

**Session Guide for Parents/Caretakers of Very Young Adolescents**

**(ages 10-14)**

Global version designed for adaptation

May 2023

**Foreword**

Pathfinder, in partnership with CARE, and with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), first implemented the [Act With Her](https://www.pathfinder.org/projects/act-with-her/) (AWH) program in Ethiopia from 2017 to 2023. Beginning in 2021, Pathfinder also partnered with the Institute for Family Health, through funding from the Elsa & Peter Soderberg Charitable foundation, to [expand AWH into Jordan](https://www.pathfinder.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/AWH-Jordan-Fact-Sheet-2022.pdf).

Expanding further from an earlier program model in Ethiopia called *Her Spaces*, AWH is a panoramic program model that partners with adolescent girls in laying the health, education, economic, and social foundations that they need to thrive during the transition to adulthood. This upstream approach provides girls with support during one of the most crucial life stages, reaching them before or during some of the most common disruptors of their future well-being (such as forced marriage, pregnancy, or school dropout). Although it’s a girl-centered program, AWH also directly includes adolescent boys and connects with parents/caregivers and local communities, to ensure that adolescent girls have support now and in the future from their peers, partners, families, and influential allies. A longitudinal randomized impact evaluation, conducted by the Gender & Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) research consortium and funded by the UK government, is assessing the program’s impact in Ethiopia.

Adolescents in age- and gender-segmented groups receive either 25 discussion modules (ages 15–19) or 40 discussion modules (ages 10–14). Topics covered include a wide range of puberty and menstruation, health, nutrition, education, safety, gender, communication, and economic empowerment themes (with 4 sessions designed as joint-gender meetings). The curriculum-based discussion groups are led by local “near peer” mentors of the same gender ages 18–25. Parents or caregivers of adolescents also meet for a short series of facilitated discussions on the topics shared with their children, improving their own knowledge and their ability to communicate about complex issues with their children. Beyond the adolescent and adult group programming, AWH also partners with communities to advance locally-led social norms change and systems strengthening.

This document is the global version of the Act With Her **Session Guide for Parents/Caretakers of Very Young Adolescents (ages 10-14)**.

For the entire suite of open-access materials, please visit:

[**Act With Her Program Package: Open-Access Editable Materials for Replication & Adaptation**](http://www.pathfinder.org/publications/act-with-her-program-package)

The program package includes the global versions of all group discussion curricula per gender and age group, participant booklets, mentor pre-and post-tests, and key MEL tools.

**Acknowledgements**

The Act With Her program model was initially collaboratively designed in 2017 by Pathfinder, CARE, the GAGE research consortium, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with key inputs and thought partnership from the Government of Ethiopia and Save the Children. The global session guides for very young adolescent (VYA) were first developed in 2017, followed by adaptation for use in Ethiopia. Next, in 2020 the global session guides for older adolescents (OA) and all global participant guides were developed, followed by adaptation for use in Ethiopia. Finally, in 2021 the VYA materials were adapted for use in Jordan.

All AWH materials are intended for free and open-access replication, adaptation, and use in new contexts. **For their use in new settings, please:**

* Inform Pathfinder at **info@pathfinder.org**
* Kindly include the following acknowledgment in your adapted materials:

*The global Act With Her program materials were first developed in 2017 by Pathfinder, CARE, and the GAGE research consortium, with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Through open-access commitment and permissions, we have further adapted them for use in [add your setting or program information].*

* Consult the [**How-To Guide**](https://www.pathfinder.org/publications/act-with-her-how-to-guide/#downloads) which provides 20 simple step-by-step suggestions for adapting the Act With Her program for different contexts, and for making basic startup preparations and decisions.

**We would like to deeply thank the following individuals and organizations for their contributions throughout this process:**

***Global VYA materials***

Via Pathfinder: Rachel Rifkin, Courtney Boudreau, Anne Scott, Marta Pirzadeh, Jodi DiProfio, Caitlin Corneliess, Camille Collins Lovell, Kathryn Mimno, Catherine Lane, Olivia Moseley, Tricia Petruney, Cara Dunhill (layout)

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***Global OA materials and all participant materials***

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# Welcome to the Meeting Guide for Parents/Caretakers

**Parent Meetings**

Parent Meetings are designed to inform adolescents’ parents about the AWHProgram and the purpose of the Girls and Boys Clubs. They also serve to increase parents’ knowledge and skills to support their children as they participate in the Girls and Boys Club. In some cases, participants in the Girls and Boys Clubs may not have or be living with a biological parent. However, for simplification purposes, throughout the document all adult caregivers will be referred to generally as “parents”. The term encompasses biological parents and other relatives as well as caregivers who are not related to the participant but are responsible for their wellbeing. Feel free to change the language to reflect your audience, as appropriate.

The first Parent Meeting will be held prior to the implementation of the Girls and the Boys Clubs to:

1. Introduce parents in the community to the AWHprogram.
2. Explain the purpose of the Girls and the Boys Club.
3. Obtain consent for their children to participate in the Girls or the Boys Club meetings.

Five additional Parent Meetings are designed to promote positive parenting skills and inform parents on how to talk to their adolescent daughters and sons about some of the topics that will be covered in the Girls and the Boys Club meetings. This will help parents support their children as they learn and absorb the new information. The young adolescents attending the Club meetings will need support from their family and friends as they transition into adulthood. This Parent Meeting Guide should be used to facilitate the Parent Meetings.

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# Table of Contents

WELCOME TO THE PARENT MEETING GUIDE 5

TABLE OF CONTENTS 6

HOW TO USE THE PARENT MEETING GUIDE 7

ORIENTATION TO THE AWH PROGRAM 9

CHANGING ROLES 17

SCHOOL: YOUR CHILD'S BEST FRIEND 27

TALKING TO YOUNG ADOLESCENTS ABOUT HEALTH AND SEX-RELATED TOPICS 33

STAYING SAFE 45

INEQUITABLE GENDER NORMS AND PRACTICES 53

REFERENCES 58

# Meeting Facilitation Guide

This Parent Meeting Guide was developed for you – the facilitator of the Parent Meetings. It provides you with all the information you need to implement each Parent Meeting. This Parent Meeting Guide is organized based on the suggested order of Parent Meetings – see Table below. The meeting topics coincide with the topics that young adolescents will be learning in the Girls and Boys club around the same time. Work with the AWH team in your region to fine-tune the best order and number of meetings to give.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Meeting**  | **Topic** | **Objective** |
| 1 | Orientation to the AWHProject | Secure parents’ support for AWH and Girl/Boy Club activities. |
| 2 | Changing Roles  | Improve parents’ understanding of gender roles and gender norms and how these effect adolescent health, education, and occupational outcomes. |
| 3 | School: Your Child’s Best Friend | Increase parents’ awareness of the importance of education and ways to help children stay in school. |
| 4 | Talking to Young Adolescents about Health and Sex-Related Topics  | Improve parents’ comfort with and skills to communicate with their children about reproductive health and sex-related topics. |
| 5 | Staying Safe (Harassment and Violence) | Improve parents’ capacity to effectively understand gender-based violence (GBV) and respond to GBV directed at adolescents. |
| 6 | Inequitable gender norms and practices | Increase parents’ awareness of the harmful physical, social, and psychological effects of inequitable gender norms and practices on adolescents. |

**Planning for Each Parent Meeting**

Several days before each Parent Meeting read the Session Plan for that meeting. Be very familiar with the content and how to conduct the meeting. This will help you to feel comfortable with the content and stay on time. There is a lot to cover in a short amount of time.

Each Parent Meeting session has a list of supplies you might need. Gather all of the supplies so that they are ready and available the day of the meeting. Please note that it is helpful to use flipcharts to capture parents’ responses during certain exercises. When you write down what a parent says, it makes a parent feel that their comment(s) are valuable. Writing parents’ responses on a flipchart also helps you, the facilitator, to remember and summarize everything that was said. However, if there are no flipchart stands, paper, or markers that is fine too. Adapt to the situation.

Some of the Parent Meeting topics can be sensitive, such as those on gender-based violence and inequitable gender norms and practices. Invite representatives from organizations against inequitable gender norms and practices, gender-based violence or organizations that support women’s rights to help you during these meetings. Do this in advance of the meeting.

**During the Parent Meeting**

Each meeting Session Plan explains the main concepts to be discussed, how to present the content and how to implement the exercises. During the Parent Meeting follow the content of the Session Plan, but feel free to use your own words to explain the concepts and adapt the language to the situation.

The Parent Meetings are only 90 minutes in length. **So, it is essential that you mind the time carefully** so that you can cover all the content during each meeting. If need be, practice some of the exercises beforehand so that you are familiar with them and can lead them without relying too much on the Parents Guide.

There may be information covered in the Parent Meetings that you may not be familiar with. If parents ask you questions during the meeting which you cannot answer be honest with them that you do not have the answer. Tell them that you will try to have the answer for them at the next Parent Meeting. Work with AWH staff and/or other resources such as organizations that support women’s rights, supportive health care providers, and/or supportive community officials to learn more about the topic.

