



## **Relationships and Sexuality Education**

### **Information for Parents**

The content of RSE at post-primary level is described under three themes. These themes are neither sequential nor discrete; they merge and overlap with each other.

#### **Junior Cycle Themes**

##### **1.0 Human growth and development**

This theme consists of an age appropriate understanding of the biology and psychology of the human life cycle from conception through birth and growth to death. This is accompanied by a rationale for responsible behaviour in relationships and sexual activity, it includes insights into physical well being, infection and disease.

The topic of AIDS can be dealt with here in a way that supports the already existing AIDS education programme in the school. The theme of human growth and development provides a vocabulary for understanding the functioning of all parts of the human body and a psychological understanding of feelings and their appropriate expression.

##### **1.1 Human growth and development themes**

- Awareness of changes in the human life cycle
- An understanding of the physical and emotional changes that take place in males and females at puberty and appreciation of variation
- Knowledge of sexual organs and their function
- An appreciation of hygiene associated with puberty
- An awareness of the sometimes conflicting feelings, moods and emotions characteristic of adolescence
- Development of a language for the expression of emotions
- An understanding of sexually transmitted diseases, with particular reference to HIV / AIDS.

## **2.0 Human sexuality**

This theme deals with human sexuality as including all aspects of the human person that relate to being male and female and being subject to change throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions. The theme offers opportunities to develop a holistic understanding of sexuality as contributing to the development of personal well being, enhancing personal and family relationships and ultimately contributing to the well being of society.

### **2.1 Human sexuality themes**

- an awareness of what it is to be female and male
- an awareness of stereotyping and its influence on attitudes and behaviour
- an appreciation of equality and difference
- information on and sensitivity to sexual orientation
- awareness of discrimination
- respect of sexuality
- developing skills for personal safety

## **3.0 Human relationships**

This theme focuses on the importance of relationships for health and well-being. It examines how one relates to self and others – family, friends (significant and incidental) – and stresses the importance of self-esteem as a basis for worthwhile friendships and relationships. It looks at rights and responsibilities and how patterns and expressions of relationship change with time. It addresses issues such as communication, influence, intimacy, sexual attraction and sexual expression in relationships consistent with personal and moral integrity.

### **3.1 Human relationships themes**

- developing skills for self awareness
- developing skills for building and maintaining self esteem
- awareness of the qualities valued in friendships and how friendship patterns change
- developing skills for establishing and maintaining relationships
- awareness of roles and responsibilities in relationships and families
- identifying groups students belong to, behaviour in these groups and response to peer pressure.

## **4.0 Lesson themes for Junior Cycle by Year**

### *Year One: Description of Lesson*

#### **4.1 Me as unique and different**

This lesson looks at what makes us all unique and different and special reference to masculinity and femininity.

#### **4.2 Friendships**

In this lesson the students will examine friendships as the basis for a wider range of relationships.

#### **4.3 Changes at puberty**

This lesson will examine the changes that take place at puberty – including psychological, social and physical. The latter would include issues related to hygiene.

#### **4.4 The male and female reproductive system**

This lesson will give a clear understanding of the male and female reproductive system, intercourse and the concepts of fertility and conception.

#### **4.5 Images of male and female**

This lesson will analyse how our concepts of male and female are formed and developed.

#### **4.6 Respecting self and others**

This lesson will look at the importance of respect for self and others in relation to sexuality, sexual orientation and, in particular, how language may be used and abused.

### *Year Two: Description of Lesson*

#### **5.1 From conception to birth**

This lesson will give a clear understanding of human fertility and the development of foetus from conception to birth.

#### **5.2 Peer pressure and other influences**

This lesson will examine the role of peer pressure and other influences in the area of sexuality.

#### **5.3 Managing relationships**

This lesson will provide the students with opportunities for developing skills for establishing and maintaining relationships at appropriate levels.

#### **5.4 Making responsible decisions**

This lesson will focus on the skills for making considered decisions in the area of sexuality, consistent with a personal value system and within a moral framework.

### **5.5 Health and personal safety**

This lesson will develop an awareness of the potential risks in developing new relationships and the practical steps involved in keeping safe. This will include issues of health and personal safety and infection awareness with a particular emphasis on sexually transmitted diseases.

### **5.6 Body image**

This lesson will help students to develop a positive appreciation of self.

## *Year Three: Description of Lesson*

### **6.1 Where am I now?**

This lesson will consist of a review of human growth and development (refer back to 4.3).

### **6.2 Relationships – what’s important?**

This lesson will help students to identify for themselves what is important in a mature relationship.

### **6.3 The three R’s – respect, rights and responsibility**

This lesson deals with respect for self and others and rights and responsibilities involved in relationships (integrate with 6.4)

### **6.4 Conflict**

This lesson will help the students to identify sources of conflict in the context of relationships and to identify and develop strategies for resolution.

