

Elementary 6: Emotional and Romantic Life

Lesson 1: The role of puberty in emotional and romantic life

Aim/Rationale

The lesson plan aims to teach students the role that puberty and hormones play in their emotional and romantic life. It also encourages students to navigate their interpersonal relationships healthily and mindfully.

Learning Content

Learning Content in Sexuality Education

- 1) *Understand the changes in one's emotional and romantic life during puberty*
 - a. *Identify the changes that might happen*
 - b. *Understand what role hormones play*
 - c. *Have a positive attitude towards the changes*

Cross-curricular Competencies

- 1) *To construct their identity*
- 2) *To solve problems*
- 3) *To use information*

Purpose

Emotional and romantic relationships often become more important in students' lives with the onset of puberty. Students may be experiencing a romantic and sexual awakening and be becoming aware of emotional and behavioural changes during this period. It is important to help students better understand the signs of romantic and sexual awakening and the feelings that might come with it. This lesson plan aims to equip students with appropriate knowledge of the basics of sexual awakening, for instance, what puberty is and how hormones work in one's body. The lesson plan also promotes healthy body image by reassuring students about individual variations in age and experience of sexual awakening and relationship choices.

Relevant to:

- Respecting sexual and gender diversity
- Promoting a healthy body image

Lesson

Materials

1. A board
2. Markers
3. A large roll of paper

Essential Questions

- What is puberty?
- What are the possible changes in your romantic and emotional life when going through puberty?
- What are hormones? How do hormones work in your body?
- What are some different choices in terms of romantic relationships?

Creating a Safer Space in the Classroom

Before starting the class, you might want to check yourself to make sure that you are not making assumptions based on sexuality or gender. For example, to avoid assuming everyone is heterosexual, use the term partner instead of boyfriend and girlfriend. Using gender-neutral terms like partner can also avoid reinforcing the idea that there are only two genders.

To make all students feel included in a classroom conversation about puberty, it is critical to use gender-inclusive language so that everyone can feel that they are represented in the dialogue no matter how they identify. This means avoiding making assumptions about people's gender or about how their body might work. For example, instead of saying "when men ejaculate in their sleep", you might say, "ejaculation can happen during sleep". This avoids gendering people based on their body parts.

It is also important to understand that gender is about more than bodies - it's one's identity and expression too. To explain this to students you could say something like, "while many people believe that genitals define one's gender, that is not true. Our gender is more complex than that. Your gender is how you feel inside about who you are and how you would like to present yourself to the outside world."

When discussing early romantic relationships, questions about values may come up. For example, some students may be interested in making friends with people of other genders while some may not. Some may be going on their first dates, while some may not feel like getting into a relationship or think they're too young to. When it comes to such differences, try not to impose your personal values. Rather, you might say, "some people believe that... while others think that..." By introducing different views on one issue, you avoid judgment and establish an inclusive environment.

Terms

- Hormones
- Puberty

Development [40 minutes]

1. Begin the class by asking students to think back on their childhood.
 - a. Ask students, "When you were 4 and 5 years old, what would you do and how would you feel when you liked someone?" Possible answers could be crying for attention, asking for hugs, sharing toys and snacks with them, going to daycare together, etc.
 - b. Write the answers on one side of the board.
 - c. Ask students to describe feelings and things that they do when they like someone now. Write their answers on the other side of the board.
 - d. Conclude that when your body grows up, your emotional life may also change. Tell students "Some of you may be experiencing changes as you've gotten older. For example, you might want to have friendships with people of different genders, or you might want to have a romantic relationship with someone!"
 - e. Ask students what they think cause these changes. Write their answers in the middle of the board.
 - f. Circle the word *puberty*. If it's not on the board, add it. Tell students that your development is an important factor in your emotional and romantic life. In other words, you might become different at the onset of puberty!
2. Erase the board. Write *puberty*, *hormones*, *emotional life* on it. Explain to students that:
 - a. Hormones are chemicals that tell your cells and body parts to do certain things. For example, some kinds of hormones tell the body when to grow and when to stop growing.
 - b. These hormones travel to other cells and help with many functions, such as controlling mood, growth and development, as well as your sexual function. If hormones didn't exist, your bones wouldn't get the message that it's time for you to grow and get bigger or know when it's time to begin puberty.