**Orientation to the AWHProgram**

**By the end of this session, parents will:**

* Understand the physical, emotional, social, cognitive (thinking and reasoning) changes their young adolescent children go through.
* Learn the role that parents can play in providing guidance and support during this important time.
* Understand the purpose and goals of the Act With Her program and why it is important.

**Learning Objectives**

##  Total Time: 90 minutes

**Materials Needed:**



|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Flipchart stand | A variety of colored markers  |
| Flipchart paper  | Refreshments, if available |

**Preparation Notes:**

* **Read the Session Plan several times. Be very familiar with the content and how to deliver it.**
* If there are two Facilitators, divide up the activities that you will facilitate.

**Session Plan:**

1. **Welcome: Total Time: 20 minutes**
2. Welcome everyone. Thank them for attending this Parent Meeting.
3. Introduce yourself and any other facilitator or guest speaker with you.
4. Explain that parents have been invited to this meeting because, as parents, they want good things for their daughters and sons.
5. Conduct this or another introduction exercise:
* Ask everyone to stand up and find a partner. Have them pair up with someone they do not know as well.
* Explain that person will introduce their partner to the group. But, first they must gather some information about their partner.
* Have each person ask their partner three questions: (**Note:** Allow about 2 to 3 minutes for parents to talk to each other.)
* Their full name.
* What their name means – or – who they were named after.
* One thing that most people do not know about them.
* When participants are ready, ask one pair to stand up and introduce their partner. After the first person has been introduced, ask the second person to introduce their partner.
* Thank the first pair for beginning the exercise.
* Ask another pair of participants to stand up and introduce each other. When done, thank them.
* Continue this exercise until all participants have introduced each other.
1. Thank everyone and ask them to take a seat.
2. **The Changing Adolescent[[1]](#endnote-1) [[2]](#endnote-2) – Total Time: 20 minutes**
3. Ask how many adolescent children do parents have in their home now.
4. Ask what kind of changes are they noticing among their younger adolescent children.
5. Summarize some changes that occur to younger adolescent girls and boys:
* Their bodies begin to change and mature.
* They become more emotional, with many mood swings.
* Socially, they begin to seek independence from their parents and want closer relationships with their friends and peers.
* They begin to form and speak their thoughts and views on a variety of topics.
* They **are less motivated by threats and punishments than young children.** Incremental rewards and positive reinforcements are more motivating.
1. Discuss positive things that occur during adolescence:
* Adolescence is a period of tremendous growth and maturity.
* Adolescents expand their ability to reason and think for themselves.
* Adolescents make deep friendships which can last a lifetime.
* As their brains mature, they become better able to think though problems and see the consequences of different points of view or actions.
* Adolescents become interested in and open to new ideas, learning new things, and contributing to their community.
1. Discuss some of the challenges that young adolescents face:
* Girls’ and boy’s growth and development begins to draw more attention from adults and other adolescents. This may expose them to sexual risk situations at an early age.
* The hormones that cause girls’ and boys’ bodies to change also causes them to begin to have romantic and sexual feelings towards others.

Lack of emotional maturity leads to decisions that are based more on feelings and less on the consequences of the decisions.

Decisions made based on emotions can lead to greater risk-taking or not knowing how to get out of risky situations.

Adolescents begin to look to their peers and friends instead of their parents for information. This puts them at risk of getting inaccurate and/or misleading information.

Media, such as mobile phone videos, magazines, radio, television, etc. also begin to influence adolescent attitudes and behaviors.

1. Explain that there are three protective factors that make adolescents more resilient to these challenges and influence healthy and positive development as adults:
* **Family connectedness** – This is the most protective factor in the lives of adolescents.
* **Close social relationships** – When close peer relationships exist, there is less emotional stress and less risky behavior, including early sex.
* **Education** – School attendance positively influences adolescents and makes them less susceptible to harmful behaviors.
1. Mention that the Act With Her program builds on these protective factors by:
* Strengthening adolescents’ life skills on a variety of topics.
* Building strong, positive peer support through the Girls and Boys Clubs.
* Providing knowledge to parents on how to positively support their children as they go through adolescence.

1. **Overview of AWH Program: Total Time – 40 minutes**

**Act With Her Program (AWH)** (about 10 minutes)

Tell parents about the AWH program, including these and/or other key points:

* AWH promotes and strengthens protective factors in a young adolescent’s life. It is implemented by Pathfinder and Care, two large international NGOs.
* AWH supports young adolescent girls and boys to transition into adolescence and adulthood in healthy ways.
* ****AWH teaches skills that will empower girls and boys as they grow into adults. It will also prepare them to deal with situations that may be harmful to them.

Discuss key components of the AWH program:

* Girls and Boys Clubs:
* Meetings for girls and boys 10 to 13 years of age on a variety of topics and life skills over a 10-month period.
* Girls and Boys clubs will be held separately, except for four joint sessions.
* Parent’s Meetings: Meetings to give parents the knowledge and skills to successfully support their daughters and sons during adolescence.

Explain why AWH is focusing on young adolescents from 10 to 13 years of age:

* This is the age when both girls and boys begin to change physically, emotionally, cognitively (thinking and reasoning), and socially.
* Working with younger adolescents helps to build the foundation for healthy behaviors and good decisions later in life.
* Younger adolescents gain the most from support from their parents and the community.
* If you give younger adolescents knowledge early in life, **it empowers** them to make better decisions during more challenging situations when they are older adolescents.

Ask parents what empowerment means to them.

Discuss what empowerment means:

* A process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling (or having more control) over one’s life.
* Developing and having the confidence to share your thoughts and opinions.
* Developing and having the confidence to protect yourself from risky situations.
* Having the belief in yourself to make positive decisions.

**Girls and Boys Clubs** (about 15 minutes)

Mention that one of the things that protects young adolescents from risky behaviors is positive social support from their friends and parents.

Explain that the AWH Girls and Boys Clubs will:

* Provide young adolescent girls and boys with accurate information and life skills to grow up into healthy and productive adults. These skills will help protect them from some risky situations.
* Build a group of informed, supportive peers who will help and support each other during the program and beyond.

Discuss the key features of AWH Girls and Boys Clubs:

* They will be held for girls and boys 10 to 13 years of age.
* Club meetings will build life skills in health, education, staying safe, communication, good decision making, and finances.
* Ideally, Club meetings should be led by two trained, older, same-sex Mentors.
* Club meetings will also be overseen by a local (town, regional, parish, etc.) supervisor.
* Other details, such as:
* How Girls and Boys Clubs are formed.
* How frequently they will meet and at what time.
* Where they will meet and for how long (2 hours).
* Other important details, as needed.

Explain that four of the Girls and Boys Club meetings will be held together as Joint Club sessions where girls and boys will learn about good communication skills and how to protect and support each other.

Mention that trained, older, same-sex Mentors will run the Club meetings because:

* As a natural part of adolescent development, peers often become more important than parents when seeking information about sensitive topics, such as adolescent health and sex-related topics.
* Older peers – those who are a couple of years older –tend to have a greater influence on younger adolescents. The younger adolescents see them as knowledgeable near peers and feel more comfortable with them when talking about sensitive issues.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Explain that your children are involved voluntarily with your oral consent.

Ask if anyone has questions.

**Parent Meetings** (about 10 minutes)

1. Discuss the following:
* Most parents begin to notice their children are becoming adolescents when there is a dramatic change in their child’s behavior towards them. For example, they may seek more privacy, be less willing to talk about things, sulk, be moody, and/or not comply with rules.
* Adolescents will start to separate from their parents and try to become more independent. They will want to do more things alone or with their friends.
* More and more adolescents will seek information about sensitive topics, such as their bodies, health, and sex-related topics from their peers and not their parents.
* Adolescents start to want more freedom. When this happens parents can feel the need to continue to parent them like children. This can create tension.
* No matter their behavior, adolescents still need and want guidance and support from their parents.
1. Point out that adolescents actually value support and boundaries set by their parents. However, this needs to be done in a way that is less authoritarian and more negotiated.
2. Ask parents what is the importance of parents’ role during adolescence.
3. Summarize parents’ comments. Discuss any of the following not mentioned:
* Family connectedness is the strongest protective factor in helping adolescents make good decisions as well as respond to risky circumstances.
* Adolescents still need a lot of guidance and support from their parents and community. They actually value support and boundaries set by their parents, although they may not show it.
* Discussing sensitive or sex-related topics openly with adolescents before they are exposed to them actually makes it more likely that they will act more responsibly when exposed to risky situations.
* Parents may not be aware of, or know how to best deal with, changes in adolescent behaviors.
* Parents often find it difficult to talk to their children about adolescent health related topics that their children need to hear from their parents.
1. Explain that AWH wants to support parents as they guide and support their children through adolescence.
2. Mention that the AWH program will be holding several meetings with parents to help them develop skills to talk to and interact with their daughters and sons in ways that young adolescents can hear and appreciate.
3. Review what parents will learn during Parent Meetings.
* An awareness of the health, emotional, cognitive (thinking and reasoning) changes and social pressures their adolescent children will face.
* New skills to communicate effectively with their child about their changing body and sex-related topics.
* Key protective factors that contribute to healthy development and how to help their daughters and sons stay safe as they grow and mature.
* How gender and social norms determine how women and men in the community are expected to behave and how these can influence health and wellbeing.
1. Ask if parents would be interested in such meetings. If so, ask:
* Where is a good place to hold Parent Meetings?
* When is a good time to hold Parent Meetings?
1. Come to an agreement when and where the next Parent Meeting will take place.

