Lesson for
Sexuality: More Than Inserting A Into B

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

1. List the five components of human sexuality that makeup the Circles of Sexuality and at least one element that falls within each.
2. Assess what they’ve learned about human sexuality to this point in their lives.
3. Categorize the messages they have received about sexuality using the Circles of Sexuality.
4. Draw conclusions about the predominant sources of sexuality information in their lives.
5. Infer reasons why elements of human sexuality may be missing from their learning thus far.

TIME NEEDED
50 minutes

MATERIALS
• Copies of Sexuality: More Than Inserting A Into B—one per student
• Copies of “Sexuality Messages Grid”—one per student
• Pen or pencil for each student

PREPARATION
• Make enough copies of the “Sexuality Messages Grid” for each student to have one.
• Gather pens or pencils in case students need them.
• Review An Explanation of the Circles of Sexuality.

PROCEDURE
1. Review class ground rules with your students. Let students know that during today’s class they will reflect on what they’ve learned about sexuality from a variety of sources. The lesson will expand their understanding about what the term “sexuality” really encompasses. Once they know what they have learned about sexuality, they may be able to draw conclusions about the areas of sexuality that have not been emphasized in their lives or infer why certain areas were given more attention than others. [1 minute]

2. Distribute copies of Sexuality: More Than Inserting A Into B to each student. Ask students to alternate reading the article out loud to the group. [5 minutes]

3. When students have finished reading, conduct a brief discussion about the article. Use these questions to encourage discussion:

   • As you read this article, what did you realize about the term “sexuality”?
   • Which areas of sexuality were completely new to you? (If students have questions about
• How might someone benefit from a full understanding of what sexuality encompasses? [10 minutes]

4. Tell students that today’s lesson is going to give them an opportunity to create a personalized grid that reflects what they’ve learned about sexuality thus far in their lives. Stress to students that their completed grids will serve as a basis for general discussion with the class, but that they will only be asked to share the specifics of their grid if they are comfortable sharing. Their completed grids will not be collected.

5. Explain to students that they will each receive a grid with each of the five components of human sexuality—three of which are discussed in detail in the article. The other two are more commonly understood in our culture, but let students know that you welcome questions if they don’t understand what something means. Refer to the teacher resource entitled An Explanation of the Circles of Sexuality if students have specific questions about elements in any of the five circles.

Below each component listed in the middle column of the grid is a list of elements that are included in that component. For example, the sexual health and reproduction component includes elements such as birth control and anatomy. These elements are meant to provide clarification about each component. Tell students that they are going to use the grid to record what they’ve learned or specific messages they’ve received about each of these components of sexuality.

6. Point out to students that we learn about sexuality from a variety of sources—parents, peers, media, self inquiry, etc. Learning about sexuality occurs formally, such as in school or through a conversation with a parent, and also informally, like watching TV. Learning about sexuality also happens even when something is NOT talked about. For example, a young person might notice that their parents never talk about what they should do if they’re being sexually harassed at school. While this is certainly an element of sexuality, the lack of conversation about the topic might make the student think it’s not important, that it doesn’t happen to people their age or that their family is not comfortable talking about it.

7. Pass out copies of the “Sexuality Messages Grid.” [5 minutes for steps 4 to 7]

8. Tell students that they are going to complete their grids individually, after thinking about what messages they’ve received about sexuality in their lives thus far. Point out that on the left side of the grid they should list messages that were directly stated (i.e., TV commercials teach you that people can get STDs, like herpes, HPV and HIV). Students should list the message and the source next to it. The right side of the grid should include messages that were indirectly stated or unclear (e.g., a parent changes the channel when a love scene comes on the TV). Tell students that they can list more than one message in each box. They should think of as many as possible and can write on the back if they need more room. Challenge students to come up with at least one message for each of the five circles in human sexuality. Students can begin as soon as they are ready. Circulate around the room to address any questions that students have. [15 minutes]

9. When time is up, ask students to look over their grids, both the content of their messages and the overall look of their grids. Use the following questions to generate discussion:

- Which of the five circles of sexuality (headings in middle column) has the most messages? The least? Why do you think that is?
- What themes do you notice about the KINDS of messages you received? (Did you receive accurate or inaccurate information? Did you get messages that communicate values?)
- What themes do you notice about who the messages came from?
- How would you characterize the messages based on who they came from (e.g., media messages were inaccurate, messages came from mom, but not dad, etc.)? What do you make of this?

