

TEACHER PREPARATION

KEY CONCEPTS

One of the most certain predictors of how a young person will treat his or her spouse, especially after the intense romantic “honeymoon” phase wears off, is how he or she currently treats the opposite sex – that is, parents and other close family members.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. List a number of “foolish mistakes” that adolescents make in their relationships with the opposite sex.
2. Choose to develop positive character traits they can work on now that will help them be better prepared to have a successful marriage.
3. Choose whether or not to sign their Personal Journals committing to wait to have sex until marriage.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The focus of this lesson is on character qualities that adolescents can work on now, not sometime in the future, which will help them prepare for a successful marriage.

MATERIALS / PREPARATION

In the Box: Grandmothers’ Letter, and a wrapped present (optional).

LESSON

BEGINNING THE LESSON

SURPRISE NEIGHBOR NUDGE 5 MINUTE

In pairs, students will:

- Share a “good” surprise.
- Share a “bad” surprise.

Help the students to pair up with as little noise and movement as practical. When it looks like most have shared two surprises, say:

Today is our last session on male-female relationships, and we are going to begin by talking about surprises. In a minute, you’ll be asked to pair up with someone near you, and then each of you will be asked to briefly share two things.

The first is a time when you got a really good surprise. It could be a present you weren’t expecting. It could be some good news that you or your family received. It could be when you were expecting a bad grade on an exam but got a good one.

Once each of you has shared a good surprise, then you should each describe a bad surprise. Maybe it was when someone got sick or hurt. Or maybe it was a bad grade when you were expecting a good one. You can choose any kind of bad surprise, big or small.

OK, let’s all quickly pair up and start describing one good and one bad surprise.

In our story today, the three students are going to get a surprise. I wonder whether it will be a good or a bad one.



LISTENING TEAM ACTIVITY

[Choose four students to be on a “listening team”. You may decide to seat them at a table or leave them at their desks.]

The assignment for this team is that at the end of the story they should each be ready to answer a question.]

- **Team Member 1: What escaped from Pandora’s Box?**
- **Team Member 2: What was left in Pandora’s Box?**
- **Team Member 3: Besides curiosity, what did the grandmothers say could lead us to opening the box too soon?**
- **Team Member 4: What did Olga define as the “enemy of your soul”?**



STORY 6 MINUTES

[Read the following story:]

The three friends walked into the classroom and immediately saw the small attractive package sitting on the teacher’s desk. Because the teacher wasn’t in the room, Sasha picked up the package and shook it, trying to determine what might be inside.

“What do you think it is?” asked Dima.

“Something from our grandmothers?” suggested Natasha.

“Maybe it’s something to eat,” said Sasha.

“Must be. See the handwriting on the outside? ‘*Surprise package for the grandchildren.*’ That’s us. Do you think we ought to open it?” asked Natasha.

“Would you like to know what’s inside?” asked Tatyana Alexandrovna as she entered the room. The three jumped at the sound of her voice. Teachers have an unsettling way of just showing up unannounced; makes you wonder whether they do it on purpose.

The three nodded yes.

“Well, only one way to find out, right?” said Tatyana Alexandrovna.

Sasha picked up the box. “Sure used enough tape on this package!”

“Probably wrapped it securely because there’s something special inside,” offered Natasha as she picked at one of the knotted ribbons.

“Just rip it open and stop playing around,” suggested Sasha.

“Here, let me have a go,” said Dima as he tore into the package. Paper and tape flew as he ripped away. Soon he had a big wad of paper and tape – and the box.

He opened the box and found a single sheet of paper wadded up in a ball. He spread out the crumpled paper – but nothing was written on it.

“I don’t get it!” said Natasha. “Why wrap up a silly piece of scrap paper?”

The sound of the teacher absentmindedly tapping a sealed envelope against the edge of her desk interrupted their questioning. The three turned to stare at her.

“I failed to mention that there was a card that came with the box,” she said. “Usually one opens the card before the package.”

“We didn’t know there was a card!” objected Dima.

“Let’s open it now,” suggested Sasha. “Natasha, why don’t you open it?”

Inside the envelope was a handmade card with the following written in large handwriting:

SOME THINGS ARE BEST LEFT UNOPENED – AT LEAST FOR NOW.
IF YOU CAN RESIST OPENING THIS PACKAGE,
YOU CAN EXCHANGE IT FOR SOMETHING FAR MORE ENJOYABLE,
ENTERTAINING AND EXCITING. THE CHOICE IS YOURS.

