

# How Well Do I Communicate With Others?

A Lesson Plan from *Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum*

Fostering responsibility by respecting young people's rights to honest sexuality education.

## NSES ALIGNMENT:

By the end of 12th grade, students will be able to:

**PR.12.IC.1** – Demonstrate ways to communicate decisions about whether or when to engage in sexual behaviors.

**TARGET GRADE:** Grade 9  
Lesson 2

**TIME:** 50 Minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

- White board and markers
- Student Handout: "How Well Do I Communicate with Others? Example One" – one per half the students in class, folded in half
- Student Handout: "How Well Do I Communicate with Others? Example Two" – one per half the students in the class, folded in half
- "How Well Do I Communicate with Others?" roles – prepared as described
- Homework: "Communication in the Media" – one per student
- Exit slips cut in half, enough for each student to have one half sheet
- Blank sheets of 8 ½ x 11 paper –one per student
- Pencils in case students do not have their own

## ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

Print out enough copies of the "How Well Do I Communicate?" roles and cut them into thirds. Put each role into separate piles, and from that create enough triads for the entire class (for example, if you have 24 students, you would create 8 complete sets with each having a partner one, a partner two and a judge to create one complete set). You may wish to put each set together with a paper clip for easy distribution in class.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Describe at least two characteristics of effective communication. [Knowledge]
2. Apply effective communication skills to a scenario relating to communicating with a partner about having a sexual relationship. [Knowledge, Skill]

## A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE:

Language is really important and we've intentionally been very careful about our language throughout this curriculum. You may notice language throughout the curriculum that seems less familiar - using the pronoun "they" instead of "her" or "him", using gender neutral names in scenarios and role-plays and referring to "someone with a vulva" vs. a girl or woman. This is intended to make the curriculum inclusive of all genders and gender identities. You will need to determine for yourself how much and how often you can do this in your own school and classroom, and should make adjustments accordingly.

## PROCEDURE:

**STEP 1:** Say, "Today, we are going to looking at how we communicate with other people. Have any of you ever said something to another person, and they've reacted in a surprising way – or some way that didn't make sense?" After students react, say, "A lot of times we immediately wonder, 'wow, what's wrong with them? Why didn't they get what I was saying?' Rather than blame the other person right away, we need to take a look at how we communicate, and whether we're being as clear as we think we are!" (2 minutes)

**STEP 2:** Ask the class to get into pairs and to make sure they have something to write with. Distribute the blank sheets of paper and say, "I'm going to distribute two things to you right now. First, everyone should get a blank sheet of paper. Once you all have that,

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I'm going to give another sheet to one person in each pair. That person is going to be the 'communicator.' We will do this twice, switching roles the second time, so to start please decide now who is going to be the communicator first."

Ask the communicators to raise their hands and walk around the room with the "How Well Do I Communicate? Example One" sheets, folded in half. Say, "I am giving the communicator a sheet. Please do not show it to your partner or anyone else in the class.

We will call the other person in the pair the 'listener.' The communicator needs to sit facing the listener so that the listener cannot see what is on the piece of paper. Communicators, you may need to hold up a notebook between you and your listener. When I say 'go,' communicators are going to describe what is on the sheet of paper in front of them. Listeners, you are going to draw on the blank paper what you hear the communicators describe to try to create something that matches what they are describing. The goal is at the end to have both papers look the same.

Now, there are a few rules:"

Write the following rules on the board as you go through them:

1. Listeners cannot see what's on the communicator's sheet.
2. Communicators cannot use hand gestures or draw anything themselves.
3. You may not look at the work other pairs are doing or refer to their work.
4. Listeners can ask clarifying questions, but otherwise should not speak.