**D. Wrap Up: Total Time – 10 minutes**

1. Ask if anyone has questions.
2. Make any concluding remarks.
3. Thank everyone for coming to the meeting.
4. Explain when the next Parent Meeting will be and where.
5. Close the meeting.



**Changing Roles**

**By the end of this session, parents will:**

* Learn the difference between sex and gender.
* Understand how gender roles change over time.
* Understand the effects of gender roles and behaviors on adolescent health, education, and occupational outcomes.

**Learning Objectives**


##  Total Time: 90 minutes

**Materials Needed:**



|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Flipchart stand | Flipchart paper  |
| A variety of colored markers  |

**Preparation Notes:**

* Label one flipchart, “**Women**” with a colored marker. Label another flipchart, “**Men**” with a different colored marker.
* Just before the meeting starts, tape the flipchart labeled **Women** on one side of the meeting site. Tape the flipchart labeled **Men** on the opposite end of room – about 5 meters apart, if possible.
* Make a flipchart for Girls/Women with three columns, labeled as below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Grandmother’s time** (past) | **Women (you) now** (present or future) |
| Clothing |  |  |
| Schooling (grade level achieved)  |  |  |
| Chores |  |  |
| Friends |  |  |
| Jobs/work |  |  |
| Parenting |  |  |
| Technology (electricity, mobile phones) |  |  |
| Marriage |  |  |
| Childbirth |  |  |

* Make a flipchart for Boys/Men with three columns, labeled as below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Grandfather’s time** (past) | **Men now** (present or future) |
| Clothing |  |  |
| Schooling (grade level achieved)  |  |  |
| Chores |  |  |
| Friends |  |  |
| Jobs/work |  |  |
| Parenting |  |  |
| Technology (electricity, mobile phones) |  |  |
| Marriage |  |  |
| Childbirth |  |  |

* **Read the Session Plan several times. Be very familiar with the content and how to deliver it.**
* If there are two Facilitators, divide up the activities that you will facilitate.

**Session Plan:**

### What is a Woman/What is a Man?[[4]](#endnote-4): **Total Time – 20 minutes**

1. Welcome everyone to the Parent Meeting. Thank everyone for coming.
2. Introduce yourself and any other facilitators.
3. If there are any new parents at the meeting, ask them to introduce themselves.
4. Explain the following exercise:
* You are going to read a word out loud.
* If someone thinks the word describes a woman, they should stand by the flipchart labeled **Women.** (**Note**: Point to the flipchart labeled, “Women”.)
* If someone thinks the word describes a man, they should stand by the flipchart labeled **Men**. (**Note:** If some parents are unable to read, tell them which color writing is the woman and which color represents the man.)
* If you think the word describes **both** men and women, stand in the middle, between the two flipcharts.
1. Give examples:
* If I say “Mother”, stand by the **Women** flipchart because only girls/women can become mothers.
* If I say “Tall” and you think that only men can be tall, stand next to the **Men’s** flipchart (different color writing).
* If I say, “Smart” and you think that both **Men** and **Women** can be smart, then stand in the middle between the two flipcharts.
1. Begin the exercise by reading the first word in the list below (see sentence #9 below).
2. Once everyone has moved to their flipchart (or in between), ask: Why did you chose to stand by your flipchart – or in the middle?
3. Read the next word from the list below.
4. Repeat steps 6 to 8 for all the words on the list below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Strong | Clever  | Cook |
| Smart | Rich | School graduate |
| Teacher | Good communicator | Loving |
| Decision maker | Care taker | Mother |
| Doctor  | Father | Respected |
| Cleaning | Farmer  | Police  |
| Market seller  | Nurse | Engineer |

1. When the exercise is done, ask everyone to sit down.
2. Ask participants:
* Which of these words was difficult to decide whether they describe women or men?
* For those difficult-to-decide words for **Women,** ask, “Can a man do any of these things?”
* For the difficult-to-decide words for **Men,** ask, “Can a woman can do anything of these things?”
* What things are men **not** expected to do? Why?
* What things are women **not** expected to do? why?
1. Mention that many people believe that only men can be strong, brave, financially successful, and make decisions for the family. They also believe that only women can do the cooking and be caring.
2. Ask participants how they feel about these beliefs and roles.
3. If your daughter told you that she wanted to become a doctor, what would you say to her?
4. If your son told you he wanted to become a cook, what would you say to him?
5. ******What is Gender?[[5]](#endnote-5): Total Time – 20 minutes**
6. Ask what is the difference between **biological** **sex** and **gender**? (**Note:** Encourage a discussion on this. Expect parents not to know the difference.)
7. Discuss what “**Sex**” means:
* Sex refers to the biological aspects of a man and a woman, such as the differences in reproductive organs and genitalia. Women have a vagina and have eggs, while men have a penis and produce sperm.
* These are traits that a person is born with.
1. Discuss what "**Gender**" means:
* In general, it refers to the socially constructed definition of what men and women are. It is ‘socially constructed’, meaning it is defined not by biology, but by society. How a society defines what being a man or woman is can vary from place to place, even within the same country, and can change over time.
* Expectations of how men and women should act and what they should do are referred to as **Gender norms and roles.** While most people are born either male or female, they are taught gender norms and roles – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and workplaces.

For example, gender norms and roles could dictate that:

* Women be timid, physically weak, and vulnerable (gender norms).
* Men be strong, assertive, “the boss” (gender norms).
* Women cook the meals, clean the house, tend the children, etc (gender roles).
* Men work outside the home and earn money (gender roles).
1. Explain that the “What is a Man? and What is a Women?” exercise is a good example of these terms. For example, everyone agrees that only a woman can give birth, but not everyone agreed with the different roles that women can/should have. (**Note**: Discuss a role from the exercise that not everyone agreed upon.)
2. Explain: Although a girl is biologically female, there are expectations, such as certain roles and behaviors given to her by society. These have nothing to do with her biological sex.

***Explain:*** *Although a girl is biologically female,* ***there are expectations, such as certain roles and behaviors given to her by society.***

* Physically, only females have breasts, menstruate, and can give birth.
* But, both females and males are capable of being strong leaders, cleaning the house, tending cattle, or becoming doctors.
1. Mention that this is the same for boys.
* Physically, only males have a penis, testicles, and produce sperm, but they cannot give birth.
* They are also capable of being good care takers, washing dishes, and feeding children. Men’s biological sex does not prohibit them from doing these things.
1. Ask these or similar questions about **gender roles**. (**Note**: Encourage a discussion.)
* Where do we learn these gender roles?
* When do we begin learning these roles?
* How do these roles continue to thrive within families?
1. Ask these or similar questions about **gender norms**:
* How do gender norms affect the way that women act and live?
* How do gender norms affect the way that men act and live?
* Are these norms and behaviors permanent?
1. Discuss the consequences of gender roles and norms with these or similar points:
* Society’s expectations of gender roles for both boys/men and girls/ women can limit the choices that adolescent girls and boys make in their lives.
* Gender roles and norms influence the abilities of girls and boys to obtain education, type of work women and men do (unpaid and paid), and the ability to earn money.
* Strict gender roles can limit girls’ and boys’ capacity to have fulfilling productive lives and provide well for their families.
* Strict gender norms also restrict a girls’ social interactions and mobility – keeping her in the house more, instead of empowering her to protect herself.
* Gender norms can influence boys as well – they obtain more freedom but may have less family support.
1. Explain that gender roles and norms are passed down from society to the family and to the child. But societal gender roles and norms can (and do) change over time or from region to region.
2. Let’s see how society has changed gender roles and norms in your community.
3. **Changing Gender Roles: Total Time – 30 minutes**
4. Explain that we are going to explore how roles may have changed over time in your community/region.
5. Ask the following questions for women (**Note**: Write responses to the questions on the three -column flipchart for Women – prepared beforehand. Put responses related to grandmother in the “Grandmother” column and responses related to themselves in the “Women now” column.)

