scenarios Two and Three Discussion on unhappy relationships:
- What makes this an unhappy situation?
- Is it possible to improve this relationship from unhappy to happy? If so, what advice would you give to the woman and man in the role-play to improve their relationship? If it is not possible to make this relationship happy, what advice would you give the unhappy partner?
- What would the unhappy woman in scenario three lose by leaving the relationship? What would she gain?
- What would the unhappy man in scenario three lose by leaving the relationship? What would he gain?

4. Summing up (10 mins)
The Facilitator leads the discussion on summing up
- What makes happy relationships?
- What makes unhappy relationships?
- Has this discussion changed your thoughts on your own relationships?
18. The joys and problems with sex

Aim: To share our understandings of the good things and difficult things about sex in our own lives

Method: Writing and sorting words associated with sex, and discussion

Materials: Small pieces of paper on which participants can write one word, pens

Time: 45 to 60 mins

1. Introducing the activity (10 mins)
The facilitator explains that most of us often (or sometimes) find sex enjoyable, fun and rewarding, and none of us would have been born if it wasn’t for sex. But at the same time, almost all of us at some time in our lives can have questions or difficulties related to sex, which we may find painful or embarrassing, and with which we would like some help. This activity is a way of helping us to share with one another our own understanding of the good things and the difficult things about sex in our own lives.

2. Writing & sorting words that come to mind when we hear the word “sex” (20 mins)
The facilitator asks participants to work in a group. If there are fifteen or more people they can work in three or four groups. If there are around five people they form one group. The facilitator asks each participant to write a word that comes to her mind when she hears the word ‘sex’. These can be good, bad, funny, happy or sad thoughts or words. (If anyone feels really uncomfortable talking about sex the group should excuse them from the discussion).

Each person writes one thought or word on one piece of paper.
Each person can take as many pieces of paper as she would like.
All group members put their words in one big pile. Group members then decide which words go into which of the following three categories and place these in three piles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joys</th>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Neither joys nor problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The group may feel that some words could fit in two categories, as what some might see as a problem someone else may see as a joy. Group members should discuss and listen and not judge different views as they decide which word or thought goes into which category.

A note for the facilitator: If the following words do not come up please write each of these words on separate pieces of paper: abortion, sex work, homosexuality, violence against women, oral sex, anal sex. Then please place each of these words in one of the three piles.
3. Groups present in big group (15 minutes)
If there is more than one group, one person from each group presents the words they placed in each category and tells the large group why each word was put in that particular category (joys, problems, neither). If there is only one group skip point 3 and move to 4

After each group presents participants discuss:
Do those from other groups agree with this group’s views? Why do they agree?
Do those from other groups disagree? Why do they disagree?

4. Discussion and summing up (15 mins)
The facilitator leads discussion on the following questions:
- Was there a bigger pile of papers in the problems pile than in the joys pile?
- Why is this the case?
- How can we make sure we can all enjoy sex that is pleasurable and free from infection, unwanted pregnancy and abuse?
- What are some of the key learnings from this activity?
1. Introducing the activity (5 mins)
The facilitator explains that this activity gets us to think about ways to communicate about sex with a romantic partner. It is often difficult to talk about sex, to make clear whether or not you want to have sexual contact, and to protect yourself against STIs including HIV. It is important that we strengthen our skills to communicate clearly about these things.

2. Preparing one-minute conversations (10 minutes)
The facilitator asks four volunteers to prepare and act out a role-play in pairs. Each pair prepares two one-minute conversations based on the stories below:

**Pair 1: Preventing sexually transmitted infection.**
Person A and Person B are in a relationship. One is male and one is female.
Person A is concerned about sexually transmitted infections, and wants to use a condom. Person B, who is older, does not want to use a condom.
In the first conversation show Person A giving in and agreeing not to use a condom.
In the second conversation show how Person A persuades person B to use a condom.

**Pair 2: Preventing pregnancy**
Person A and Person B are in a relationship. One is male and one is female.
Person A wants to prevent pregnancy and wants to use contraception. Person B wants to have a baby and does not want to use contraception.
In the first conversation show Person A giving in and agreeing not to use contraception.
In the second conversation showing how Person A persuades person B to use contraception.