10. Close the lesson by asking students how their view of sexuality has changed as a result of this exercise. [14 minutes for steps 9 and 10]
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clearly Stated Messages</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sexuality Component</th>
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<th>Subtle/Unclear Messages</th>
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<td>(also called “body awareness”)</td>
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<td>Sexual response cycle</td>
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<td>Non-intercourse sexual behaviors</td>
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<td><strong>Intimacy</strong></td>
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<td>Puberty, sexual health, birth control &amp; safer sex methods, STIs, anatomy of reproductive systems, intercourse behaviors, related thoughts and feelings</td>
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<td>Withholding sex for personal gain</td>
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<td>Sexual abuse and assault</td>
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Sexuality is much more than sexual feelings or sexual intercourse. It is an important part of who a person is and what she or he will become. It includes all the feelings, thoughts and behaviors associated with being female or male, being in love, being in relationships that include sexual intimacy and sensual or sexual activity as well as how a person feels about his or her body. It also includes enjoyment of the world as we know it through the five senses: taste, touch, smell, hearing and sight.

**SENSUALITY**

(The term “body awareness” can also be used.) This circle encompasses awareness and feelings about your own body and other people’s bodies, especially the body of a sexual partner. Body awareness enables us to feel good about how our bodies look and feel and what they can do. Body awareness also allows us to enjoy the pleasure our bodies can give us and others. This part of our sexuality affects our behavior in several ways.

- **Body image**
  Feeling attractive and proud of one’s body and the way it functions influences many aspects of life. Adolescents often choose media personalities as the standard for how they should look, so they are often disappointed by what they see in the mirror. They may be especially dissatisfied when the mainstream media does not portray or does not positively portray physical characteristics the teens see in the mirror, such as color of skin, type of hair, shape of eyes, height or body shape.

- **Experiencing pleasure and release from sexual tension**
  Our bodies are wired to experience pleasure when certain parts are touched. People also experience sensual pleasure from taste, sight, hearing and smell.

- **Satisfying skin hunger**
  The need to be touched and held by others in loving, caring ways is often referred to as skin hunger. Adolescents typically receive considerably less touch from their parents than do younger children. Many teens satisfy their skin hunger through close physical contact with peers. Sexual intercourse may sometimes result from a teen’s need to be physically close to someone, rather than from sexual desire.

- **Feeling physical attraction for another person**
  The center of attraction to others is not in the genitals. The center of attraction to others is in the brain, humans’ most important “sex organ.”

- **Fantasy**
  The brain also gives people the capacity to have fantasies about sexual behaviors and experiences. Fantasy provides a safe environment where people can experiment with elements of their sexuality without harm to themselves or others. Sexual fantasy is normal. Not all fantasies should be brought into reality because if they are, the results may be unexpected, unwanted or harmful.

- **Attraction template**
  This refers to all of the physical elements of another person that a person finds attractive. This is also known as someone’s “type.”

- **Non-intercourse behaviors**
  This refers to all of the behaviors that one might engage in for sexual pleasure that do not involved oral, anal or vaginal sex. These behaviors are also referred to as outercourse.

- **Human sexual response cycle**
  This refers to the predictable series of physiological changes that occur in the human body when presented with sexual stimuli.

**INTIMACY**

Intimacy is the ability to be emotionally close to another human being and to accept closeness in return. Being intimate with someone means that you can let your guard down and be who you really are. An important element of a healthy intimate relationship is the concept of reciprocity between
partners. Several aspects of intimacy include the following:

• **Sharing**
  Sharing personal thoughts and feelings with someone else is what makes personal relationships rich. While body awareness is about physical closeness, intimacy focuses on emotional closeness.

• **Caring**
  Caring about others means feeling their joy and their pain and being open to emotions that may not be comfortable or convenient. Nevertheless, an intimate relationship is possible only when we care.

• **Liking or loving another person**
  Having emotional attachment or connection to others is a manifestation of intimacy.

• **Emotional risk-taking**
  To have true intimacy with others, there has to be some emotional risk-taking. Sharing personal thoughts and feelings with someone else is risky, because the other person may not feel the same way. But it is not possible to be really close with another person without being honest and open with her or him.

• **Vulnerability**
  Intimacy requires vulnerability on the part of each person in the relationship. The person we share with, care about and like or love has the power to hurt us emotionally. That makes us vulnerable.