***Explain that we are going*** *to explore how roles may have changed over time* ***in your community /region.***

* How did your grandmother dress? How do you dress now?
* Did your grandmother go to school? If so, to what grade?
* Did you go to school? How far in school did you go?
* What kind of chores did your grandmother do? What kind of chores do you do now?
* What kind of work or job did your grandmother have? What kind of work or job do you have now?
* Who took care of the little children in your grandmother’s time? Who takes care of the children in your home now?
* Did your grandmother have electricity? Do you have electricity in your home?
* Did your grandmother/mother have a mobile phone? Do you have a mobile phone?
* At what age did your grandmother marry? When did you get married?
* How did your grandmother give birth? How did you give birth?
1. Ask the following questions for boys/men (**Note**: Write responses to the questions on the three -column flipchart for Boys/Men – prepared beforehand – just as you have done for the women. You can also do this exercise if only women are attending the Parent Meeting.)
* How did your grandfather dress? How do you (or your husband) dress now?
* Did your grandfather go to school? If so, to what grade?
* Did you (or your husband) go to school? How far in school did he go?
* What kind of chores did your grandfather do? What kind of chores do you (or your husbands) do now?
* What kind of work or job did your grandfather have? What kind of work or job do you (or your husband) have?
* Who took care of the little children in your grandfather’s time?
* Who takes care of the children in your home now? Do you (or the husband) participate in child rearing?
* Did your grandfather have electricity? Does your home have electricity?
* Did your grandfather/father have a mobile phone? Do you (or your husband) have a mobile phone?
* At what age did your grandfather marry? When did you (or your husband) get married?
* What was your grandfather’s role during the birth of his children? What was your (or your husband) role during childbirth (Were you more participatory during the birth than in your grandparent’s time? Did you attend the birth?)
1. When done, review the two flipcharts and responses. Initiate a discussion:
* In which areas of life have gender roles changed the most since your grandparent’s time?
* Since your grandparents’ time whose roles have changed the most, women or men?
* Which changes do you think have been better for women? For men? Why?
* Which changes do you think are worse for women? For men? Why?
* Which factors may have brought about these changes?
* How has transportation affected these roles – are there better roads and/or transportation (cars, buses, bicycles, etc.) than before?
* How has radio, TV, and/or the internet affected gender roles?
* How has technology (electricity, solar lamps etc.) changed your lives and gender roles?
1. Point out that society, and, thus, some gender roles and norms, may change in some areas and not change in other areas.
2. Continue the discussion by asking these or similar questions:
* Will gender roles and/or norms continue to change in your children’s time. If so, in what ways?
* How might changing gender roles and/or norms affect the kind of work/job your daughters will have in the future?
* How might changing gender roles and/or norms affect the kind of work/job your sons have in the future?
1. Point out that gender roles are **not** permanent. They are shaped by society over time. Traditions, popular culture, the media, peers, family, and the community (including schools) all play a role in shaping, reinforcing, and/or changing these gender roles.

*Point out that gender roles are not permanent.* ***They are shaped by society over time.***

1. Mention that it is usually young people who contribute to positive changes in gender roles and norms over time. Girls will be doing different things than their mothers did, and boys will also do different things than their fathers.
2. Explain that it is okay to do things differently than your grandparents or parents. This has happened in every generation.
3. Summarize by explaining that as gender roles change over time there will be more equal opportunities for boys and girls in terms of education, work opportunities, and earning potential.
4. **Gender Inequalities– Total Time: 10 minutes**

Explain that adolescence is a time when gender roles and norms passed on by families, communities, and institutions are greatly felt and internalized.[[6]](#endnote-6)

Point out that gender roles and norms for boys are often different for girls. This creates inequalities in treatment and opportunities.

Discuss the effects of **gender inequality** on girls and boys:

* Because of strict gender norms for young girls and women, their physical health is often compromised by limited knowledge and access to health services, menstruation supplies, food, money-making opportunities, etc.
* Beliefs related to withholding food, as well as certain types of food, from adolescent girls at a time when they are growing the most inhibits their growth and their health as mothers and the health of their future babies.[[7]](#endnote-7)

Gender roles and norms limit girls’ education and learning because they are often required to leave school due to:

* Menstruation – due to lack of menstrual hygiene supplies and/or cultural beliefs.

* Having to do more chores around the house.
* Having to marry early.
* These norms often causes them to abandon their educational and occupational plans as well as friendships.

Girls have less mobility when they get older because they are kept inside due to the fact they menstruate, can get pregnant, and have more restrictions on their freedom.

* Girls often have fewer empowerment opportunities and less voice within their homes, schools, and communities.[[8]](#endnote-8)
* Gender also impacts young boys. Gender norms put pressure on boys to prove their masculinity. Often, they have few role models that demonstrate ways to act differently towards girls and women. This can drive them to engage in risky and harmful behaviors, such as violence towards girls, as well as boys, unsafe sex, and substance abuse.
* Working with adolescent boys before gender attitudes and behaviors are firmly cemented is critical.[[9]](#endnote-9)

Mention that gender norms and roles have changed over time, and these changes have been good for both women and men. Everyone can benefit from expanding rigid gender norms and roles.

**E. Wrap Up: Total Time – 10 minutes**

1. Ask if anyone has questions.
2. Initiate a discussion about today’s meeting using these or similar questions:
* What is your take-away from this Parent Meeting?
* What did you learn?
1. Ask: Based on what you learned today, how can parents best support their child as she/he attends the Girls or Boys Club?
2. Thank everyone for their participation and input today.
3. If there will be another Parent Meeting, explain when and where it will take place.
4. Close the meeting.

# School: Your Child’s Best Friend

**By the end of this session, parents will:**

* Increase their awareness of the importance of children continuing their education.
* Develop strategies to help their children stay in school.

**Learning Objectives**


##  Total Time: 90 minutes

**Materials Needed:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Flipchart stand | Flipchart paper  |
| A variety of colored markers  |

**Preparation Notes:**

* **Read the Session Plan several times. Be very familiar with the content and how to deliver it.**
* If there are two Facilitators, divide up the activities that you will facilitate.

**Session Plan:**

1. **Welcome – Total Time: 20 minutes**
2. Welcome everyone to the meeting. Thank them for coming.
3. Introduce yourself and any other facilitator.
4. If there are new parents at the meeting, ask them to introduce themselves.
5. Remind parents that adolescence is an exciting time for young girls and boys as they change and grow into older adolescents then adults.
6. Mention that adolescence is also a time when young adolescent children are trying new things out for the first time, like learning who will be their friends, deciding what to wear or which sports they want to play, thinking about different occupations they would like to have as an adult, or taking on different challenges, such as experimenting with alcohol or drugs.[[10]](#endnote-10)
7. Point out that there are three things that make adolescents resilient to adverse challenges and circumstances. Ask what these might be?
8. If not mentioned, discuss the three most protective factors that help adolescents become resilient to challenges in their lives.[[11]](#endnote-11)
* **Family connectedness**:
* This is the most protective factor in the lives of adolescents.
* It is why it is so important to talk with your children and maintain a good relationship with them.
* It is also important that parents not take adolescents’ desire for freedom and close connection with their friends too personally. This independence is needed for the child to grow up. But, this will change and there will be a greater closeness to family when they are older.
* **Positive social relationships**:
* When adolescents, especially girls, have close positive social peer relationships, there is less stress and likelihood of making poor decisions.
* Adolescents who are several years older tend to have the greatest influence on both girls and boys.
* This is why the Girls and Boys Clubs are led by older, trained same-sex Mentors.
* **Remaining in School – School attendance is consistently linked to**:
* More positive and less disruptive behavior.
* Less emotional distress.
* Delayed initiation of sex.
1. Mention that in previous Parent Meetings, we have talked about how to connect and talk with your adolescent child. We have also talked about the Girls and Boys Clubs and why we use older Mentors to lead them.
2. Explain that today we are going to talk about the third most protective factor – education.
3. **Importance of Education – Total Time: 25 minutes**
4. Ask parents to close their eyes and dream about what it would be like for their children if they were able to finish secondary school. Encourage them to use their imagination.

***Ask parents to close their eyes and dream about what it would be like*** *for their children if they were able to finish secondary school.*

* How would their child feel about themselves?
* What kind of work would they be doing?
* Would they be better able to support the family, if so, how?
1. After about 5 minutes, ask parents to describe what their children would be like or be doing if they completed secondary school. (**Note**: Encourage many parents to share.)
2. Ask: What are the benefits of staying in school and finishing primary school?
3. Ask: What are the benefits of finishing secondary education?
4. Summarize these or other benefits to girls and boys staying in school and finishing primary and secondary school:
* It can help your children to achieve their long-term dreams and goals.
* Your children will have more knowledge and skill to start and/or run a family business, find a job, or start a good career.
* There will be more occupational opportunities for your children.
* Your children will be able to earn more money, take care of their family, and even invest for emergencies or a new house.
* Girls will have healthier children that will experience fewer infant and childhood illnesses and death.
* Children will be better able to support their parents when they are older.
* Educated adults will advocate for education and better schools for children.
1. Ask what are the challenges for girls to stay school? (**Note:** Encourage an active discussion. Write answers on flipchart, if available.)
2. If not mentioned, ask if any of these challenges exist in your area:
* Menstruation – Lack of menstrual supplies and private places to change in or near schools, and/or cultural beliefs that keep menstruating girls at home.
* Household chores – As girls get older they are given more household chores, which can interfere with going to school and/or studying.
* The distance to travel to school is very long.
* It is unsafe to walk back and forth to school.
* Harassment, bullying, or violence at school or on the way to and from school.
* Expectations around early child marriage.
* Society’s expectation that girls do not need education.
* School costs (fees, books, uniforms, etc.)
1. Ask what are the challenges for boys to staying in school? (**Note:** Encourage an active discussion. Write answers on flipchart.)
2. If not mentioned, ask if any of these challenges for boys exist in your area: (**Note**: Add these to the flipchart responses from the question above.)
* Regular or increased chores and responsibilities on the farm or taking care of animals – for boys.
* Not enough time to study because of chores and responsibilities.
* The distance to school – it is very long.
* Safety - It is unsafe to walk back and forth to school, especially for girls.
* Harassment, bullying or violence at school or on the way to and from school.
* School costs (fees, books, uniforms, etc.)
1. Acknowledge everyone’s comments. Then say: Let’s talk about ways to overcome some of these challenges that prevent your child from going to or finishing school.
2. **Solutions to Staying in School – Total Time: 35 minutes**
3. Draw the illustration below on a blank flipchart[[12]](#endnote-12) (see instructions below):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Instructions:* Draw a ditch with a stream or rocks.
* On one side of the ditch draw a picture of a child (it can be a stick figure).
* On the other side of the ditch write, “Completing school”.
 |

