

Debate a Gender Position

Introduction

Through this activity, participants will get the chance to be on the other side of a debate by discussing and defending a position they may not agree with. It is useful for addressing issues of gender and sexuality because it asks that people maintain an open mind and remain open to change.

Objective

■ Participants will better understand how assumptions about what is considered 'normal' or 'right' influence sexuality and gender norms.

Timeframe: 1 ½ hours

Materials Needed: none

Ideal Workspace: enough space to position seats so that the two teams are facing each other

Number of participants: 10-15

STEP 1

If participants are not already acquainted, ask them to introduce themselves.

Describe the activity, its purpose, and how it will work.

Remind participants that this is a group learning exercise, and that it is not necessary for everyone to agree on everything. However, everyone in the group deserves respect. Participants should refrain from judging, interrupting or ridiculing others, and should respect the privacy of others by maintaining confidentiality.



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STEP 2

Divide participants into two teams of 5-8 people and randomly assign one statement to both teams (choose from the list of statements provided below). One team will be against the statement and the other will agree with the statement. Depending on the participants, it may be more appropriate to ask them to defend their own opinions, rather than asking them to defend an opinion they do not agree with.

Ask each team to take a few minutes to discuss how they will defend their position during the debate with the other team.

Bring both teams together and ask them to debate the statement in turn. Try to give each group an equal amount of time to state their argument.

If the group is large, you can add a third group that will decide collectively on the 'winner' of the debate.

Examples of Statements for Debate:

It is natural that women do all of the housework.

A husband can force his wife to have unprotected sex even if he knows he has a sexually transmitted disease.

Women like to have lots of children.

Women are more vulnerable to HIV transmission than men.

A woman is more likely to infect her male partner with HIV than her partner is likely to infect her.

It is normal for married men to have sex with women other than their wives.

STEP 3

After the debate is finished, bring everyone back together and facilitate a group discussion on the outcomes of the debate, and the participants' reactions to some of the issues that were brought up. You can use the following questions to guide you.

Guiding Questions

- How did you feel about the issue that was debated? Have your feelings changed?
- How did you feel arguing a point that you did not necessarily believe in? What happened?
- How do you think society has influenced the assumption(s) that were discussed?