Note: while the four participants are preparing the conversations the other participants can be on a ten-minute break. Alternatively the facilitator could get the four participants to prepare their conversations before the session starts.
3. Acting out the conversations and discussion (30 mins)
The two pairs act out the four conversations while others watch. The group then discusses:

- What was different between the first and the second conversation of each story? (tip for the facilitator: the first conversation was giving in and passive; the second conversation was standing your ground and being assertive)
- Which version (passive or assertive) happens more often in everyday life?
- What did you see that was helpful?
- What other suggestions do you have for handling this conversation?
- What can we learn from these conversations for our own lives?

4. Making Posters in small groups (20 mins)
(If there are 15 or more people in the session they form three or four groups and each group takes one scenario. If there are 5 people in the session they form one group and work on two scenarios).
Participants discuss and make posters in groups to show three ways to start a difficult conversation based on the following scenarios:

**Scenario for Group 1:**
Discuss ways to tell an intimate partner that you might have a sexually transmitted infection. Make a poster showing three ways to start a conversation.

**Scenario for Group 2:**
Discuss ways to tell your partner that you want to have sex and to find out if your partner feels the same way. Make a poster showing three ways to start a conversation.

**Scenario for Group 3:**
Discuss ways to tell a parent or trusted adult that you were sexually abused. Make a poster showing three ways to start the conversation.

**Scenario for Group 4:**
Discuss ways a person can tell a partner that she wants to continue relating but is no longer comfortable having sex. Make a poster showing three ways to open the conversation.

5. Groups present posters and discuss. (15 minutes) (if you have one group skip this)
One person from each group presents the poster. The others comment and ask questions.

6. The facilitator makes concluding observations (10 mins)
Speaking up for yourself in a sexual situation can be more difficult if the other person has greater status or power than you do. Remember, you always have the right to consent or refuse consent in a sexual situation. What are some of the ways you can become stronger about speaking up for yourself in sexual situations? Would practicing what you want to say beforehand help? Would writing down what you want to say help?

20. Having conversations on sex and safety

Aim: To think about and practice how to have conversations on sex and safety
Method: Reflection, role play, discussion
Time: 70 to 90 minutes

1. Starting conversations – practice in pairs (10 minutes)
The facilitator asks participants to work in pairs to practice how they would start conversations on sex and safety. It is often difficult to talk about sex with a partner and we need to strengthen our skills to communicate clearly about sex. The facilitator writes the topics below on a large sheet of paper so that all can see.

- **Topic A**  Whether or not to have sex
- **Topic B**  Previous sexual experience
- **Topic C**  Sexually transmitted infections, HIV and AIDS
- **Topic D**  Previous drug use
- **Topic E**  Using condoms

The facilitator asks each pair to discuss how they would start a conversation with a sexual partner about each of these topics. Each member of the pair practices starting a conversation on each topic. The pair then:
- Writes down one way of starting a conversation on each topic
- Decides when is the right time to have a first conversation on each topic – e.g. after a first kiss? When you are already in a sexual situation?

2. Pairs share their ideas and others contribute and discuss (25 minutes)
One pair shares their ideas on Topic A. Others discuss and contribute suggestions:
- Ideas they think might work and why.
- Ideas they think may not be good and why.

Another pair shares their ideas on Topic B and others contribute and discuss as above.
Different pairs share their ideas on each of Topics C, D and E and the group contributes and discusses as above.
3. Discussion after reviewing all five topics (5 minutes)
The facilitator leads discussion on what can make it easier to have these types of conversations.

4. Acting out difficult conversations (10 minutes)
The facilitator asks two volunteers to act out the conversation in the following situation:

   Henry and Mia have talked and they think they want to have sex. Henry starts a conversation with Mia about using condoms. Henry does not want to have sex without a condom. Mia does not think it is necessary to use condoms. Right now they are taking a walk.

Other participants watch the act and think about how the two are communicating.

5. Discussion (10 minutes)
After the two volunteers have acted out the conversation, the facilitator leads discussion:
What went well? What might have been handled differently? Was the conversation realistic? Do you have any advice for either of the two?

Repeat 4 and 5 for the following scenarios:

   Anjali starts a conversation with Mo about whether or not to have sex. They may or may not agree about what to do.

   Carlo starts a conversation with Mary about their previous sexual experience and drug use. They recently met and have no idea about the other’s previous experiences with sex or drugs.