1. Explain that between many girls and boys completing school are challenges and obstacles. The ditch and stream in the illustration represent all the challenges/obstacles that your children face in completing school.
2. Ask what are the obstacles to going to school for girl and boys.
3. Write all the challenges to going to, or remaining in, school in the ditch. (**Note**: See the illustration on the following page.)
4. When the challenges are done, draw a road or bridge over the ditch (**Note**: See the illustration on the following page.)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Instructions:* Ask what are challenges to staying in school (Write responses in the ditch – see illustration.)
* Draw a bridge over the ditch/stream.
* Ask what are ways to overcome the obstacles to staying in school? (Write responses above the bridge – see illustration.)
 |

1. Ask parents what are some ways to overcome these challenges. Write the solutions on top of the bridge (see instructions and illustration on this page.) (**Note:** Encourage an active discussion.)
2. Review the solutions mentioned with the parents.
3. Ask if they would like to add any others.
4. Discuss the following:
* Are these solutions something you can realistically implement?
* How can your children help with these challenges?
* Who in the community can help you deal with these challenges/obstacles to keeping children in school?
* If not mentioned, ask how other family members, teachers, community officials, etc. can help you find and implement solutions for your child to continue her/his schooling.
1. Depending on what solutions are discussed, make an action plan with the parents. Have them commit to steps needed to implement any of the solutions discussed.
2. Thank everyone for the great ideas and input.

**D. Wrap Up: Total Time – 10 minutes**

1. Initiate a discussion about today’s meeting, using these or similar questions:
* What is your take-away from this Parent Meeting?
* What did you learn?
1. Ask: How will you share what you learned and discussed with family and friends?
2. Thank everyone for their participation and input today.
3. If there will be another Parent Meeting, explain when and where it will take place.
4. Close the meeting.



**Talking to Young Adolescents About Health and Sex-Related Topics**

**By the end of this session, parents will:**

* Know when and how to talk to your children about adolescent health and sex-related topics.
* Know how to talk to your children about menstruation.

**Learning Objectives**


##  Total Time: 90 minutes

**Materials:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Flipchart stand | Flipchart paper  |
| A variety of colored markers  |

**Preparation Notes:**

* **Read the Session Plan several times. Be very familiar with the content and how to deliver it.**
* If there are two Facilitators, divide up the activities that you will facilitate.

**Session Plan:**

1. **Welcome – Total Time: 30 minutes**
2. Welcome everyone to the Parent Meeting. Thank everyone for coming.
3. Introduce yourself and any other facilitators or guest speakers.
4. If there are any new parents at the meeting, ask them to introduce themselves.
5. Ask everyone to close their eyes and remember what it was like when they were 10 to 13 years old. (**Note**: Allow about 2 to 3 minutes for participants to think.)
* Who was your best friend or who did you like to spend time with?
* What was the popular song or your favorite kind of music to listen to?
* What was it like?
* How did you feel?
* What were some of your challenges?
* What did you like about this age?
1. Ask participants to describe what it was like for them at that age. (**Note**. Encourage many people to share their experiences.)
2. Ask participants how they learned about the changes that would occur to them during adolescence? As needed, ask some of the following probing questions:
* Did you observe these changes among your older sisters, older brothers, or cousins?
* Did you hear your older sisters or older brothers talk about it?
* Did you observe or hear about it from your peers, friends?
* Did your parents, an auntie/uncle, or other family members say anything about changes that would happen as you grow up? If so, what did they say?
1. Ask women how they learned about menstruation. Some questions to ask:
* Did you hear about it within your family, such as from your mother, sisters or cousins?
* Did you hear about it from your girlfriends, peers or a teacher?
* Did your parents or an older family member talk to you about it? If so, how much did they tell you?
1. If men are present, ask them how they learned about changes that would happen to their adolescent body. Some questions to ask:
* Did you hear about it within your family, such as from your father, mother, brothers, or cousins?
* Did you hear about it from friends or peers?
* Did your parents or an older family member talk to you about it? If so, what did they tell you?
1. Ask how participants learned about sex and reproduction (how babies are made)? Some questions to ask:
* Did you hear your older siblings or cousins talk about it? If so, how accurate was the information?
* Did you hear about it from your peers and friends? If so, how accurate were they?
* Did you hear about it from their parents?
1. Point out that some important challenges for any adolescent is how to manage their new feelings about their changing body, romantic feelings, and sex-related topics/issues.
2. Explain that when we talk about sex-related topics/issues, we are not just talking about the act of having sex, but also sexual thoughts and feelings, which adolescents most struggle with. This is often a taboo topic to discuss.
3. Discuss how important it is for parents to talk to their adolescent children about their changing bodies and/or sex-related issues.
* Parents play a very important role in their young adolescent’s life. Adolescents actually **do** look to their parents for advice and guidance.
* Talking to your child by age 10 gives parents time to talk about their values and expectations and provide correct information. This gives their child time to develop skills to handle any romantic or sexual feelings responsibly and delay possible sexual initiation.
* With parental guidance and support, adolescents are more likely to make responsible choices.
* It is better for young adolescents to hear accurate information from their parents than from other sources.
* Many young adolescents get their information from their peers, girlfriends, magazines, and the internet (or mobile phone).
* Peers, friends, media, and the internet often pass on incorrect or misleading information, which would not be very helpful to your daughters or sons.
1. Mention that when parents talk to their children about health and sex-related topics, they can also share their values and teach their children why it is important to stay healthy, and how to do so.
2. Explain that talking to your children about adolescent health and sex-related topics might not be easy or comfortable. It might even feel embarrassing. You might think:
* What does one say?
* How do I say it?
* When is the best time to talk to my child about these things?
1. Explain that there are ways to talk to children about adolescent health with limited embarrassment to your child or yourself. This is what we are going to talk about today.
2. **How to Talk to Your Child about Adolescent Health[[13]](#endnote-13) [[14]](#endnote-14)– Total Time: 30 minutes**

**“When” to Talk to Your Child** (about 5 minutes)

1. Mention that it might feel awkward to talk to your child about adolescent health related topics. That is natural.
2. Discuss these tips:
* Take advantage of opportunities to talk about these things, such as when your child comes to you with a question.
1. Discuss good opportunities or “teachable moments” to talk to your children about their changing body and/or sex-related topics:
* Good times to start a conversation are when a family member or friend is pregnant, a cousin has started her menstruation, or after a Girls or Boys Club meeting when the girl/boy comes to you with a question.
* Good times to talk about reproduction and how babies are made are when a girl starts her menses or when a boy reveals that he has had an erection or nocturnal ejaculation (wet dreams).
* If your daughter or son has a question, give an answer. Be “ask-able” and open to questions. If you do not know the answer, tell them you will try to find the answer.
* Create opportunities to talk by being open to talk when an opportunity presents itself. Make yourself available. Young adolescents resist “scheduled” talks; they don’t open up when you tell them to, but when they want to.
* Listen! Listening can also be the best way to uncover a more serious problem that requires your attention.
* If you feel embarrassed, explain to your child that this is difficult to talk about. Your parents may not have talked about these things with you. But, you want your child to be well informed.
1. Attend Parent Meetings and/or talk to health care providers, friends, Girls and Boys Club Mentors, or other people knowledgeable about adolescent health to learn how to answer your child’s questions.
2. Ask if anyone has questions.

**“How” to Talk About Adolescent Health** (about 5 minutes)

1. Point out that “how” parents explain the information is very important. Be open, calm, and non-judgmental.
2. Discuss these general tips for talking to children about adolescent health and sex.
* Take time to talk to your child about what happens to a girl’s/boy’s body during adolescence.
* Emphasize that these changes are normal and natural.
* Give them little bits of information at a time.
* You do not need to tell them everything at one time.
* Be open to opportunities to talk. Make it easy to talk to you – be “ask-able”.
* Reward questions.
* Ask your daughter/son if s/he has any questions.
* Follow their lead. When your daughter or son is distracted and/or no longer interested in listening, close the conversation.
* Remember, at this age, talking about their body, menstruation, or sex is still uncomfortable. The shorter the conversation the better.
1. Remind parents:
* It may feel awkward to talk to your daughters/sons about these things.
* You should remember that your children are going to get the information from somewhere.
* When ***you*** talk to your daughters/sons before they talk to their peers or hear things on media, ***you*** can be sure that they are getting correct information from you and learning your values and expectations of them.
* When you talk with your children, as well as listen to them, they are more likely to come to you with questions.

**Key Messages for Girls** (about 10 minutes)

1. Discuss some “teachable moments” or opportunities for parents to talk to their daughter about her changing body.
* You notice that your daughter’s body is beginning to change, such as the development of breasts, body odor, growth of underarm or pubic hair.
* You notice that she is moody, emotional and/or has mood swings.
* She starts to menstruate.
* She comes to you with a question about her body, something she “heard” from her friends or siblings, or something she learned from the Girls Club, etc.
1. Keep the conversation short and light. Key messages to tell your daughter are:
* Your body is beginning to change because you are becoming an adult.
* You will grow breasts in preparation for becoming a mother someday.
* You will soon begin to menstruate (if she has not already started).
* You will feel more emotional and moodier. Your feelings may shift from glad to mad in minutes.

* All of these changes are natural and normal. All girls go through this, but maybe not at the same time.
* Some girls begin changing early and some begin late. In the end, everyone changes.
1. Tell parents that they should also tell their daughters about changes that happen to boys as well. (**Note**: See key messages for boys below for details.)
2. Explain that parents should talk about menstruation before their daughter begins to menstruate. Knowing what menstruation is and how to handle it when it happens will empower the daughter to take good care of herself.
3. Some key messages about menstruation include:
* Menstruation is not something to be scared or ashamed of. It is normal and natural for girls/women to menstruate, and it can be managed.
* During puberty a girl’s body begins to release an egg from the ovaries inside of her about once a month.
* After the egg is released, the uterus (womb) will develop a lining with a little bit of tissue and blood in preparation for a possible pregnancy.
* If the girl/woman does not become pregnant, her body will get rid of the tissue and blood in the uterus. This is called menstruation.
* Menstruation usually happens about once a month and lasts about 4 to 7 days (but can last longer or shorter).
* Some girls menstruate monthly and some girls have irregular menstrual cycles. A menstrual cycle will probably become regular with time.
* Menstruation means you are now capable of becoming pregnant. It does not mean that you are ready to have sex or a baby yet or get married.
* Feel proud. This is a sign that you are healthy and maturing.
* Girls do not need to stay home from school or be secluded when menstruating. They can use homemade cloth pads or sanitary pads to catch the blood.
* Girls can continue their normal activities, including attending school.
* But, just because you are maturing and can physically have children during puberty does not mean that you are an adult. You are not yet ready for a lot of things that adults do – ***and this includes sex and having children.***
1. Discuss menstrual hygiene management:
* When menstruating, girls can manage their menstruation by using cloth rags or home-made cloth pads to catch the blood.
* When menstruating, girls should change the cloth/pad every 2 to 3 hours or more if they are bleeding heavily.

***Discuss any myths and beliefs about menstruation.***

* During the Girls Club, girls will learn how to make home-mad cloth pads which they can wash and reuse.
* When at school, girls should try to bring an extra cloth or pad in a bag to use later.
* After changing a cloth or pad, girls should wash the outside of their vagina (vulva) with water and pat dry.
1. Discuss any myths and beliefs about menstruation. These should be adapted for context.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Myth/belief** | **What to tell parents:** |
| Menstruation is considered a curse | * It is not a curse. It is a natural occurrence.
* It is a small amount of blood and tissue shed from the uterus that comes on a monthly basis when a girl/woman is not pregnant.
 |
| A menstruating girl/woman is unclean. | * There is no relationship between menstruation and purity.
 |
| A menstruating girl/woman should be secluded. | * A menstruating girl/woman can manage her menses with good menstrual hygiene.
* Girls do not need to stay home from school or be secluded when menstruating. They can use homemade cloth pads or sanitary pads to catch the blood.
* Girls can continue their normal activities, including attending school.
 |

1. Ask if anyone has a question.

**Key Messages for Boys** (about 10 minutes)

1. Remind parents that boys enter puberty and adolescence about two years later than girls on average, but this varies with each boy.
2. Explain that it is best to talk to your son about adolescent health and sex-related topics before he enters adolescence. Find “teachable moments” to talk to your son about his changing body.
3. Keep the conversation short and light. Some key messages about his changing body include:
* A boy’s body changes during adolescence, and he begins to grow from a child into an adult.
* His voice will begin to crack as it changes.
* His penis and testicles will get bigger. He will begin to produce sperm, a substance that can make a girl pregnant.
* He will feel more emotional and moodier. He may feel more angry than usual.
* All of these changes are natural. All boys will go through them, but maybe not at the same time.
* Some boys begin as early as 11 years old and some begin as late as 13 years of age. But, in the end, everyone changes.
1. Other key messages to discuss with adolescent boys include:
* When a boy’s body starts changing, his penis may sometimes become hard. This is called an erection. Boys cannot control when erections will happen. It may feel scary the first time it happens.
* It is very common for boys to awake with an erection in the morning.
* When a boy has an erection, it will eventually go down.
* When a boy/man has an erection, he can also ejaculate. When this happens, a fluid comes from the hard penis. He can control whether he ejaculates.
* Boys and men often ejaculate while they are asleep. This is called a sex dream or wet dream. It is very common and normal. These nocturnal ejaculations only happen when boys/men sleep. They cannot control them.
* Even though your body now has the ability to produce sperm, have an erection, and ejaculate, this does not mean that you are an adult yet.
* Just because you are maturing, it does not mean that you are ready for a lot of things that adults do – ***and this includes sex.***
* Boys may feel pressure from peers or other men to have sex to prove themselves. But, boys are not mature enough to have sex, which could get a girl pregnant.
1. Tell parents that boys should also know what changes girls go through during adolescence as well. (**Note**: See key messages for girls above for more details.)
2. **How to talk about Babies and Sex – Total Time: 20 minutes**
3. Explain that whether parents like it or not, girls and boys begin to develop sexual and romantic feelings during adolescence.
4. Point out that adolescents will hear about sex from their siblings, friends and/or from TV, magazines, or the internet.
5. Discuss why it is important that parents talk to their young adolescents about sex:
* Young adolescents actually want to talk to their parents about sex, although it feels very awkward to them.
* Talking to young adolescents about sex does **not** encourage them to have early sex. Actually, children are **more likely to delay intercourse** when they talk to their parents about sexuality.
* Parents do **not** need to know all the answers. The most important thing is that their child feels like they can come to their parents with questions.
* Young adolescents who ask questions about sex are **not** necessarily sexually active. They are probably curious and want to know more information.
1. Tell parents that when it comes to talking about sex, they should follow the same rules: a) find teachable moments and b) provide small bits of information.
2. Explain that it is important that young adolescents understand reproduction and know how babies are made. This will **not encourage them to have sex.** On the contrary, it will make them more prepared for when they are having sexual and romantic feelings.

***Explain that*** *it is important that young adolescents understand* ***reproduction and know how babies are made.***

1. Point out that talking about sex is a great time to discuss your values and what you expect from them.
2. Discuss key tips for talking to adolescents about reproduction and sex:
* Explain the facts about how babies are made. Essential key messages are:
* Adolescent girls and women release an egg from the ovaries inside of them about once a month. This is called ovulation.
* Menstruation means that an adolescent girl has started to ovulate.
* Adolescent boys begin to produce sperm.
* When a man and woman have sex, the egg and sperm can meet.
* When the egg and sperm meet, they fuse together and become an embryo. This is called conception.
* The embryo becomes a fetus and grows in the uterus. After 9 months a baby is born.
* Explain your values—children want to know their parents’ values.
* Don’t assume your children absorb the family’s values through the air.
* Be explicit about what your values are and what you expect from them.
* Answer any of your child’s questions to the best of your ability. Reward questions and remain “ask-able”.
* Make sure your child knows that that a girl can get pregnant the first time she has sex. She can even get pregnant before she has her first menstruation.
* In the Girls Club, girls will learn how to stay away from risky places and how to use refusal skills to say no to harassment and sexual advances. Help girls practice the refusal skills, which they have learned in the Girls Club.
1. Mention that parents all over the world find it awkward and sometimes embarrassing to talk about sex-related topics with their children. Here are some reminders:
* Be ask-able. Often your children are just curious.
* You only need to provide small bits of information at time. Be sure to check their understanding of what was said.
* Be ready! Think about how to talk to your child and practice some of the key messages, if you can.

*Explain that when parents talk to their children, they should always remember:*

***Show Love.***

***Provide support.***

***Set boundaries***

1. Explain that when parents talk to their children, they should always remember the three most important things parents can do:
* **Show love**. Young adolescents need adults who connect with them, communicate with them, spend time with them, and show a genuine interest in them. This is how they learn to care for and love others.
* **Provide support**. Young adolescents need support as they confront the challenges they face during adolescense – issues that may seem unimportant to their parents and families. They need praise when they’ve done their best. They need encouragement to develop interests and personal characteristics.
* **Set boundaries**. Young adolescents need parents or other adults who consistently provide structure and supervision that is firm and appropriate for their age. Limits keep all young teens physically and emotionally safe.
1. Ask if anyone has questions.