**SEXUAL IDENTITY**

Sexual identity is a person's understanding of who she or he is sexually, including the sense of being male or female. Sexual identity consists of four interlocking pieces that affect how each person sees him- or herself. Sexual identity is a core part of every human being and can only be understood and defined by the individual.

• **Biological sex**
  This refers to the chromosomes that one is born with along with the physical manifestation of internal and external sexual organs that result. While most people are born with either XX (female) or XY (male) chromosomes, some people are born with other combinations, including XXY, XYY and many more. People born with a chromosomal makeup other than XX or XY are known as intersexed. An intersexed person may have ambiguous genitalia, underdeveloped or missing internal reproductive organs or other conditions that manifest as a result of different hormone levels.

• **Gender identity**
  This refers to one's sense of being male or female. Gender identity is set in the brain between the ages of two and three and cannot be changed. While it is most often consistent with a person's physical body, sometimes it is not. When this happens, the person would likely identify as being transgender. People in this situation may take a variety of steps to bring their internal perception of self and their physical body into alignment.

• **Gender role**
  Gender roles are socially defined, often exaggerated, identifying actions and/or behaviors for each gender. Some things are determined by the way male and female bodies are built or function. For example, only women menstruate, and only men produce sperm. Other gender roles are culturally determined. In the United States, it is considered appropriate for only women to wear dresses to work in the business world. In other cultures, men may wear skirt-like outfits everywhere.

There are many socially defined expectations about what men and women can/should do that have nothing to do with the way their bodies are built or function. This aspect of sexuality is especially important for young adolescents to understand, since peer, parent and cultural pressures to be "masculine" or "feminine" increase during the adolescent years. Young men and women have the right to accept or reject elements of their gender role. This is what makes each person an individual. All people possess masculine and feminine qualities, and it is healthier for individuals to express what feels most natural for them, regardless of what society's messages are.
Gender bias means holding stereotyped opinions about people based on their gender. Gender bias might include believing that women are less intelligent or less capable than men, that men are insensitive, that men cannot raise children without the help of women, that women cannot be analytical or that men cannot be nurturing. Many times, people hold fast to these stereotyped opinions without giving rational thought to the subject of gender.

**Sexual orientation**

Sexual orientation refers to the directions of one's romantic and erotic attraction; it is who one falls in love with. While many popular culture messages portray sexual orientation in terms of sexual behavior, it is really about the feelings that someone experiences. Think about your first crush on someone. It is those feelings that help someone determine their orientation. The feelings may or may not manifest through physical sexual behaviors with another person. Orientation falls along a scale from attraction to a different gender (heterosexuality) to attraction toward both genders (bisexual) to attraction to the same gender (gay/lesbian). Sexual orientation begins to emerge by adolescence although many gay and lesbian youth say they knew they felt same-gender attraction by age 10 or 11. Research indicates that roughly 10 percent of the population is exclusively gay/lesbian in orientation.

Heterosexual, gay, lesbian and bisexual young people can all experience same-gender sexual attraction and/or activity around puberty. Such behavior, including sexual play with same-gender peers, crushes on same-gender adults or sexual fantasies about same-gender people are normal for pre-teens and young teens and are not necessarily related to sexual orientation.

Negative social messages and homophobia in our wider culture can mean that young adolescents who are experiencing sexual attraction to and romantic feelings for someone of their own gender need support, so they can clarify their feelings and accept their sexual orientation.

**Sexual Health and Reproduction**

This area of sexuality involves sexual anatomy, the capacity to reproduce and the behaviors and attitudes that make sexual relationships healthy and enjoyable. It deals with the ownership, care and maintenance of all of the reproductive organs, as well as any outcomes that result from use of the reproductive system with another person.

- **Factual information about reproduction**
  Young people need factual information about reproduction to understand how male and female reproductive systems function and how conception and/or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) occur. (STDs are also sometimes referred to as sexually transmitted infections (STIs)). Adolescents often have inadequate information about their own and/or their partners' bodies. Teens need this information, so they can make informed decisions about sexual expression and protect their health. Young people need to understand anatomy and physiology because every adolescent needs the knowledge and understanding to help him or her appreciate the ways in which his or her body functions.

- **Feelings and attitudes**
  These vary widely when it comes to sexual expression, reproduction and topics such as STDs, contraceptive use, abortion, pregnancy and childbirth. It is important for each individual to have clarity on these issues before entering into a relationship and to be able to articulate these views with a partner before acting in a way that is inconsistent with a person's values.

