**FACILITATOR’S GUIDE**

**Activity 6.1: Exploring Abstinence – Skills to Make Abstinence Work**

**Materials**: Mahjong paper and markers, or chalk and board.

**Activity**:

(1) Introduce the activity by pointing out that failure to make good decisions about sex is one of the reasons teens can become infected with HIV, other STDs and/or experience an unplanned pregnancy. Explain that one decision teens can make about sex is to not have it—to abstain until they are much older.

Pin up two different Mahjong paper sheets with the word "Abstinence" written on each one. **Ask teens to define abstinence**. Write their responses on one of the Mahjong paper.

**If the youth do not make the following points, make them yourself:**

Abstinence is a deliberate decision to avoid something. People choose to abstain from many different things, such as sweets, meat, candy, tobacco products, voting, alcohol and/or other drugs, and/or sexual activities.

People choose to abstain for many different reasons, such as health (avoiding sweets or fat), personal religious beliefs (avoiding meat, alcohol), commitment to a cause or person (abstaining from voting and/or participating in some behaviours), fear (of punishment, of negative consequences), and disinterest.

People define sexual abstinence in many different ways. For one person, it may mean no physical contact with potential partners—no kissing, no holding hands. For another, it may mean abstaining from one particular behaviour, such as avoiding vaginal intercourse.

For the purpose of this exercise, abstinence should mean having no sexual intercourse: vaginal, oral, and/or anal.

2) Split the class into four groups give the groups 15 minutes to **list and discuss at least 10 reasons why teens might decide to NOT have sex.**

Once the groups have completed their list, ask them to share the reasons they have listed with the rest of the class. Record the reasons on a master list using the second Mahjong paper.

Teens should have identified some of the following, if not add them to the list:

**Religious beliefs, personal beliefs, not ready for sex, want to wait until they get married, want to wait complete secondary education , risk of pregnancy, risk of STIs, don't want to jeopardize life goals, relationship with parents, not in love, peer pressure, not interested.**

Ask the class to discuss the reasons listed. Ask the teens to evaluate if each reason is a "good" or "bad" reason in their opinion to choose abstinence. Validate that people have different reasons for choosing abstinence and that each should be valued and respected.

Explain to the group that **abstinence is only 100 percent effective if used consistently and correctly.** Ask teens what they think you mean by that statement.

Conclude with the following discussion:

**Given what we learned today, do you think that there are some good reasons to choose abstinence from sexual intercourse?**

Is it difficult to stick to the decision not to have sex? What are some things people can do to help themselves follow through with that decision? What can you do to help your friends if they choose to be abstinent?

Adapted from Life Planning Education: A Youth Development Program