

# FOR THE WHOLE WORLD

## A Vision of Sexual Rights<sup>1</sup>

### Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will:

- Evaluate the rights described in the Declaration of Sexual Rights approved by the World Association for Sexual Health.
- Identify which of these rights are commonly denied to people in their countries.
- Recommend specific changes that may need to occur if a person is to have the sexual rights that are important for them.

### Rationale

In 2014, the World Association for Sexual Health adopted a revised Declaration of Sexual Rights. It “reaffirms that sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life, encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction.” It also “reaffirms that sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social wellbeing in relation to sexuality.”

Surely the Declaration is controversial; many social customs as well as religious traditions conflict with its broad definition of sexual rights. For this very reason, an examination of the Declaration may challenge unexamined beliefs and provide individuals with an opportunity to clarify their own values and/or develop a new system of sexual values — for everyone: race, ethnicity, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, including disability, age, national, martial and family status, sexual orientation and gender identity, health status, place of residence, economic and social situation.

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<sup>1</sup> We want to thank Bill Taverner and The Center for Sex Education for sharing this lesson plan from Brick, P., Lunquist, J., Sandak, A. & Taverner, B. (2009). *Older, Wiser, Sexually Smarter: 30 Sex Ed Lessons for Adults Only*. Morristown, NJ: The Center for Sex Education. © 2009 by The Center for Sex Education and adapted and updated with permission.

## Materials

- Easel paper/board, markers, tape, and pencils
- **Handout: Declaration of Sexual Rights**

## PROCEDURE

1. Note that in recent years we've heard a lot about rights — civil rights, gay rights, patients' rights, voting rights, women's rights, workers' rights — and now the Declaration of Sexual Rights developed by the World Association for Sexual Health, a federation of organizations of professionals in the field of sexology from around the world. Through the Declaration, the Association hopes to create an understanding of the conditions that are necessary in order for people to be sexually healthy.
2. Ask participants to imagine they are developing a statement of sexual rights. What would these rights be? Ask them to brainstorm their ideas as you jot them on easel paper or board. Note that they won't discuss them immediately, just accept all suggestions.
3. Distribute **Handout: Declaration of Sexual Rights** and pencils. Ask participants to look over the list of rights and circle any *not* on the list the group developed.

### *Discussion Questions*

- What rights are on the Declaration that we didn't list? Are they important? Would you want to add them to our list? Why or why not?
  - Which rights, if any, do you disagree with? Have questions about? Explain.
4. Divide participants into pairs (or small groups) and ask them to examine each right and rate the degree to which a person in your society today have that right. They should work toward consensus (agreement) on the rating:

- 3 = Most people have this right*
- 2 = Some people have this right*
- 1 = Few people have this right*

**5.** As participants work, urge them not to spend too long on any one statement; if they disagree, they can put a “?” and move on. After all groups appear finished, bring them back together for discussion.

### ***Discussion Questions***

- Which rights are available to people in your country (i.e., ranked with a “3”)?
  - Which rights are denied to most people (i.e., ranked with a “1”)? Why do you think they are denied?
  - On which statements did you disagree? What was the disagreement?
  - Examine your rankings and think about the importance of each. Imagine you will advocate for change. Which one right would you choose first?
- 6.** Select a right that a number of participants said they would want to work on. Ask for recommendations for specific suggestions for creating change. List them.
- 7.** Closure: Ask volunteers to give their thoughts or feelings about this discussion.

## DECLARATION OF SEXUAL RIGHTS World Association for Sexual Health

1. The right to equality and non-discrimination.
2. The right to life, liberty and security of the person.
3. The right to autonomy and bodily integrity.
4. The right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
5. The right to be free from all forms of violence and coercion.
6. The right to privacy.
7. The right to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual health; with the possibility of pleasurable, satisfying and safe sexual experiences.
8. The right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its application.
9. The right to information.
10. The right to education and the right to comprehensive sexuality education.
11. The right to enter, form and dissolve marriage and other similar types of relationships based on equality and full and free consent.
12. The right to decide whether to have children, the number and spacing of children and to have the information and the means to do so.
13. The right to the freedom of thought, opinion and expression.
14. The right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly.
15. The right to participation in public and political life.
16. The right to Access to justice, remedies and redress.

**Sexual rights are fundamental & universal human rights.**