

Reasons Why

In this activity, participants explore the full range of underlying reasons for women's unintended pregnancies, pregnancy termination or continuation, and governments' regulation of pregnancy and second-trimester abortion. Participants are encouraged to identify how their and others' level of comfort with women's reasons affects reproductive health policies and services and societal stigma.



Objectives

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

- Identify diverse reasons for women's pregnancies, unintended pregnancies, second-trimester abortion and the continuation of unintended pregnancies;
- Name the reasons why women may make decisions about their unintended pregnancies that they really don't want to make;
- Discuss the reasons why governments regulate pregnancy and abortion, particularly in the second trimester, more than many other medical conditions and procedures;
- Differentiate their comfort levels with regard to the different reasons;
- Discuss how individuals' subjective level of comfort affects different women's access to safe abortion care.



Materials

- Reasons Why question strips
- Scissors
- Flipchart easel and paper
- Markers



Timeline

10 minutes to complete group exercise
15 minutes for reporting back to large group
15 minutes for debriefing in large group

40 minutes total



Advance Preparation

- Cut the Reasons Why questions into strips.
- Make a list of all of the possible responses to the Reasons Why questions.
- Prepare local examples to illustrate the point about governments regulating pregnancy and abortion, particularly abortion in the second trimester, more than many other medical conditions and procedures.

Note to facilitator: You will need to adjust how you distribute questions to groups (give more than one question to some small groups or give more than one group the same question) if you have more or fewer than seven groups.

Because this activity presents women's reasons as a whole, it may be helpful to follow this with an activity that uses case studies, scenarios or stories to present and foster empathy for individual women's circumstances surrounding pregnancy and abortion.



Instructions

1. Divide participants into groups of three to five people each. Give each group a piece of flipchart paper, markers and one or more "Reasons Why" questions. Ask each group to designate a recorder and a spokesperson.
2. Ask each group to brainstorm all of the possible responses to the question they have been given. Encourage them to think as deeply and broadly as possible, thinking about the range of diverse women and their life circumstances. Ask the recorder to write the group's question and responses on the flipchart paper.
3. When they are finished, ask the spokesperson for each group to put the flipchart paper up on the wall and present their responses to the large group. Ask other group members not to comment until all of the groups have presented.
4. Once all of the groups have presented, solicit additional responses to all of the questions. Ensure that all of the possible responses to every question have been identified. You may need to suggest additional responses that were not listed by the group.
5. Ask participants to silently review the reasons given for each question and to assess their comfort level with each. Encourage them to examine why they feel more or less comfortable with different reasons.
6. Facilitate a discussion using some of the following questions:
 - What reasons for having sex are you more comfortable with than others?
 - What reasons for unintended pregnancy are you more comfortable with than others?
 - What reasons for second-trimester abortion make you uncomfortable, and what is the source of your discomfort?
 - What are your core values that influence your comfort levels with the different reasons, and how do your values influence your comfort levels (with sex, unintended pregnancy and abortion)?
 - How do people's different levels of comfort influence societal stigma against women who have second-trimester abortion and providers who perform them?
 - How do you feel about women making a decision about their unintended pregnancy that they really don't want to make?
 - What are the reasons that governments often regulate women's pregnancies and abortion, particularly abortion in the second trimester, to a greater extent than other medical conditions and procedures? How much of this has to do with gender (the fact that only women become pregnant and the majority of legislators are usually men)?

- (For participants working in reproductive health and abortion care) How does our discomfort with certain reasons (for having sex, unintended pregnancy, abortion) affect our work in reproductive health and, specifically, second-trimester abortion care? How might clients sense this discomfort? What impact could this have on the quality of health care we provide?
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Note to facilitator: You may need to really prompt participants to think deeply to identify the core values that influence their comfort levels.

You may need to present certain local examples to illustrate the point about governments regulating pregnancy and abortion, particularly in the second trimester, more than most other conditions and procedures.

7. Close the activity by discussing some of the following points:
 - Individuals' discomfort with some women's reasons (for having sex, for an unintended pregnancy, for abortion) results in the implementation of reproductive health policies, laws and service-delivery systems that deny certain women access to safe, high-quality abortion services. This can lead to some women having to risk their health and lives to procure a (possibly unsafe) second-trimester abortion. In other words, it creates health disparities and often tragic outcomes for some women but not others.
 - Ensure participants grasp that this disparity in access to safe second-trimester abortion services is based on individual, subjective beliefs about what are "acceptable" versus "unacceptable" reasons for pregnancy and abortion.
8. Solicit and discuss any outstanding questions, comments or concerns with the participants. Thank the group for their participation.

Activity adapted from:

Marais, Thea. 1996. Abortion values clarification training manual. Melrose, South Africa, Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa.

Reasons Why Questions

Instructions

Cut the following statements into individual strips of paper to hand out to groups.

What are all of the reasons why women have sex?

What are all of the reasons why women become pregnant?

What are all of the reasons why women have an unintended pregnancy?

What are all of the reasons why women terminate a pregnancy?

What are all of the reasons why women continue an unintended pregnancy?

What are all of the reasons why women may make a decision about their unintended pregnancy that they really don't want to make?

What are all the reasons why governments regulate women's sexual activity, pregnancies and abortion, particularly second-trimester abortion?

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Marais, Thea. 1996. *Abortion values clarification training manual*. Melrose, South Africa, Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa.