

Cross the Line

This activity is often used as an icebreaker to bring participants' different views on second-trimester abortion to the surface and address the connection between second-trimester abortion and stigma. It helps participants understand how stigma affects people's diverse views and experience with second-trimester abortion, as well as broader public dialogue on second-trimester abortion.



Objectives

By the end of this activity, participants will be able to:

- Articulate their feelings and beliefs about second-trimester abortion;
- Identify diverse views among participants;
- Describe how stigma impacts individual and societal views and reactions to second-trimester abortion.



Materials

- Masking tape or string, approximately 2-3 meters (or yards) long, to mark a line on the floor. If neither of these materials is available, ask participants to pretend that there is an imaginary line across the floor.



Timeline

30 minutes



Advance Preparation

- Clear a large area of the room to allow participants to move around and place the line in the middle of this area.
- Review and adapt statements if needed. Select in advance the statements that most apply to that group of participants. It is advisable to end with a statement upon which you think all participants can agree, such as the last one in the handout.



Instructions

1. Ask all participants to stand on one side of the line.
2. Explain that you will read a series of statements and if the statement applies to their experiences or beliefs, they should step entirely across the line.
3. Remind participants that there is no in between, which means they must stand on one side of the line or the other, and there are no right or wrong answers.
4. Ask participants not make side comments during the exercise. They can ask for clarification about a statement if they need it.

5. Stand at one end of the line and give an easy practice statement, such as:

Cross the line if you had fruit for breakfast this morning.

6. Once some people have crossed the line, give participants an opportunity to observe who crossed the line and who did not. Thank them and ask them to all return to the same side.
7. Read the first statement about second-trimester abortion. Once some people have crossed the line, give participants an opportunity to observe who crossed the line and who did not. Invite participants to notice how it feels to be wherever they are.
8. Ask someone who crossed the line and someone who did not to briefly explain their response to the statement. If someone is the only person who did or did not cross the line, ask them what that feels like.
9. Invite all participants to move back to one side of the line.
10. Repeat this for the remaining statements.
11. After the statements are read, ask participants to take their seats.
12. Discuss the experience. Some discussion questions may include:
 - *How did you feel during the activity?*
 - *Were there times when you felt tempted to move with the majority of the group? Did you move or not? How did that feel?*
 - *What did you learn from this activity?*
 - *How have your feelings about second-trimester abortion changed since you were younger?*
 - *What does this activity teach us about the stigma surrounding second-trimester abortion?*
 - *How might stigma affect women's emotional experience with second-trimester abortion?*
 - *How about women's family members?*
 - *How might stigma impact the experience of health workers and providers working in second-trimester abortion care?*
13. Debrief in particular the last statement, "You believe all women deserve access to safe, high-quality second-trimester abortion services if they need them." If everyone in the group crossed the line, discuss this commonality. If not everyone crossed the line, discuss how these different views affect people's work on second-trimester abortion care and the broader social climate for second-trimester abortion in that setting.
14. Ask one or two participants to share what they learned from this activity. Let participants know that you will be discussing these issues more throughout the workshop.
15. Solicit and discuss any outstanding questions, comments or concerns with the participants. Thank the group for their participation.

Activity adapted from:

Exhale. 2005. *Teaching support: A guide for training staff in after-abortion emotional support*. Oakland, CA, Exhale.

Cross the Line

Instructions

Read some of the following statements, beginning each time with, *“Cross the line if ... ”* After participants have moved, follow up each statement with, *“observe who crossed the line and who did not ... notice how it feels to be wherever you are ... now please all move back to the same side of the line.”*

Cross the line if:

- You were raised to believe that abortion should not be openly discussed.
- At some point in your life, you believed abortion is wrong.
- You were raised to believe that abortion is a woman’s right.
- You were raised to believe that women of faith/religious women do not have abortions.
- You have been asked to keep someone’s second-trimester abortion a secret.
- You have ever felt uncomfortable talking about second-trimester abortion.
- You have ever felt embarrassed talking about second-trimester abortion.
- You have ever heard a family member talk in a derogatory manner about women who have had second-trimester abortions.
- You have ever heard a politician talking in a derogatory manner about women who have had second-trimester abortions.
- You have ever heard a religious leader talking in a derogatory manner about women who have had second-trimester abortions.
- You or someone you are close to has had a second-trimester abortion.
- You have ever stifled your feelings about a second-trimester abortion experience.
- You have ever avoided the topic of second-trimester abortion to avoid conflict with others.
- You have heard the term “baby killers” applied to women who have second-trimester abortions or health workers that perform them.
- You have known women who risked their own health or lives to have a second-trimester abortion.
- You believe the phrase “safe abortion saves women’s lives” is true.
- You believe relief is a common reaction after abortion at any stage.
- You believe guilt is a common reaction after abortion, especially if it is a second-trimester abortion.
- You believe there is a need for a supportive social environment for second-trimester abortion.
- You have provided support to a woman or family member who experienced a second-trimester abortion.
- You believe all women deserve access to safe, high-quality second-trimester abortion services if they need them.

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