6. Wrap up with the following questions: (10 minutes)
   • Before you have conversations like these, what do you need to think about yourself? Do you need to be clear about how you feel, what you want, what you want to say?
   • What are some tips for successful communication?
   • What are some tips for saying “no” respectfully?
   • What rights does each person have? Does each person have the right to express their opinion, the right to say no, the right to protect ones own health?
   • Whose responsibility is it to start such conversations in a relationship? Why?

Readings

The readings in this section can be drawn on by facilitators in preparing for the activities.

Readings include:

• Learning to be girls and boys, women and men
• Violence against women and girls
• Gender and Violence
• Responding to GBV
• Communication: an important and empowering skill
• Direct versus indirect communication styles
• Talking to your partner about sex
Learning to be girls and boys, women and men

We are taught our place in life as girls and boys from an early age. We are taught how to behave, what we can and cannot do, and what we can expect to receive.

At Home
Girls are taught to be soft spoken, to do the housework, to serve their brothers and fathers. Girls are taught not to expect anyone to serve them. Girls learn early in life that they are not as important as boys, that their mothers are not as important as their fathers. Girls learn early in life that men and boys get the best pieces of meat. That if there is not enough money to send all the children to school the boys will be sent and not the girls. Girls learn that men have power over women. They see this in how their fathers and uncles control their mothers and aunts. They see this in how their brothers control them. Girls learn that they have to accept all these things without questioning or objecting.

Girls learn early in life what it means to be a good girl. What it means to be a good woman. They learn that if they do not behave like a good girl then they will be in big trouble. Girls are taught these things by their family at home.

Boys are taught that they can demand things, that they will be served by their sisters and mothers, that they are important and that they can boss and control girls and women.
Girls and boys are taught these things by our mothers and our fathers. Our mothers do not have the strength to challenge many of these things even though these things oppress them too.

In the Community
Girls are taught that the things they have learnt about what it means to be good girl and a good women are things that are expected of them by the community also.
They learn that only men can be leaders such as chiefs, indunas or councilors.
They learn that only men can be priests or religious leaders
They learn that community meetings are not places for women.
They learn that good women listen respectfully while the men speak. They learn that men can own land or a house, that women cannot own land or a house.

Boys learn all these things also. They learn that they are the leaders and the owners. Culture, tradition and religion teach us these things.

At School
Girls are taught at school that they should not aim too high in life. Good woman are housewives, nurses or teachers. Good women are not leaders, or engineers, or doctors. Good women must not outshine their husbands. They must help their husbands to shine. Girls are not encouraged to take science or maths at school. Girls should not be too clever. Good girls should hide that they are clever.

Boys learn these things too at school. They learn that they will be leaders in the home and the community and maybe also in the country.

At Work
At work women learn that men earn more than they do, and that men are usually in the higher up positions. There are also some jobs that only women do and some that only men do. For example it is not seen as good for a man to be a nurse.

There is a system that needs to be changed
All of this shows that it is not only one or two people who think women and men have these unequal places, unequal share in property, jobs and income and unequal share in leadership. It is also a system that keeps things this way. So what we need to change is people’s ideas and also the system.

Women’s place and men’s place is made to seem natural and normal
The unequal and unjust place of women is made to seem natural and normal and women are not expected to question this. Women take on the message because that is what a good woman is expected to do. Women pass on the message to their own daughters. The oppressed police their own oppression, so that even when there is space to be free we as women can be our own jailors.
Change is possible and is happening
All of this can change. Women have challenged and are challenging.  
Women have challenged the way they are treated – they have challenged the abuse they face from their husbands and boyfriends, whether this is in the form of words or if it is through beatings.  
Women have challenged men to share the housework with them.  
Women have challenged that they should get equal pay.  
Women have challenged that they can be leaders.  

We need to make sure that things don’t go back to the ways of the past  
We need to make sure we can be leaders as women  
We need to make sure we can speak our minds and say what is in our hearts  
We need to make sure our families and communities hear us and listen to what we say  
Women and girls are human beings with rights!  

We need to make change everywhere  
We need to challenge the messages we have learnt from very young  
We need to change our own ways of thinking  
We need to speak to our boyfriends and husbands, our brothers and fathers, and the men in our organisations to change their way of thinking  
We need to speak to our mothers and daughters, our sisters and women friends and change their way of thinking  

It is in our power to make these changes happen!
How widespread is violence against women and girls?
Sadly, violence against women and girls (sometimes called gender-based violence) is very widespread. It is a major public health and human rights issue. In many countries across the world between one-third and two-thirds of women are beaten, forced into sexual activity, or otherwise abused by an intimate partner during their lifetime. These forms of violence include physical, emotional, psychological and economic abuse.

What are the consequences of violence against women?
The health consequences include:
• Serious pain and injuries, such as broken bones, burns, black eyes, cuts, bruises, headaches, and abdominal and muscle pain, sometimes enduring for years
• Mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders
• Sexual dysfunctions, including painful sex, lack of desire, and fear of sex
• Reproductive health problems, including miscarriage, STIs and HIV infection, unplanned pregnancy, and increased sexual risk-taking among adolescents.

In a community, violence against women can perpetuate the false belief that men are better than women. Gender-based violence creates a climate of fear and insecurity in families, schools, communities, and workplaces.

Gender based violence is unacceptable and we need to find ways of stopping this!
• Attitudes need to be changed about masculinity and violent behavior.
• Women and girls need to be educated about their legal rights and they need to be empowered.
• Practices such as child marriage, which put many girls in relationships in which they are at risk of violence, need to end.
• Gender education, and information about gender-based violence needs to be included into formal and informal education
• Campaigns such as the annual 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women, and activities during Women’s Month should focus the need for men to change.

**We need to make sure women who experience violence get the support they need**

Women who experience violence and their children need access to various services, ideally in one place. They may need hotlines, counseling, support networks, shelters that meet safety standards, legal services, and health care, including emergency contraception for rape victims.

**Providing training to healthcare providers**

Trained healthcare providers can help detect abuse and assist victims by offering medical, psychological, and legal support and referrals.

**We need to make sure that government takes actions.**

Government needs to:

• Show political commitment through statements, action and commitment of resources
• Enact and implement laws that address violence against women, and evaluate the application of these laws
• Provide training for police, prosecutors, and judges
• Establish specialized courts and police units
• Enact vigorous arrest, prosecution policies and appropriate sentencing.

Research and documentation of violence against women and girls increases recognition of the problem and the commitment to address it.

Gender and Violence

Violence against women and girls, or against individuals who do not conform to dominant gender norms, is called gender-based violence. Women are often subject to interpersonal violence, frequently in the home. Women and girls are vulnerable to violence perpetrated by people they know, including their intimate male partners. Such violence may be of a sexual nature, such as unwanted touching or forced sex. Such violence may include beatings, burning, or murder.

Some people face violence because they are perceived (correctly or not) as homosexual or transgender. Violence based on a person’s identity is sometimes referred to as “hate crime.”

All gender-based violence is a violation of human rights.

Gender-based violence reflects and reinforces cultural norms about masculinity and male control and dominance. Examples include:

- Girls are often brought up to expect to have little control over their own bodies.
- Boys are often brought up to believe that males are superior to females and that men should dominate women.
- Many females are brought up to accept that men are entitled to be violent or that violence is an expression of a man’s love. Some people even blame the victim rather than holding a man responsible for being violent.
- When communities tolerate violence against individuals who do not conform to expected gender roles (such as people who are attracted to the same sex, transgender people, and openly feminist women in conservative settings), “hate crimes” can become a common aspect of the culture.

Responding to GBV

More and more people (males as well as females), organizations, communities, and country governments are working to reduce violence. Actions include:

- Teaching people ways to resolve conflicts without violence, including ways of expressing their feelings respectfully and effectively
- Supporting survivors of gender-based violence, including providing a safe haven where they can seek help and safety
- Working to change attitudes that tolerate or excuse violence or blame it on the victim
- Promoting norms that honor diversity and difference and that support boys and young men who choose not to adopt aggressive male roles
- Educating people about violence, including the gender norms that foster violence, the wide range of contexts in which violence takes place, the rights of all people to live free of violence, and the importance of shared responsibility for reducing violence; and
- Advocating for the passage and enforcement of effective laws against violence.

Points for Reflection

What are some of the reasons that women remain in relationships in which they are being physically abused? What role might be played by economics? By fears for one's safety? Concerns for the family? Worries about community attitudes? Lack of alternatives? Not being aware of their rights?

Communication: an important and empowering skill

Being able to communicate so that others understand you and being able to understand what other people are trying to say are important and empowering skills.

These skills can help people to
• develop relationships based on mutual understanding and satisfaction
• resolve conflicts respectfully and without violence
• feel good about yourself and about your relationships.