## **Senior Cycle Themes**

### **7.0 Human growth and development**

This theme consists of an age appropriate understanding of the biology and psychology of the human life cycle from conception through birth and growth to death. This is accompanied by a rationale for responsible behaviour in relationships and sexual activity. It includes insights into physical well being, infection and disease. The topic of AIDS can be dealt with here in a way that supports the already existing AIDS education programme in the school. The theme of human growth and development provides a vocabulary for understanding the functioning of all parts of the human body and a psychological understanding of feelings and their appropriate expression.

## **7.1 Human growth and development themes**

- understanding the structure and function of sex organs
- awareness of fertility
- awareness of the importance and methods of family planning
- understanding of pregnancy and the development of the foetus
- appreciation of the importance of health care during pregnancy
- recognising the range of human emotions and ways to deal with these
- an understanding of the relationship between safe and sexual practice and sexually transmitted diseases with particular reference to HIV / AIDS.

## **8.0 Human sexuality**

This theme deals with human sexuality as including all aspects of the human person that relate to being male and female and being subject to change throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions. The theme offers opportunities to develop a holistic understanding of sexuality as contributing to the development of personal well being, enhancing personal and family relationships and ultimately contributing to the well being of society.

### **8.1 Human sexuality themes**

- understanding of what it means to be male or female
- consideration of male and female roles in relationships and in society
- awareness and understanding of sexual orientations exploration of some of the issues pertaining to equality
- understanding the concept of sexual harassment and its different forms
- awareness of sexual abuse and rape, including legal issues and the identification of help agencies in these areas
- skills for making choices about sexual activity
- Exploration of the range of attitudes, values and beliefs regarding sexual behaviour in modern society

## **9.1 Human relationships**

This theme focuses on the importance of relationships for health and well-being. It examines how one relates to self and others – family, friends (significant and incidental) – and stresses the importance of self-esteem as a basis for worthwhile friendships and relationships. It looks at rights and responsibilities and how patterns and expressions of relationship change with time. It addresses issues such as communication, influence, intimacy, sexual attraction and sexual expression in relationships consistent with personal and moral integrity.

## **9.1 Human relationships themes**

- understanding the nature of peer pressure
- developing skills for resolving conflict
- development of an awareness of the complex nature of love and loving relationships
- understanding marriage as a loving commitment
- deeper awareness of the importance of family life

## **10.0 Lesson themes for Senior Cycle**

### **10.1 Recognising and expressing feelings and emotions**

This lesson will provide opportunities for developing an awareness of the feelings connected to a variety of relationships and the language needed to express the feelings.

### **10.2 Fertility awareness**

This lesson seeks to develop a deeper awareness and understanding of male and female fertility as an introduction to family planning.

### **10.3 Contraception**

In this lesson students develop their awareness of natural and artificial means of contraception.

### **10.4 Values and relationships**

This lesson will help the students to identify what they value in a relationship and think critically about idealised images of relationships presented by media and other sources.

### **10.5 Personal integrity**

Students will consider how affection is expressed in a variety of contexts, how to set boundaries and strike a balance within relationships in a way that protects personal integrity and respect for one's own sexuality.

### **10.6 Responsible parenthood**

Using models of decision making, students will explore the implications and consequences of pregnancy and parenthood for both male and female. Factors that impede responsible decision making should be considered, eg., alcohol, drugs, lack of assertiveness, etc.

### **10.7 Sexually transmitted diseases**

Students will be given an understanding of the nature of sexually transmitted diseases with particular reference to AIDS, how they are contracted and the importance of early medical intervention and the location of appropriate medical support. Issues of discrimination might be addressed here.

### **10.8 Sexual harassment**

This lesson develops awareness of and skill for dealing with all forms of sexual harassment in a variety of contexts.

### **10.9 Gender orientation**

This lesson will examine some issues concerned with, and attitudes to gender orientations in modern society.

### **10.11 Gender discrimination**

This lesson helps students understand that the roles assigned to people in life situations are coloured by our stereotyped views of what it is to be male and female. This might include issues of gender discrimination, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and pornography.

### **10.12 Personal rights and personal safety**

In this lesson the students will reflect on the right to privacy and their own space, and the consequences when privacy and space are invaded. The students will understand the invasion of person integrity and the issues of power and control involved in abuse and rape. Help agencies are also identified.

### **10.13 Making, keeping and ending relationships**

In this lesson students will take steps towards developing and enhancing the skills necessary for making, keeping and ending relationships.

### **10.14 Love is ...**

The students will explore the concept of love and the importance of love in its various aspects such as closeness, intimacy, distance, pleasure and commitment.

### **10.15 Commitment and marriage**

This lesson is to help students look at the various elements of marriage that help support life-long love and family life.