- **Sexual intercourse**
  This is one of the most common behaviors among humans. Sexual intercourse is a behavior that may produce sexual pleasure that often culminates in orgasm in females and in males. Sexual intercourse may also result in pregnancy and/or STDs. Sexual intercourse takes many forms, including oral, anal and vaginal intercourse.

- **Reproductive and sexual anatomy**
  Having a reproductive system means that it is necessary to understand that system and be able to take appropriate measure to ensure its
If someone is engaging in behaviors that may lead to pregnancy or STDs, it is important that the individual is equipped with preventive information so that his or her decisions are healthy. Each individual has one reproductive system for life; appropriate care is necessary during the adolescent years so that if the person wishes to later have or father children, the system is healthy and able to do so.

**Sexual reproduction**

This is the actual process of conception, pregnancy, delivery and recovery following childbirth. This is just as much a part of sexuality as is the act of intercourse, even though many people don't think of it this way. Young people need information about sexual reproduction—the process whereby two different individuals each contribute half of the genetic material to create a child. The child is, therefore, not identical to either parent. (Asexual reproduction is a process whereby simple one-celled organisms reproduce by splitting, creating two separate one-celled organisms identical to the original (female) organism before it split.)

**SEXUALIZATION**

Sexualization is that aspect of sexuality in which people behave sexually to influence, manipulate or control other people. Often called the “shadowy” side of human sexuality, sexualization spans behaviors that range from the relatively harmless to the violent, cruel and criminal. These sexual behaviors include flirting, seduction, withholding sex from an intimate partner to punish her or him or to get something, sexual harassment, sexual abuse and rape. Teens need to know that no one has the right to exploit them sexually and that they do not have the right to exploit anyone else sexually.

**Flirting**

This is a relatively harmless sexualization behavior. It allows people to enjoy their sexuality with others without risk of physical outcome. Flirting is mutual: it is enjoyed and participated in by both people. It is not one sided. In some cases, flirting crosses the line and makes someone feel hurt, humiliated or ashamed. This is no longer flirting, but rather sexual harassment.

**Seduction**

This is a difficult concept for many people to grasp, but it tends to be more harmful than flirting. It always implies manipulating someone else, usually so that the other person will have sexual intercourse with the seducer. The seducer is using the person seduced for his or her own sexual gratification.

**Sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment is an illegal behavior that means harassing someone else by targeting an element of his or her sexuality, including but not limited to his or her gender. It could mean making personal, embarrassing remarks about someone’s appearance, especially characteristics associated with sexual maturity, such as the size of a woman’s breasts or of a man’s testicles and penis. It can also include behaviors such as spreading sexual rumors, outing someone in terms of his or her orientation or repeated sexual advances that are not returned. Sexual harassment creates an unsafe environment for someone, emotionally and/or physically. People have a right to go to work or school without worrying about elements of their sexuality being targeted or made fun of by others. Sexual harassment can occur between people of any gender and can be particularly difficult to experience at the hands of a supervisor or someone who has more power (i.e., a teacher). The law provides protection against sexual harassment. Young people should know that they have the right to file a complaint with appropriate authorities if they are sexually harassed and that others may complain of their behavior if they sexually harass someone else.

**Rape**

Rape is coercing or forcing someone else to have oral, anal or vaginal intercourse. Force, in the case of rape, can include use of overpowering strength, threats and/or implied threats that arouse fear in the person being raped. Rape takes many forms and affects people of both genders. While women are more likely to be raped, it is estimated that 1 in 33 men will be raped in their lifetime. Rape is motivated by a desire for power and control over the victim; it is not about sexual desire.
Refusing to accept no and forcing the other person to have sexual intercourse always means rape.

• Incest
Incest is sexual contact between two people who are related. Incest is illegal and can be damaging because it exploits the trust that family members tend to place in one another. It can also be particularly difficult when there is an age difference between the two people. In these cases, because the older person knows that incest is illegal and tries to hide what is happening, he or she often blames the child. The triple burden of sexual contact with a family member, betrayed trust and self-blame makes incest particularly damaging to survivors of incest. In addition, incest is often misunderstood in our culture, giving way to hurtful jokes that make light of the damaging experience of incest. Incest is far more common than people realize, but because it involves sexual contact within a family system, it is one of the least talked about forms of sexual assault. This can lead survivors of incest to feel even more isolated with their experience and can prevent them from seeking support.

Adapted from Wilson, P., Our Whole Lives: Sexuality Education for Grades 7-9, Unitarian Universalist Association (1999).