

# Lesson 7

## Feelings: SHAME

### Activity 2

#### Discussion

Review the list below and discuss the following acts. Do teens feel shame, guilt, or embarrassment doing each of these? Should they? Would you? Why?

- Buying a condom
- Asking their doctor about a bump that they are concerned may be the result of a Sexually Transmitted Infection
- A parent accidentally walking in on them while masturbating
- Disclosing the number of sexual partners they have had thus far to friends or peers
- Admitting to being a virgin
- Dropping a tampon out of your purse in the school hallway
- Watching a porn on the internet that you accidentally came across

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#### Vignette #1:

Sarah is seventeen years old and has been dating her boyfriend for a little over a month now. Almost daily some of her friends discuss their sexual activity in a way that is exciting and humorous. Sarah feels left out. She looks forward to this act with her boyfriend and anticipates being able to connect with her friends in this way after it happens, despite not feeling as though she is “in love” as she always thought she wanted to be when engaging in sex for the first time. Sarah decides to take things to the next level with her boyfriend and try oral sex that evening. She anticipated the discussion that would occur the next day with her friends and their surprise at her decision to go through with this behavior since she was always fondly referred to as the “late bloomer” in her group.

That night, after some “fooling around,” Sarah performed oral sex on her boyfriend. Upon arriving back home, she felt slightly strange. She felt uncomfortable, but in a way she wasn’t able to understand or explain. She wondered where her excitement had gone and what it meant that she no longer cared about the next day’s discussion with her friends. She found herself feeling slightly ashamed the following day but was not sure of the cause. She had a hard time understanding, since some of her friends had gone this far with their partners, why she felt this overwhelming sense of discomfort.

- What could have happened here?
- What are your thoughts about why she suddenly no longer cared about the reactions of her friends?

- What are some of the reasons you can think of for why she did and/or did not want to take things to this level with her boyfriend?
- How do you think pleasure factored into Sarah's experience? Could pleasure have something to do with her reaction, or no?
- What could her personal reaction say about her values?
- How could she learn from this reaction? Should she explore it more?
- Could this reaction be connected to her ideas about love? How?
- How might this experience influence her identity as a sexual being?

**Vignette #2:**

Bobby is a sixteen year old male in High School. He is popular, on the basket ball team, gets good grades, and has a girlfriend whom he's been dating for about six months now. His family consists of himself, his parents, and his little brother, and they are "very close." He describes himself as a happy guy with a great family and group of friends. Lately, however, Bobby has been having fantasies that he feels are very disturbing or abnormal during masturbation. Although his friends don't discuss at length the sort of fantasies they usually experience, he feels certain that they are not at all similar to his. He has no desire to perform the sort of fantasies he imagines on his girlfriend, yet worries that these images are required in order to obtain pleasure when masturbating. He additionally worries about what it means that he could derive pleasure from such atypical or "perverse" thoughts.

- Should Bobby feel ashamed?
- Is there something wrong with Bobby?
- How do we define "normal" when it comes to sexuality?
- Is it shameful to experience pleasure to thoughts or fantasies that go outside the norm?
- How is pleasure connected to shame?
- Can you think of some other examples where shame would be attached to pleasure? Guilt? Embarrassment?
- Where does this come from?
- What are the rules of your culture/ religion/ family with regard to pleasure and pleasure seeking behaviors?

**Vignette #3:**

Samantha is in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. She is a good student and very responsible despite the occasional late night out or shopping splurge. She recently broke up with her boyfriend of two years and ever since it seems she feels inclined to masturbate with more frequency than before. Although masturbation has always been a routine part of her life, she has never felt as though it was a constant thought or urge that was distracting or irrational. She is unsure of what is normal with regard to frequency of this behavior, and feels confused about the messages she heard growing up to this effect. Her "excessive" desire has resulted in feelings of confusion about who she is as a sexual person and negative thoughts about her identity as a girl.

- Is there something wrong with Samantha?

- How do we define “normal” when it comes to masturbation?
- Can her behavior be labeled as “shameful”? Why/ why not?

**Vignette from Pop Culture:**

Let’s think about the acts of domestic violence perpetrated against Rihanna by boyfriend and pop-star Chris Brown last year. Discuss with a partner or in small groups how Chris may be experiencing both shame and guilt in this situation.

- How is it that others are ashamed of his behavior?
- Where does this feeling come from?
- What should Chris feel guilty about?
- Why is it that guilt is a justified experience for Chris?

Jot down your ideas and discuss them with the class.