People have different styles and skills in communicating. These can be based on what is acceptable in your culture – e.g. in some cultures you should not look an older person in the eye, or in some cultures you should not appear too eager to accept a cup of tea, a meal or a gift even if you would like to.

Different styles in communication can also be based on individual personality or the communication style you learned as a child.

It can also be based on what you were brought up to see as good behavior as a woman or a man – for example in most cultures women are taught to be passive and submissive while men are meant to be assertive and overpowering. So while a strong willed man who puts across his point of view clearly is admired, a woman with these qualities is called bossy or a ball-breaker.

People with less “social power” or social status than another may feel that they are not supposed to have a strong view and this may affect his or her ability and style in communicating. This could negatively affect women, young people, poor people and black people who may feel they are less entitled than men, older people, rich people and white people respectively, when they want to express their views.
Tips for Effective Communication

Clear communication is when the message the sender intends to convey is the same as the message that the receiver understands. It is important to check that your message was understood correctly, especially if it involves a difficult or emotional topic.

In every situation, one of the most important behaviors for good communication is listening well and with respect.

Active and non-judgemental listening is important in good communication. When you are listening it is helpful to try to understand the other person. Saying things such as “I can understand how you feel,” or “good point” helps the person know you are listening and understanding. Making eye contact, giving positive nonverbal cues, such as a smile or nod can also help. If you are not sure what the person is trying to say ask for clarification.

State your feelings and start your sentences with “I” rather than with “you”;

Acknowledge that all people have a right to their feelings and opinions.

Avoid being too directive, judgemental, or controlling

State as clearly as you can what you want or what you do not want

Help identify possible solutions to problems.

Points for reflection

In a conversation between a wealthy person and a person from a lower socioeconomic class or caste, who is likely to feel freer to express ideas and feelings? Who is likely to feel freer in a conversation between a man and a woman?

How can we make sure that someone’s needs, feelings, and right to communicate are respected without regard to social status?

Points for reflection

When you are trying to communicate, how does it feel to:

Be interrupted or not be heard?

Be criticized, called a name, or labeled?

Be judged or made to feel guilty?

Sense that the other person is trying to control the conversation?

Receive negative nonverbal messages, such as being frowned at?

Some people communicate in a way that is direct and firm. Others communicate in ways that are indirect. Direct and firm communication may be verbal or nonverbal, but generally sends a clear message. For example:

- A person who communicates assertively expresses his or her feelings or thoughts in a straightforward way.
- A person may use “I” statements that express his or her feelings and thoughts (for example, “I feel bad when you speak that way to me” or “I’m glad that you came with me to the health clinic”).
- A person may make eye contact or use other nonverbal messages to communicate directly.

Indirect communication may also be verbal or nonverbal, but often sends a less specific or less defined message. For example:

- A person may avoid specific expressions of their own opinion or feelings
- (for example, “I heard that you can become pregnant the first time,” rather than “I won’t have sex if you don’t use a condom”).
- A person may avoid finishing a sentence or making eye contact.

Sometimes knowing the best way to express oneself — directly or indirectly — is difficult.

- A person who communicates indirectly may be following cultural norms about politeness, social status, or expectations about gender roles. Understanding how to assert oneself effectively in one’s own culture is important.
- Indirect communication may not always be clear to the listener or receiver.
- Sometimes people are in situations in which they do not feel that they are being heard. They may need to practice expressing themselves more clearly, directly, and repeatedly than they are used to doing.
- Communicating directly and firmly is not the same as being aggressive. A person can communicate clearly and directly while still respecting the feelings and thoughts of others.
Talking to your partner about sex

Communication is an important part of a sexual relationship. Communication with a sex partner is important for ensuring that both people are consenting to engage in sexual activity.

*Effective communication can help people protect their own and their partners’ well-being.*

This protection includes:
- Guarding against sexually transmitted infections, including HIV;
- Protecting against unwanted pregnancy; and
- Reducing the likelihood of a conflict that could lead to violence.

Communication can also increase mutual trust and pleasure. Communication is important for clarifying expectations and limits.

Such expectations and limits may relate to:
- feelings;
- the exchange of money or material goods; or
- other factors.

Gender norms often affect the way people communicate — or do not communicate — about sex.

*Everyone can learn to communicate comfortably and effectively about sexuality.*

*Practicing helps!*
