

# **Sexual Health Education**

## **INFLUENCING BEHAVIOUR**

Educators used to provide only sexuality information, hoping to affect behavior. We know that providing information alone is a poor use of our limited sexuality education time. In order to influence healthy choices, educators have to address the barriers that inhibit youth from practicing safe and safer behaviors.

Successful sexuality education includes opportunities for youth to address their attitudes and to learn and apply skills – in addition to acquiring knowledge – within a supportive environment.

### ***Skills that are practiced repeatedly***

- communication and negotiation
- accessing community resources
- decision making and goal setting
- evaluation and critical analysis
- application of information

### ***Attitudes that are discussed and affirmed***

- accept sexuality as a positive, integral part of who we are
- planning for sex is responsible
- right to demand abstinence or safer sex
- the responsibility to protect self and partner(s)
- acknowledge possibility of becoming pregnant and/or contracting STIs
- want to delay pregnancy until well prepared to parent
- have plans and goals for the future

### ***Knowledge that empowers***

- reproductive anatomy and functioning
- rights and responsibilities in relationships
- methods of birth control and STI protection available
- where and how to access methods, services, and further information
- rights as a teen health care consumer
- positive, enjoyable expressions of affection and intimacy
- pregnancy options

### ***Environment that supports healthy choices***

- accessible, youth-friendly services
- positive role models in school and community
- enforced policies that support positive sexual health messages
- accurate, relevant informational resources
- social supports: safety, family support, comprehensive sexuality education, educational/recreational/employment opportunities, social connections, sexuality-positive societal and media messages