- c. Puberty is a period when you grow from a child to an adult. It is also a time where you might start being interested in romantic and sexual relationships and being physically able to have children. Puberty starts when your brain releases a special hormone that triggers other hormones to travel to your testicles or ovaries and start the development process.
 - d. Some changes that might happen to your body include: growing taller and gaining weight; hair growing on the legs, underarms, and pubic area; sexual changes may also happen, such as vaginal lubrication (a naturally produced fluid that lubricates the vagina), erection (the penis increases in size and gets hard), and ejaculation (the release of a fluid called semen from the penis). It's common to have romantic or sexual thoughts and feelings during and after puberty. Some people have more or less romantic and sexual feelings (or none at all), and that's okay!
 - e. Hormones in each person's body work a bit differently, so everyone starts and goes through puberty on their body's own schedule.
 3. Repeat that hormones play a very important role throughout puberty. They not only cause bodily changes, but also make your feelings and emotions change. That's the reason why now some of you may be looking forward to dating, a relationship, and exploring your romantic life.
 4. Tell students that although puberty and hormones play a big role, people have various reasons to want or not want to start a relationship. For example, when all of their friends are dating, some people may feel the pressure to start dating too. Some people start dating because social media conveys the message that dating means popularity. Others start a relationship because they like someone and want to be closer to them!
 5. Divide students into groups of 3-4.
 - a. Assign each group a discussion topic below. Hand out a large piece of paper and markers to each group and instruct them to write down their answers to their assigned question.
 - i. Why do people start dating?
 - ii. Why do people not want to start dating?
 - iii. Why might young people begin a romantic relationship before they are ready?
 - iv. Why might young people not start a romantic relationship, even if they want one?
 - b. Ask each group to share their thoughts.
 - c. Ask the class what the right age is to start dating. Conclude that there is no one right age to start dating. Everyone will have different answers, and everyone can decide what's right for them.

Culmination [20 minutes]

1. Write the word 'PUBERTY' in the centre of the board and draw a circle around it.
2. Ask students: what are some sources that young people learn about puberty from?
3. Write their answers around the word 'PUBERTY'. Possible answers could be: school, media, family, books, friends, advertisements, doctor/nurse, TV shows, internet...

4. Pair students up to brainstorm for the following question: which ones do you think might be good sources that offer accurate information about puberty? Why?
5. Ask students to share their answers. List the qualities of reliable sources on the board. Examples include: A reliable person like a teacher or librarian referred you to the source; the person has expertise in the subject (ex. your doctor); the source is a government or another reputable organization like a university.
6. List the qualities of unreliable sources on the board. Examples include: The person doesn't have special knowledge of the subject; you were referred by an unreliable source (ex. social media); you get different information when you fact check what you learned.
7. Conclude that we have a wide range of sources to learn about puberty and our emotional life. However, it is always important to keep an eye on the reliability of the information and its source. Misunderstandings can lead to uncertainty, anxiety and many more negative emotions. False information can lead to misunderstandings and even negatively impact one's health.

Performance Objectives

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

- Identify possible emotional and behavioural changes when puberty begins.
- Understand the concept of puberty and hormones.
- Understand individual choices and variations in romantic relationships during puberty.

Assessment Ideas

1. Give each student a “Puberty Myths & Facts” worksheet.
 - a. Give students 5 minutes to think and write down their answers for Part I.
 - b. Go over the myths with the class. Ask students to vote for each one: was it a fact or myth? Ask for students to give their reasons. Then go over the right answers with the answer key.
 - c. Give students 15 minutes to complete Part II by writing their own myths & facts on the worksheet. Tell students that there should be at least one myth and one fact in the three statements that they create.
 - d. Pair students up, have them exchange their worksheets and decide if the statements their classmate has created are myths or facts. Optionally, give the students extra time and have them research some of the statements.
 - e. Encourage students to share their myths & facts with the class.
2. Ask students to create a journal of their emotional and romantic life and use it for a week. They can explore their feelings or ideas about dating and relationships. They can write about how they experience and feel about their growth and body changes. Or it can simply address their daily life and emotions, for example, how they interact with their friends or parents. If students would like to share, encourage them to show it to their friends or trusted adults. It's ok if they prefer keeping the journal to themselves. Encourage students to talk to a trusted adult, such as teachers, school nurses, and parents, if they have questions or need help.



Tel 514-527-0928 Fax 514-527-0701
2075 Plessis, Ground Level, Montréal (Québec) H2L 2Y4
info@accmontreal.org