

Project Us – Script excerpt. For perusal purposes only.

Matt

I need to talk to you. I'm Matt. I'm here with a couple of friends and my girlfriend. We're here because talking about sex is hard. And we want to get better at it.

Cady

Not just sex like intercourse, not just the "where do babies come from" kind of sex, but we need to talk about all of it- sex, sexuality, sexual activity, sensuality, all of it.

Elijah

And how to protect ourselves during that sexual activity.

Audre

The four of us tried having the conversation together, but we need some help.

Matt

So. We built some games and we're going to ask for your participation for the next 40 minutes. Participate as much or as little as you want to and if you need to leave at any point, even just to go to the bathroom, just check in with your teacher on the way out. We need as much thought and input from you as possible, but just know that if you share anything that tells us you're at harm to yourself, someone else, or you're being harmed, we have to talk to your teacher about that. We'll play the games along with you, so that goes for us too.

To be honest though, we're no experts on the subject. All I have to offer is my experience.

And the experiences of my friends, which are varied to say the least.

Like Audre, my girlfriend.

(Thus we meet Matt's friends...)

Audre

The information I got about sex came through images (and nightmares) of diseased genitalia in Mr. Carroll's freshman year health class. In two short weeks Mr. Carroll introduced me to a vast spectrum of sexual health lessons, where I quickly learned that if I kissed or "pet" a boy (what does that even mean?), I'd *probably* survive adolescence, but if I touched anyone below the belt with my hands, mouth or whatever, I'd get gonorrhea or syphilis or chlamydia or AIDS and die. Oh, and if I let anyone touch me, same thing. Including Matt, my boyfriend. That was useful— I spent the majority of sophomore year associating intimacy with death.

Elijah

My girlfriend Emily taught me everything I know about sex. Or, we taught each other by trial and error...emphasis on the error. We had a huge learning curve to get around because we were each others' firsts -- which we never really talked about. We knew we were both amateurs but also assumed, as I think a lot of people assume, that we were supposed to know how to have sex before ever having it. So we kept doing it without talking about it. Never once did either of us mention what worked and what clearly didn't. This huge lump of awkward, silent fear crawled into bed with us every time we were together. Not exactly the kind of threesome most guys dream about.

Cady

I got information about sex from my religion, and from God. Well, not directly from God. He didn't call me into his office one Sunday afternoon for a heart-to-heart on the birds and the bees. But I found my religious views on sex through prayer, and in my church youth group, and once in a dream. I listened hard. But somewhere around 8th grade, I started to get confused. My body seemed to want sex... or maybe not sex, because I had no clue what that actually meant, but certain parts definitely wanted *something*. So I got more confused. Didn't know what those parts were, or what they did, or why they got warm every time I saw my friend Brianna uncross her legs in English class. Enter more confusion.

Elijah

I'm close with this girl—close enough to have almost any other conversation – but for some reason when it comes to sex we don't talk. And, the longer the silence lasts, the weirder it feels to break it.

Audre

When word got out that chlamydia had swept the sophomore class through oral sex, my school went nuts. Terror among the students that we were all going to get it from the toilets, terror that it would lead to infertility, disfiguration or death, terror over talking about it.

Cady

Soon my confusion turned into guilt and shame.

Audre

The administration responded to the Chlamydia outbreak by throwing a basket of condoms in each guidance counselor's office. Never mind that we had to humiliate ourselves in front of the adult we met with to choose electives; never mind that we had no idea what to DO with the condoms; never mind that condoms didn't solve the issue of protection for female oral sex; never mind all of it, never mind.

Cady

Never mind the confusion.

Elijah

Never mind the conversation.

Audre, Cady and Elijah

Never mind the fear.

Audre

Or the quieting of voice and heart.

Matt

So my understanding of sex came from Audre, who couldn't see through the images of warts, sores and pregnant twelve-year olds burned in her mind, Cady who was too consumed by fear of eternal damnation to speak a word, and Elijah who was having more sex than any of us but still couldn't talk about it. Pretty cloudy outlook, huh?

What's yours?

Matt facilitates...

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Open the envelopes on your desk and pull out the game board and influence cards. *(Students pull out game board and information source cards)*

Think about who and what influences your ideas about sex. Who do you have conversations with? Who do you learn from? Arrange the cards on your desk in a diamond, like this...
(Matt shows Diamond Configuration)

Who or what influences you most? Put them at the top of your diamond. Who influences you the least? Place them at the bottom. Now fill in the rest of the diamond from most influential to least influential.

(Students begin constructing Diamond Nine, as actors walk around to answer questions.)

Audre facilitates...

Think about these sources of information. What are the messages you've heard and lessons you've learned from them? Can you think of a quote?

Pull out the slips of paper and write down quotes you have heard about sex from your friends, your teachers, TV...

Write in their voice. For example, Elijah once said to me that he's comfortable talking to me about sex, but not to his girlfriend. So I would pull out the friend label and write:

Elijah

(Elijah speaks as Matt writes his quote on cream slip of paper)

"I'm cool talking to you about sex, because you're my friend. But I can't talk to my girlfriend about it."

Audre

Go to it.