
Expectations

The students will:

- identify major sexually transmitted and blood borne infections and some of their consequences.
- examine methods of family planning in the light of Catholic teaching.

Note to the Teacher

Two issues related to sexuality and fertility are presented in Topic 5: sexually transmitted and blood borne infections (STBBIs) and some methods of family planning. In Grade 7, the topic of STBBIs was introduced, but in Grade 8 more information has been included in the student book. When presenting information on STBBIs, it is important to stress that one very serious consequence is the impairment or complete loss of fertility. If you want more background and information about STBBIs before presenting this topic, you can consult the website of the Canadian Medical Association (CMA). The CMA has a section for the public within which you will find current and reliable information about sexual health. The term now used is “sexually transmitted and blood borne infections”. In the student text, the previous term, sexually transmitted infections, is used. Remind students that as medical and scientific understanding of diseases improves, definitions are updated.

The potential health risk of sexual behaviour is a very sensitive issue to discuss with students of this age. They do need, however to be aware of the implications of intimate sexual contact for their health as body/spirit persons. You will want to ensure classroom discussion of this issue stays clear of dubious rumours or stories some students may have heard about STBBIs.

The second issue, family planning, is one that has a history of divisiveness within our Catholic community. In *Guidelines for Family Life Education*, the Bishops of Ontario acknowledge the confusion and disagreement that surround this issue. They point out, however, that “while we respect the moral judgements of people made in good faith, we cannot allow a currently imperfect understanding of God’s will to replace the true teaching of the Church.” (#61)

The Ontario Bishops also recognize the challenge that Catholic teachers face as they live out their responsibility to teach what the Church teaches:

Teachers may at times be tempted to downplay certain Church teachings because they know that they themselves do not practise what they preach. However, we should remember that while none of us lives our lives perfectly in response to the gospel, we cannot fail to give others Christ’s saving word, accepting the advice of Paul

to Timothy: “Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching.” (*Guidelines for Family Life Education*, #109)

Important Words

- *fertility, sexually transmitted and blood borne infection (STBBI)*
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Materials/Preparation

- This topic is lengthy, and you may want to divide it into two sessions, the first for the introduction and Protecting Fertility (92 – 98), and the second for Living in Harmony with Fertility (pages 98 – 101).
 - For additional information, you may want to consult the unit on sexually transmitted and blood borne infections in the Supplementary Resources to support Grade 8 Family Life Education, available at www.carfleo.org.
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Program Resources

- Student Book, pages 92 – 101
 - Reflection Sheet #15 (The Gift of Fertility)
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Curriculum Connections

This topic provides a connection to the Grade 8 lessons in *AIDS: A Catholic Education Approach to HIV (Human Immune-deficiency Virus)*, to Unit 6, Theme 2, “What’s sex worth?” in *Stand by me* in the *We are Strong Together* catechetical program and to the Health and Physical Education: Healthy Living curriculum.

We Experience

Read together the introduction (page 92) and invite the students’ response. You might ask them:

- What is fertility? (the physical ability or power to procreate, to give life)
- How does sexual intercourse between husband and wife communicate a love that reaches into the future? (it has the potential to create new life, and their love is meant to nurture and protect any children they may have)

You might explain that human sexuality is mysterious because its meaning is so rich and deep that we cannot fully understand it.

Protecting Fertility

Read together the introduction (page 93) and invite the students' response. You might ask them:

- Can you think of some other examples of how it's good to be a body/spirit person? (eating something delicious when you're absolutely starving; drinking a big glass of water on a very hot day)
- Why is fertility described as a power? (just as your muscles give you the power to run, lift heavy items, smile, or frown, fertility is the power to create new human life)
- What have you heard about sexually transmitted and blood borne infections?
- In your opinion is it important for young people to be aware of sexually transmitted and blood borne infections? Why? Why not?