“That’s not fair,” cried Sasha. “You held the card back to get us to open the box!”

Dima put the crumpled piece of paper back into the box, gathered all the paper, tape, and ribbon, and crudely rewrapped the package. “Here’s the gift. We’d like to exchange it for something wonderful the card promised,” said Dima.

The teacher sadly took the box and shook her head. “I’m afraid this isn’t the same box I gave you – it has been opened.”

“Come on! We didn’t know,” complained Sasha.

“No, you didn’t, did you?” said Tatyana Alexandrovna. “Pity.”

“OK, what’s going on?” asked Natasha. “What are our grandmothers really up to?”

“Perhaps this second card might shed some light on it,” offered the teacher.

“There’s another card!” all three exclaimed.

“Just how many cards have you got from our grandmothers?” demanded Sasha.

“Good question! It might be a good idea to ask whether anything else comes with whatever you are about to open,” suggested Tatyana Alexandrovna. “It’s better to find out as much as you can before opening any mysterious packages.”

The teacher placed the second envelope on the desk in front of the students. “Natasha, would you like to read what the grandmothers intended for you to know?”

Natasha picked up the sealed card and looked at her teacher.

“Yes, it’s safe to open this one,” encouraged Tatyana Alexandrovna.

The card contained one page of neatly written script. Natasha began –

Dear Ones,

It is so easy to get your life out of order and end up missing the very thing you were trying hard to find! Do you remember the Greek myth of Pandora’s Box? The story is told many ways. She is given a mysterious box by the gods that she isn’t to open. Her curiosity gets the better of her and she decides to just have a peek. When she breaks the seal on the box, every woe ever known escapes to plague the world. Try as she might, she cannot put a single one of the vile things back into the box. Despair, Hate, Guilt, Regret, Revenge, Shame, and Deceit – those were just a few of the legion of troubles released on the world.

The weight of what she has done is too much for Pandora, but then she sees one last thing still in the box – Hope. In the midst of all the evil unleashed, there is still that one redeeming virtue.

Inside of you are many wonderful hopes and dreams – a lifetime of meaningful experiences yet to be tasted. But life can also hold much that is painful. Loss, regret, unfairness, and injustice are merely shadows of the emotional knots that can plague your life when you try to grow up too fast or open the wonderful mystery of your sexuality before it is time.

Oh yes, and curiosity is just one of the things that can trick you into opening the box too soon. Boredom, spite, hopelessness, foolishness, and gullibility are some of the inner voices that will try to get you to ignore the voice of your better self or the voices of those farther down the road who love you and only want your best.

As Olga would tell you, the Enemy of your soul is always pointing out the one thing you don’t have and making that one thing the measure of your happiness or fulfillment. “Forbidden fruit” is a term well applied beyond the Garden of Eden.

Your Grandmothers



= 11 minutes

EXPLORING THE LESSON



LISTENING TEAM REPORT AND DISCUSSION

8 MINUTES

Limit discussion to four minutes

Limit discussion to four minutes

Optional discussion question: How can these be motivating?

[Ask Listening Team Member 1 whether he or she can tell you what escaped from Pandora's Box. If any of the following were missed, ask whether anyone else in class could remember it.]

Answer: Every known woe. Also mentioned – Despair, Hate, Guilt, Regret, Revenge, Shame, and Deceit.

Ask Listening Team Member 2 if he or she can tell you what was left in Pandora's Box.

Answer: Hope.]

[Class discussion question:]

With every known woe released, why would Hope be left in the box?

[Ask Listening Team Member 3 if he or she can tell you what the grandmothers mentioned, besides curiosity that might have led to the box being opened too soon.]

Answer: Boredom, Spite, Hopelessness, Foolishness, and Gullibility.

Ask Listening Team Member 4 if he or she can tell you what Olga defined as the "Enemy of your soul".

Answer: The one who is always pointing out the one thing you don't have and making that one thing the measure of your happiness or fulfillment.]



= 19 minutes



DYADIC REVIEW

8 MINUTES

Let's take some time to work in groups of two and review your notebooks for the last four lessons plus today's story. Based on everything we've learned in these lessons, write down "Things Young People Do That Mess Up Their Lives." Write down all the things you can find or remember.