Answer any questions they may have and tell them they have about 5 minutes in which to do this. Ask them to not show the other person what's on their sheet, even once you have called time. (10 minutes)

**STEP 3:** After about 5 minutes, ask everyone to stop, reminding them to not show the other person either what was on their sheet or what they drew. Say, "Please place your sheets face down on the desk. Now, you're going to switch – the communicator is now the listener, and vice versa. I am going to distribute a second, different sheet to the new communicators, and the other person will now be the listeners. Please do not get started until I have said 'go.'" Have the new communicators raise their hands and go around the room distributing the "How Well Do I Communicate? Example Two" sheets folded in half to them. Once everyone has a sheet, remind them of the rules and that they have about 5 minutes and have them get started. (8 minutes)

**STEP 4:** As the students are working, write on the board to the right of the activity rules, "Worked Well" and then a few feet to the right, "Didn't Work Well." After about 5 minutes, ask the students to stop their work. At this point, they should turn over all four sheets to compare both drawings and originals. Give them a minute to react to these in their pairs.

Ask, "So how'd you all do?" Allow the range of responses, from "we both did great," or "I was nowhere near – but my partner did a great job!"

Say, "Think about whether your drawing matched the communicator's descriptions. When something you drew matched, why do you think that was?" Record responses in the "Worked Well" column. Responses may include:

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- The person was really clear
- The person was specific
- The person compared what was on the sheet to something else I already knew
- I spoke up and asked questions to make sure I understood
- The person didn't get frustrated; if I didn't get it they tried again

Then ask, "When something you drew didn't match, or if you didn't end up completing the drawing, why do you think that was?" Record these responses under the "Didn't Work Well" column. Responses may include:

- The communicator got frustrated with me when I didn't understand
- The communicator rushed me
- The communicator gave incomplete information, such as the shape but not its size or location on the page
- I didn't ask clarifying questions because I didn't think I could

Ask them to review the two lists and reflect on what they notice. Then say, "Both people have a role to play in communicating clearly. When we're the one who has something in particular to say or get across, we can sometimes be so focused on that that we don't think about the other person and how they're hearing it. If we become impatient or angry, that can shut the other person down so they may not feel like they can ask clarifying questions – or they may just agree to end the conversation. But both people have a responsibility to be as clear as possible when talking with another person – and they both have an equal right to be heard." (10 minutes)

**STEP 5:** Say, "This was just about drawing a picture – we're going to now talk about what it's like when two people are communicating about sex."

Divide the class into new groups of 3. Tell them that each group is going to have three characters: Partner One, Partner Two and the Judge. Each person will have a specific task, which you will give them. Explain that partners one and two are going to communicate with each other about something relating to their sexual relationship, and that they need to reach a decision. The judge's job is to decide how well they communicated and whether the decision they reached made sense given how they communicated. Ask the triads to please not show each other what's on their sheets.

Ask whether there are any questions. Refer back to the lists on the board about what they found worked or didn't work when it came to communicating during the drawing activity and to use that in their dialogues.

Then go around the room, randomly assigning people the role of partner one, partner two and judge, making sure each triad has a partner one, partner two and a judge. Once everyone has a sheet, give them about 2 minutes to read it through and think about how they want to play their role. Tell them they can make notes to themselves on their sheets, too, if they think that would help (in particular, the judge should be noting what they observe in the interaction). Tell them they can start, and that you will stop them after about 5 minutes of discussion. Ask the judge not to express any opinions until you have said so. (7 minutes)

**Note to the Teacher:** *If two cisgender, heterosexual boys end up randomly being assigned to each other, it is possible they will have a homophobic response that could include refusing to do the work or speaking or making gestures that mimic their understanding of gay male*

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*stereotypes. Some boys may be fine doing the role plays, but someone from another group might make a homophobic comment about it. Should this happen in your class, it's important to stop what you are doing, notice the interaction, and ask for the class members to reflect on what's happening and why. Direct the students back to your class groundrules – and reinforce the agreement to be respectful – and that making homophobic comments is not respectful.*

**STEP 6:** After about 5 minutes, ask the groups to stop their work. Then ask the judges to take 2 minutes to share with their partners what they thought. After 2 minutes, ask for the class' attention and process the activity using the following questions:

- What was it like to do that? What was [easy, challenging, fun, boring – add in their responses] about it?
- Partners one and two – how do you think you did? Did you feel you were clear? Was your partner clear?
- Judges – what did you think of how the partners did? Can you share an example of when the two partners were on the same page and when they weren't? Why?
- How many partners compromised and changed their minds? What caused you do that?