Go through the questions and answers about STBBIs on pages 94 and 96 and encourage comments and questions. You might ask the students:

- Was there anything that particularly surprised you in this information about STBBIs? Why did it surprise you?
- Can you think of any reasons that persons between the ages of 15 and 24 have the highest rates of STBBIs in Canada? (they may be unaware of the risks; they are most likely single and some of them have intimate sexual contact with more than one person; they tend not to get regular medical checkups; they often avoid telling doctors or nurses about their sexual activities, or they lie about them)

Ask the students to review the chart (Major Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infections, Pages 95 – 96) and to ask any questions they have.

Read together Paula's letter on page 97 and invite any comments from the students. Be sure to tell them that this is a true story and that Paula wrote this letter to the students because she wanted them to know what happened to her.

Bring this session to an end by reading the final paragraphs (page 98) with the students. You may want to explore with the students the tendency of some young people to engage in impulsive and risky behaviour without considering the consequences.

Living in Harmony with Fertility

Read together page 98 and invite comments from the students. You might ask them:

- Why is the power to give life much more than the ability to conceive a child? (it involves a commitment to love and nurture a child for many years into the future)

- What do you think are some of the joys of being a mother or father?
- What do you think might be the challenges of being a parent?

In addition to inviting students' questions and comments after reading pages 99 – 100 of the Student Book (Teacher's Guide, p. 179), read the following:

- You probably hear a lot of conflicting messages about contraception in popular culture. For example, you might hear that if you use condoms and other forms of contraception consistently you will be 100% protected against STBBIs and unintended pregnancy. However, the reality is that the way to completely prevent unwanted pregnancy and infection is not to engage in sexual activity. You have been learning that God's plan for the gift of sexuality is that it remain in the context of marriage. You are also learning that there is no completely safe way to step outside of God's plan. It is designed to keep us safe and happy. Choosing a different way may put us at risk for physical, social, and emotional harm.
- You might ask them: When you hear or see all these confusing messages

▷ Read together pages 99 – 100 and invite the students' questions and comments. You might ask them:

- What is a "natural" family planning method? (a way of managing fertility without the use of chemicals or devices; a method of identifying the symptoms that indicate the woman's fertile period and refraining from intercourse during this time)
- What might be the advantages of natural family planning? (it demonstrates the couple's respect and appreciation of the gift of fertility; it allows a married couple to make decisions together as they manage their fertility and plan their family; it requires co-operation and communication between husband and wife, which deepens their intimacy; it allows couples to live in harmony with their life-giving powers)
- What is a barrier method of contraception? (one that prevents the sperm and ovum from coming together)
- What is a chemical method of contraception? (one that prevents conception by suppressing the fertility cycle of the woman)

Read together page 101 and invite the students' comments. You might highlight the important point that all methods of family planning involve fundamental values, in particular, the gift of fertility.

Invite the students to reflect on what they have learned about STBBIs and family planning in this topic and summarize the main ideas. Record these ideas on a chart. If some important points did not emerge in discussion, encourage the students to expand on their ideas. The main ideas from this topic are

- We are created male and female, and our sexuality is deeply personal. The whole person, body and spirit, is created for love and life.
- Sexually transmitted and blood borne infections are primarily spread by intimate sexual contact. Many STBBIs have the potential to damage or destroy a person's fertility.
- Natural family planning involves identifying symptoms of the fertile days in a woman's cycle and avoiding intercourse during this time if a husband and wife do not want to conceive a child. Barrier and chemical methods alter the body in some way to avoid a pregnancy. Natural family planning allows couples to live in harmony with their fertility and respect the mystery of God's gift of life and love.

about sexuality and sexual health in the media, who can you go to for support to help you find the best answer that will also point you in the direction you need to follow God's plan for you? (a trusted adult such as a parent or teacher; your parish priest; a Catholic health care practitioner)

When the chart is complete, read it with the students and invite their comments. Is there anything that should be added? Removed?

Give the students copies of Reflection Sheet #15 (The Gift of Fertility). Ask them to keep the Reflection Sheet in their Family Life notebook and to complete the questions in the next few days. (For more information about the Reflection Sheets, please see Introduction to the *Fully Alive* program, page 27.)

We Respond

Bring the topic to an end by saying "A Prayer for Wisdom" (BLM #14) together.

**Health and Physical Education
expectations D1.4 and D2.3**