[Tell your students they have four minutes to work together.]

[Check on the groups as they work, and if they have difficulty finding ideas, drop a suggestion to get them going such as:

- *Being impatient*
- *Not delaying gratification*
- *Hurting others with words, gossip (disrespect)*
- *Premarital sex*

As they report, list their ideas on the board.

- Lying (dishonesty)
- Holding grudges (bitterness)
- Being self-centered (selfishness)
- Focusing on the physical instead of the emotional relationship

[After four minutes, ask each group of two to share one idea members wrote and everyone summarize in your notebooks what they share.]

Thank each of them as they share. Then ask whether any group thought of something that has not been mentioned, and add these ideas.]

 = 27 minutes



OPPOSITES

8 MINUTES

[Tell your students that you want them working again in groups of two to quickly write “the opposite” of each item they already reported.]

Give them one minute to write an opposite, and then write their opposites on the board as they report.]

Notice that most of your opposites are positive character traits. These traits or character qualities are not only things that will help you to be a good person in general, but they also are traits that will help you build a happy marriage and be ready for physical and emotional intimacy when you marry.

So how can you begin to develop each of these qualities right now? Let’s go through each one and see whether we can come up with any ideas.

I would like you to return to work with your partner to discuss how you can start developing – or further develop – the positive character quality you thought of together.

[Give your students five minutes to work together as partners and then ask them to be ready to report their work in another minute.]

Before they start reporting, tell them to take notes on the other group reports in their notebooks – including the negative behavior, its opposite, and how each group suggests developing the positive traits.]

 = 35 minutes



HINTS FROM EXPERIENCE

2 MINUTES

[Share the following hints with your students from your experience or from the experience of others.]

Let me give you a little tip to file away for when you are old enough to begin getting serious about marriage.

- Girls, do you want to know how that man you want to marry will treat you 10 or 20 years from now? It's easy to find out. Just look at how he treats his mother and his sisters. If he criticizes them now, then when the honeymoon is over, he'll most likely start criticizing you.
- Guys, it works for you, too. Is that pretty girl kind to others, especially her mother and father? Or is she sarcastic, bossy, hostile, or rebellious? If she is, you may want to keep looking.

However, if that guy or that girl is respectful, kind, courteous, loving, and works hard to please his or her parents, guess what? That's probably the way that person will treat you, even when you are old.

Here is the most important tip on love and marriage you are ever going to hear.

- Would you like to grow into someone who is worth being married to?
- Would you like to become a person who will attract someone who is talented, smart, and emotionally mature?

Then, the best thing you can do is to cultivate a good relationship with your parents and siblings.

- Guys, treating your mom and sisters in a giving and sensitive way is your greatest building block to future marital happiness.
- Girls, treating your dad and brother in a giving and kind way is your greatest building block to a happy marriage.

I guess some of you may find my hints too simple or difficult to believe. It doesn't surprise me. Most young people don't think about what it takes to be a great spouse. And sometimes, even if they do think of it, treating present family members with kindness, patience, and forgiveness is just something we'd rather not bother to do! However, these positive traits we've been discussing won't just magically appear in either you or your mate on your wedding day. It takes years to develop them and you will be many years ahead if you begin to develop them now.



= 37 minutes

ENDING THE LESSON



PERSONAL JOURNAL ENTRY

8 MINUTES

Provide sufficient time for students to complete the task.

Pledge:

“In order to save sex for the person of my dreams, in order to stay healthy, and in order to have a mature, genuine love, I (write your name) pledge to abstain from sex until I am married.”

Provide sufficient time for students to complete the task.

It is again time to revisit the list of dreams and any related obstacles that you wrote some time ago on the first page of your Personal Journal under “My dreams . . .”, the comments you made in the “Stronger Together”, the “I Assert My Independence From Drugs”, and the “I Assert My Independence From Alcohol” sections of your journal.

Take a few minutes to re-read your words and think about how they may have changed since then. If so, feel free to modify them in your Personal Journal.

Once you have completed reviewing the previous sections, you are ready to make an entry in the section titled, “I Assert My Independence From Premarital Sex.”

[Dictate the following pledge to your students to write on a clean sheet in their Personal Journal:]

“In order to save sex for the person of my dreams, in order to stay healthy, and in order to have a mature, genuine love, I (write your name) pledge to abstain from sex until I am married.”