Say, "It's so common for people to misunderstand each other – it can happen in friendships, family relationships and between boyfriends and girlfriends. Communicating about sex carries a bit more responsibility with it – it's a big decision to make, even if one or both people have already had sex before. Each decision with a partner is a new decision – so it's important to know and communicate what you are and aren't interested in doing, and to respect where the other person is if it's different from where you are."

Distribute the homework and briefly review the assignment with the students. Then distribute the exit slips and ask them to complete them and hand them to you as they leave class. (13 minutes)

### **RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:**

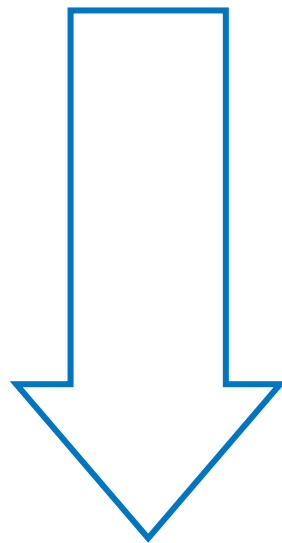
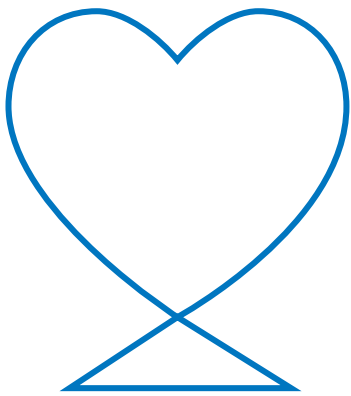
The in-class activities all serve to fulfill the learning objective for this lesson. The homework assignment contextualizes the learning in the world around the students.

### **HOMEWORK:**

Worksheet: "Communication in the Media" – have students take note of videos or shows they watch over a week's period and note what from class they saw examples of.

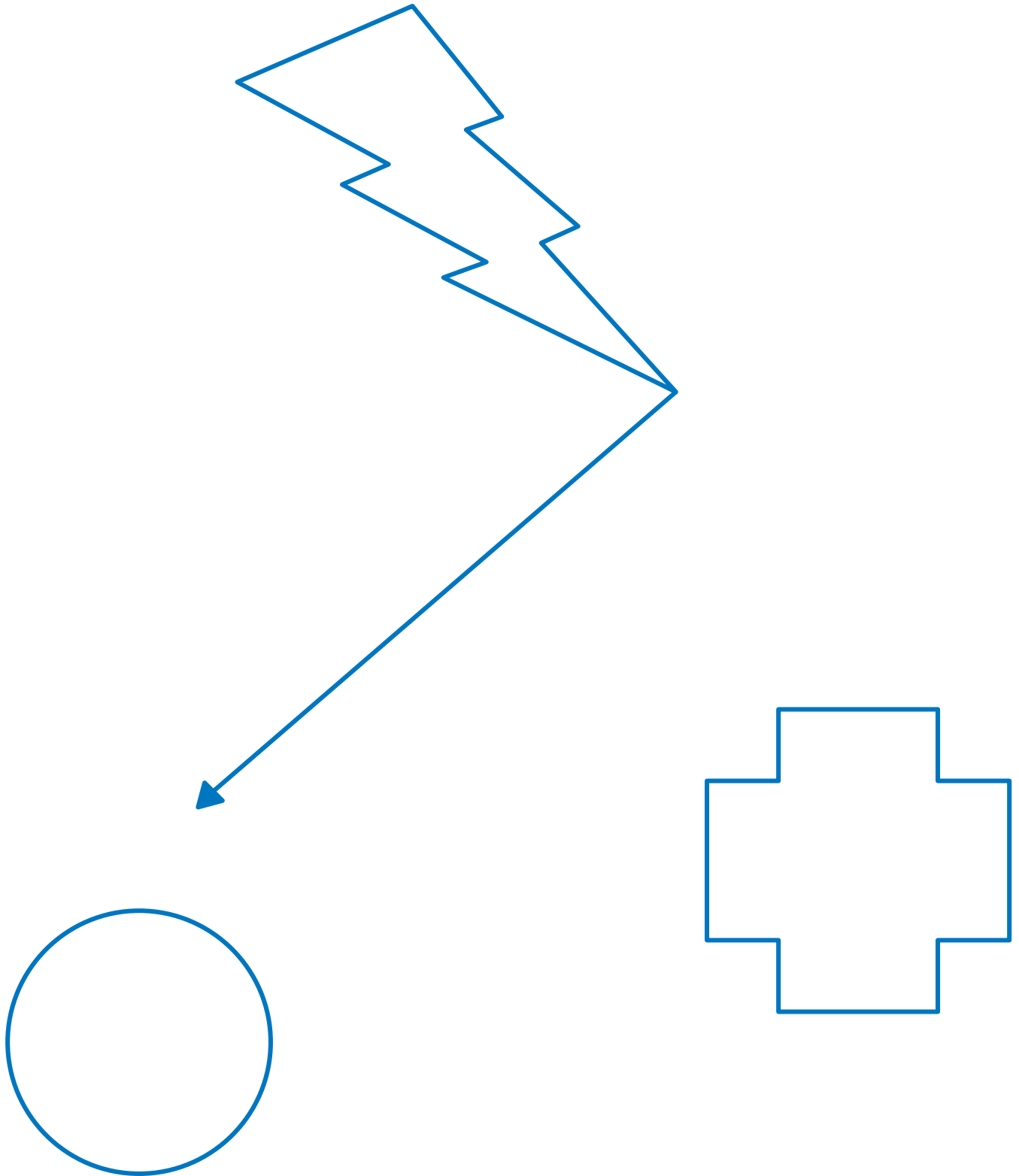
# How Well Do I Communicate With Others?