**D. Wrap Up: Total Time – 10 minutes**

1. Initiate a discussion about today’s Parent Meeting, using these or similar questions:
* What is your take-away from this meeting?
* What did you learn?
1. Ask: Based on what you learned today how can parents best support their child as she/he attends the Girls or Boys Club?
2. Thank everyone for their participation.
3. If there will be another Parent Meeting, explain when and where it will take place.
4. Close the meeting.

# Staying Safe

**By the end of this session, parents will:**

* Understand how gender norms can lead to gender-based violence (GBV).
* Describe types of GBV that adolescents can experience and how parents can seek help.
* Know how to respond to GBV when it occurs.

**Learning Objectives**


##  Total Time: 90 minutes

**Materials:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Flipchart stand | Flipchart paper  |
| A variety of colored markers  |

**Preparation Notes:**

* **Read the Session Plan several times. Be very familiar with the content and how to deliver it.**
* If there are two Facilitators, divide up the activities that you will facilitate.
* Invite a member of an Anti-Inequitable gender norms and practices (Anti-HTP) Task Force or similar group or expert on gender-based violence to participate in this meeting and answer parents’ questions.
* Have a plan in place to be able to support and refer any parent who comes to you after the meeting reporting abuse and GBV in her/his household.

**Session Plan:**

1. **Welcome – Total Time: 20 minutes**
2. Welcome everyone to the meeting. Thank them for coming.
3. Introduce yourself and any other facilitator.
4. If there are new parents at the meeting, ask them to introduce themselves.
5. Explain that as adolescents mature and grow, new things begin to happen to them.
6. Ask whether parents or their daughters have noticed people reacting to their daughter differently now that the girls’ bodies are beginning to change.
7. Point out that adolescent girls can receive more attention when their bodies and behaviors are changing. They may experience:
* More pressure about their looks, how they are dressed, etc.
* Unwanted attention from older boys, men.
* More attention from some family members.
* Teasing or harassment at school or on their way to and/or from school.
1. Ask if adolescent boys experience the same kind of attention. Why/ Why not?
2. Mention that boys can experience the following as they grow into adolescents and young adults:
* Teasing from peers and/or older boys, especially if they are not maturing as quickly as their peers.
* Harassment from peers and/or older boys and family members
* Teasing or harassment at school or on their way to and/or from school.
* Pressure to show their masculinity.
1. Ask if anyone has questions.
2. **Gender-based Violence (GBV) – Total Time: 40 minutes**

**Social Expectations** (about 20 minutes)

1. Initiate an active discussion with these questions: (**Note**: Write responses on flipchart, if available.)
* How is an ideal adolescent girl supposed to look and behave?
* How is an ideal adolescent boy supposed to look and behave?
1. Discuss the following:
* What is the difference between how girls are supposed to behave and boys are supposed to behave?
* Why are the expectations of girls’ and boys’ behaviors so different?
1. Remind parents of gender roles and norms, which were discussed in a previous Parent Meeting:
* Gender norms and roles are “rules” for how men and women should behave that a particular community and/or society adopt.
* We learn these “rules” early in life from family members, schools, religious organizations, and social institutions.
* Gender roles and norms for women and men can and do change over time. Remember the exercise we did showing how some of our grandparents’ roles are so different from modern day roles of men and women?

***Explain that in many cultures, gender norms – or behaviors –*** *for women are different than those for men.*

1. Explain that in many cultures, gender norms – or behaviors – for women are different than those for men. For example:
* Being quiet, timid, and passive are behaviors (norms) often expected of women by society/culture.
* Being assertive, aggressive (sometimes), and not showing emotions are behaviors (norms) expected of men by society/culture.
* Add any local examples.
1. Ask who has more power or a stronger position in our society, men or women?
* In what ways? Physical? Social? Political?
* Why do you think that is?
1. Remind parents that because of gender norms, society expects men and women to look and behave in certain ways. Men are often seen as stronger and women weaker.
2. Discuss the link between gender norms, inequality (power imbalance), and violence:
* Gender norms and expectations can create a sense of inequality or power imbalance between men and women. Men are thought to be stronger, more powerful, and financially successful. Women are thought to be weaker, passive, care takers, and not the main money earners in the family.
* The fact that men are seen as powerful and women as weak leads to an imbalance of power. Any power imbalance will typically result in violence as those with less power (girls and women) are judged as “less than” or “valued lower”.
* “Gender-based violence” is when the more powerful gender inflicts violence on the less powerful gender, which in most cases is men inflicting violence on women.
1. Explain that the expectation for men to have power over women is often so strong in a community that the imbalance of power is not noticed – or it is tolerated – even in an intimate relationship.
2. Point out that gender-based violence is not always physical. It can also be sexual, emotional, and/or economic.
3. Mention that when someone uses his/her power over someone else, the two are not able to work together effectively to reach their goals.

**Gender-based Violence/GBV [[15]](#endnote-15)** [[16]](#endnote-16) [[17]](#endnote-17) [[18]](#endnote-18) (about 20 minutes)

|  |
| --- |
| **NOTE:** It’s very important that you are aware of the legal issues and any mandatory reporting requirements if a minor discloses any type of violence or abuse. Please be sure to review relevant guidelines or laws before the Parent Meetings begin so you are prepared if disclosure should arise.  |

Note that this can be a particularly emotional session for some parents who have been victims of GBV or know that their children have been. Oftentimes when GBV is discussed, disclosures can occur. In this case it could be a parent’s disclosure of assault or harassment or something they are aware happened to their child. Participants may become upset by some of the topics in the Girls Club meeting(s). They may feel uncomfortable talking about issues related to sex or violence with other parents. The activities may remind them of their own violent situations they’ve experienced.

1. If a parent is upset by an activity, talk to him/her after the session in private to find out why they are uncomfortable. Listen to what is being said rather than forcing them to talk about what’s upsetting. Keep this information highly confidential.
2. Explain that both girls and boys can experience GBV, however, GBV affects girls and women more often. GBV is usually inflicted by boys or men, mainly because of the power imbalance between men and women.
3. Discuss these and/or other similar points:
* Harassment and GBV often begins during adolescence.
* Adolescents need to be aware of GBV risk factors, how they can protect themselves against GBV, and what to do if they do experience GBV.

*Adolescents should know* ***they are not to blame*** *if they experience GBV.*

* **Adolescents should know they are not to blame if they experience GBV.**
* Parents play a big role in helping adolescents deal with GBV and/or harassment.
1. Explain the different types of GBV that can be inflicted on adolescents:
* **Bullying** – when one person hurts, harms, or is mean to another person over and over again. Some bullies may repeatedly trip, hit, or push someone, while other bullies may leave a person out or not invite them to join games or group activities.
* **Intimidation** – intentionally scaring or frightening someone to do (or not do) something.
* **Isolation** – separating someone from people or events; withholding information to control the person.
* **Labeling or giving a bad name** – saying insulting and/or humiliating comments, such as calling a person stupid, dumb, fat, etc. to make the person look and feel bad.
* **Spreading rumors** – telling negative things/lies about a person.
* **Physical violence** – like punching, slapping, beating, etc.
1. Explain that sexual harassment is another type of GBV. Sexual harassment involves **any type** of unwanted sexual attention, including:
* Unwanted touching, including touching sexual parts of a person’s body. For girls/women, this may include breasts, buttocks. For girls and boys, this may include touching or grabbing their genitals.
* Touching in a sexual manner against the will of a person (e.g. kissing, grabbing, fondling, forcing a girl to touch a boy’s penis).
* Showing sexual videos or sending unwanted sexual pictures or messages.
1. Point out that harassment and GBV can come from many sources, in particular from people that adolescents know:
* Peers – both boys and girls
* Older boys or older girls
* Teachers
* Family members
* Family friends
* Neighbors
1. Discuss ways that GBV affects the lives of the adolescents. Girls and boys that experience GBV can:
* Have health problems, get pregnant and/or get infections, such as sexually transmitted infections and/or HIV from a rape.
* Become anxious, depressed, despondent, withdrawn, fearful, distrustful.
* Experience feelings of shame or guilt, **even though the sexual assault was not their fault.**
* Poor self-esteem.
* Poor performance in school and/or in life.
1. **Emphasize that any type of sexual assault is never the victim’s fault**. Sexual harassment and/or violence toward adolescents has nothing to do with how they are dressed, their mannerisms, or their behaviors.