Today is an opportunity to make an affirmative statement about how you are working to achieve your goals and the potential impact that abstinence from drugs, alcohol, and premarital sex may have on your dreams.

Take a few minutes to describe specifically how you will abstain from premarital sex and avoid its negative consequences. If you are ready to make this pledge, please sign and date it. Be sure to leave enough room for a couple of signatures as you did in the previous sections.

If you have made this choice, the next challenge is for you to share with at least two people your statement about independence from premarital sex.

It is your choice whether to accept this challenge or not. These people can be the same people with whom you shared the previous section or someone else (a parent, grandparent, teacher, sibling, or friend) whom you can trust to be supportive.

Tell them some of the things you have learned about how premarital sex can affect one’s dreams and how you plan to avoid such things. Then, ask them to sign their names below yours under the “I Assert My Independence From Premarital Sex” page as a witness to your commitment.

Before dismissing your students, remember to dictate the Parent-Teacher questions to them.



= 45 minutes

If you have the courage to take this step, you will be on your way to realizing your dreams and have the benefit of a trusted partner along the way, someone who may be a source of strength for you when you encounter the challenges and obstacles ahead.

But let me add one more thing. As strong as your commitment is right now, you will sooner or later face the overwhelming temptation to forget your promises and give in to what sounds good. Know that, if you give in, you may seriously hurt the development of intimacy in your marriage. But know as well that in the next units of this course you will be introduced to some important resources for maintaining your journey to your greatest dreams.

Now that we've completed our unit on sexual issues, we are ready to explore some skills that will help us make our dreams come true. The first one, which we'll look at next time, is how we can deal with the pressure to compromise.

RESOURCES

GOING DEEPER

There is a proverb that urges us to set a guard at the door of our heart because the heart is the birthplace of our dreams: “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

Unfortunately, life is filled with many things which if we give them the chance, will destroy our dreams before they are even born. In this course, we have been learning about several of them: drugs, alcohol, and premarital sex. What’s worse, the temptations and opportunities for self-destruction are easy to find. What is much harder, and comes less naturally, is figuring out ways to guard against those things that would hurt our hearts.

GUARDING YOUR HEART ACTIVITY

How can we “set a guard” at the door of our hearts to keep the vandals out? How can we protect that “wellspring of life” where our dreams are born and nurtured? In the next unit, we will be studying some life skills that will help us. In preparation for that unit, I would like us to come up with as many ideas as we can on the various ways to “guard our hearts” and, in so doing, protect our dreams. We are going to start by brainstorming. We will evaluate later. So let’s come up with as many ideas as we can and I’ll write them on the board.

List the brainstorm ideas on the board as they are given.

[When you have between ten and twenty ideas on the board or when you think most of the ideas are out, continue. If you think they have missed major important ideas, feel free to contribute some thoughts yourself.]

Some ideas could be: Be careful of wrong advice from well-meaning friends; don’t compromise your values; use caution in one-on-one time spent with opposite sex; cultivate friendships that share your values; guard your thought life.]

Now let’s focus on the most important ideas. We’re going to vote for the ideas that we think are most valuable or would work the best. You each can vote as many as three times, but not more than three. Take a minute to look through the list and see which three you think are the best.

Record the number of votes each idea receives.

[Read each idea aloud and have students raise their hands to vote for their preference. Record the number of votes next to the idea.]

Now we'll concentrate on the two to five ideas that got the most votes and evaluate them further. Let's try to put specific steps to each of the following ideas:

- How exactly might we accomplish them?
- Who else would we need or want to enlist to help us?
- What obstacles might we have to overcome to put these ideas into practice?

FOCUS POINT

Be sure to leave time for discussion at the end of the learning activity so your students can discuss the connection between the learning activity and the lesson. Listen to see whether they seemed to understand the key points listed. If you sense that one or more of these points may have been lost, be sure to guide the discussion to make sure they get these main ideas.

1. It is easy to lose your heart. It takes conscious effort and hard work to guard it.
2. Specific concrete plans and steps make it easier to guard our hearts.

PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

For Family Discussion:

1. Share with your adolescent one or two character qualities that you think contribute to being a good spouse.
2. Ask your adolescent to share with you the list of positive qualities covered in class. Share your own observations about how these might help a marriage.