EXAMPLE ONE



# How Well Do I Communicate with Others?

EXAMPLE TWO



# How Well Do I Communicate with Others?

## ROLES

### PARTNER ONE

You really like Partner Two. You have not had sex, and you really don't feel ready. You like the making out you've done, which hasn't included oral sex yet. You have it in your mind that if you are together in three months, you'll feel like you know each other well enough and be committed enough to each other to have sex. You are 100% sure that when you do have sex you two will need to use latex barriers, like condoms – no matter what!

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### PARTNER TWO

You really like Partner One. You have not had sex, and you really think you're ready. You like the making out you've done, but really think it's time to take it to the next step. You're sure that most of your friends have started having sex and don't see any reason to wait. You think that if partner one really cares about you they'll want to have sex. The one thing you are 100% sure about is that when you do have sex, you two will need to use latex barriers, like condoms – no matter what!

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### JUDGE

How did each partner do on communicating what they do and don't want to do? What could each partner have done more effectively? Do you think the decision they reached was the right one for them as a couple? Why or why not?

## Exit Slip: Before you go . . .

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What is one specific thing you think you can use from what we did today in class that will help you communicate with another person?



## Exit Slip: Before you go . . .

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What is one specific thing you think you can use from what we did today in class that will help you communicate with another person?



# Homework: Communication in the Media

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Over the next week, as you're watching tv or shows online (or watching a movie), find two examples of couples communicating – one that you think communicated well, and one that didn't do so well. Record the examples as you see them, then answer the questions at the end.

## Couple That Communicated WELL

Show/Movie name:

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Character(s) observed:

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What was the conversation about?

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## CHECK

Communicated clearly

Listened to the other person

Compromised when something was important to the other person

Didn't give in when they were feeling pressured

Used ultimatums ("do this or else") to get what they wanted

## Couple that DIDN'T communicate WELL

Show/Movie name:

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# Homework: Communication in the Media

Character(s) observed:

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What was the conversation about?

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## CHECK

Communicated clearly

Listened to the other person

Compromised when something was important to the other person

Didn't give in when they were feeling pressured

Used ultimatums ("do this or else") to get what they wanted

## Questions:

1. For the couple that **DIDN'T communicate well**, what was the impact on their relationship?

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2. For the couple that **DIDN'T communicate well**, what would you have them do differently in order for their conversation to have been more effective or clearer?

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