*Explain that during the Girls and Boys Club meetings girls and boys* ***will learn about the various forms of GBV and what to do if it happens to them.***

1. Explain that during the Girls and Boys Club meetings girls and boys will learn about the various forms of GBV, including sexual harassment, and what to do if it happens to them.
2. Ask if anyone has questions. (**Note**: Have a trusted member of an Anti-Inequitable gender norms and practices task force, gender-based violence expert, or a reproductive expert available to help answer questions.)
3. **Dealing with Gender-based Violence – Total Time: 20 minutes**
4. Mention that there are things that parents can do to help their children prevent harassment or deal with it when it happens.
5. Discuss the importance of parents’ support and guidance:
* Parents are the best source of education and support for their children. While adolescents tend to want to spend more time with their peers, they still want and need support and advice from their parents.
* Avoiding sensitive subjects won’t make them go away. If parents avoid talking with their child about GBV and harassment, children may turn to their friends for information and advice. This increases the chances that what they hear will be wrong information, or information not in line with your values.
1. Discuss ways that parents can help their children handle GBV and/or harassment if it occurs:
* **Observe if your daughter or son is acting differently, withdrawn, or does not want to go to school. Talk to your child about what is happening.**
* **Girls and boys may not feel comfortable reporting harassment or sexual assault for fear of not being believed or for being blamed. Be very open and non-judgmental if they tell you anything.**
* **Be open to communication, any time. Remain approachable and “ask-able”.**
* **Listen to your** child without judgment. Your child needs your love and support. Chances are she is blaming herself for any abuse that is happening.
* **Emphasize that harassment and sexual assault are never the girl’s fault.**
* Problem solve with your child.She/he will be learning ways to avoid harassment or what to do if it happens during the Girls and Boys Club meetings. Ask them about what they are learning and practice the techniques with them.
1. Discuss empowering things that parents can say to their child if she/he reports that they have experienced some sort of harassment or violence:
* “I believe you.”
* “I am glad you told me this – you are very brave to have come forward.”
* “I am sorry this happened to you.”
* “You are not alone in having this experience – it can happen to lots of people.”
* “It is not your fault.”
* “There are people who can help.”
1. Ask parents if they know where they can get support if they suspect their children are victims of GBV and harassment.
2. Discuss sources of support for girls/boys and parents:
* Talk to, and report to, someone from an Anti-HTP task force or service that protects girls and women from violence.
* Talk to a trusted, supportive adult, such as an older friend or knowledgeable auntie.
* Discuss the issue with a trusted, youth-friendly health care provider.
* Report the incident to local officials, such as community officials and organizations that support girls and women against violence.
* Report the incident to the local police.
1. Point out that when the community speaks out and rejects the power imbalance between women and men, and the resulting violence, violence against our young girls will end.
2. Ask if anyone has questions.

**D. Wrap Up: Total Time – 10 minutes**

1. Remind parents that GBV and harassment are never your child’s fault.
2. Reinforce the following:
* **Show love**. Young adolescents need adults who are there for them, connect with them, communicate with them, spend time with them, and show a genuine interest in them. This is how they learn to care for and treat others.
* **Provide support**. Young adolescents need encouragement and support to overcome obstacles in their lives.
1. Initiate a discussion about today’s Parent Meeting, using these or similar questions:
* What is your take-away from this meeting?
* What did you learn?
1. Ask: Based on what you learned today how can parents can best support their child as she/he attends the Girls or Boys Club and school?
2. Thank everyone for their participation.
3. If there will be another Parent Meeting, explain when and where it will take place.
4. Close the meeting.



# Inequitable Gender Norms and Practices

**By the end of this session, parents will:**

* Understand the consequences of Inequitable gender norms and practices on their daughters.
* Know where parents can get support related to these practices.

**Learning Objectives**


##  Total Time: 90 minutes

**Materials:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Flipchart stand | Flipchart paper  |
| A variety of colored markers  |

**Preparation Notes:**

* **Important Note:** Have someone from an Anti-Inequitable gender norms and practices taskforce, an organization that protects girls and women against gender-based violence, a supportive faith-based leader, or health expert to co-facilitate this discussion with you. It is best **not to lecture** parents about FGC or child marriage. Consider focusing mainly on the consequences of FGC and child marriage on their daughters and the legal ramifications of the practice.
* **Read this Session Plan several times. Be very familiar with the content and how to deliver it.**
* If there are two mentors, divide up the activities that you will facilitate.
* Label a flipchart, Social Changes.

**Session Plan:**

1. **Welcome – Total Time: 10 minutes**

1. Welcome everyone to the meeting. Thank them for coming.
2. Introduce yourself and any other facilitators or guest speakers.
3. If there are any new parents at the meeting, ask them to introduce themselves.
4. **Inequitable gender norms and practices– Total Time: 60 minutes**

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**Social Changes During Adolescence** (about 20 minutes)

1. Discuss social changes that occur in adolescence by asking these or similar questions: (**Note:** Take time to discuss each question.)
* Is your daughter developing different interests these days? What are some new interests that you are noticing?
* Is your daughter feeling new pressure about how she looks?
* Has your daughter or son experienced unwanted attention? If so, what is she or he experiencing? Who might be pressuring her/him?
* Are there any hints about marriage? If so, what are they?
* Have dress rules changed for your daughter or son now? If so, how have they changed?
* Are there new rules about social mixing between boys and girls? By whom?
* What coming-of-age rituals for girls are in the family? In your community? In your religious group?
1. Ask whether boys have the same social changes as girls at this age? If so, what are these? (**Note**: Encourage a discussion about what is expected of adolescent boys.)
* Mention that both boys and girls experience some coming of age changes and rituals when they enter adolescence. However, several rituals or practices for girls are particularly harmful to them and their future.
* Explain that we are going to talk about two traditional practices that often occur during early adolescence in many countries.

**Female Genital Cutting (FGC)[[19]](#endnote-19)** (about 20 minutes)

1. Explain that female genital cutting (FGC) is common in many parts of the world and can occur as a rite of passage for girls entering adolescence.
2. Point out that FGC is very painful to girls/women after it has been done and for a lifetime. It has no health benefits and is quite harmful to girls and women.
3. Discuss the harmful effects of FGC:
* **Immediate harmful effects**: pain, bleeding, swelling, infection, death from severe bleeding.
* **Recurring, long-term effects:** problems urinating, inability to menstruate properly, constant urinary tract infections, vaginal infections, painful intercourse, and infertility.
* **At labor and delivery**: prolonged labor, tears while giving birth, severe bleeding, and death of the infant or the mother.
1. Ask the guest speaker and expert on this topic to:
* Provide additional information about the harm of FGC to girls/women and the local laws against it.
* Discuss beliefs and myths that “justify” the practice, such as cleanliness or not being marriageable.
1. Discuss the country’s law against FGC.
2. Emphasize that if parents:
* Are considering this practice for their girls, please learn more about it, the harmful consequences to their daughter – including to her fertility – and the legal ramifications.
* Want to say no to the practice, they should talk to any organization or authority that helps girls and women who **do not want** the practice.
1. Explain that anyone interested in learning more about this practice and how to prevent it in your family should talk to a member of the Anti-FCG organization, a supportive female leader.

**Early Marriage** (about 20 minutes)

1. Explain that in some communities a girl can be forced to marry before she turns 18 years of age for various reasons (family promises, traditional pressure). Or, the girl may want to marry before 18 years of age.
2. Discuss the harmful consequences of early marriage:
* Once a girl is married, she is expected to become pregnant right away.
* Getting pregnant and having children at such a young age can be dangerous for the girl and for the child.
* Young mothers and their newborns can have life-threatening complications or even die.
* Young mothers may be at risk of gender-based violence at such a young age.
* Some young girls run away from their marriage and end up in risky situations.
1. Discuss the benefits of girls waiting to start a family until after 18 years of age:
* Their bodies will be more mature and better able to deliver a baby healthfully.
* They will have fewer complications from delivery, including less chance of maternal death.
* They will have fewer premature births.
* They will be fewer incidences of infant mortality.

*Point out that if girls get married too early they* ***will not be able to achieve their aspirations and dreams.***

* They will be more mature, and, thus, better able to care well for the infant.
1. Point out that if girls get married too early they will not be able to achieve their aspirations and dreams, finish school, or take care of themselves and their family if something should happen to their husband.
2. Ask someone from any anti-gender-based violence or anti-traditional practices group to:
* Provide additional information about the harm of early marriage to girls, women, and future children.
* Discuss beliefs and myths that “justify” the practice, such as: being a sign of purity, avoiding the loss of virginity before marriage as a reason to get married early, and stigma around a girl being “impure “or “too old “to marry.
* Discuss the laws against early marriage.
1. Emphasize any existing laws that prohibit marriage before 18 years of age.
2. Explain that FGC and early marriage are considered acts of violence against women. They are very harmful to the girl, her children, and they are usually against the law.
3. Mention that more and more community members are becoming aware of the harm that girls face through early marriage. They can help in the prevention of early marriages.
4. Point out that if early marriage is not something you want for your daughter, get help and advice from any organization working against inequitable gender norms and practices and/or gender-based violence.
5. Ask if anyone has questions? (**Note**: Have a member from an organization against inequitable gender norms and practices or GBV, or an expert supporter of women’s rights available to answer parents’ question.)

**C. Wrap Up: Total Time – 10 minutes**

1. Initiate a discussion about today’s Parent Meeting, using these or similar questions:
* What is your take-away from this meeting?
* What did you learn?
1. Based on what they learned today, ask how parents can you best support their child as she/he attends the Girls or Boys Club?
2. Thank everyone for their participation today.
3. If there will be another Parent Meeting, explain when and where it will take place.
4. Close the meeting.



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