

# Comfort Continuum

*This activity is designed to help participants reflect on their level of comfort discussing, advocating for and/or providing second-trimester abortion services. Participants are encouraged to reflect on their life experiences that influenced these comfort levels and how they relate to societal norms on second-trimester abortion.*



## Objectives

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

- Articulate their own level of comfort discussing or advocating for safe second-trimester abortion services;
- Discuss the different levels of comfort on second-trimester abortion held by group members and the life experiences that inform them;
- Discuss how these varying comfort levels relate to societal norms on second-trimester abortion;
- (For health-care providers) Express their level of comfort personally providing second-trimester abortion care.



## Materials

- Three paper signs labeled “A Lot,” “A Little” and “Not At All”
- Flipchart, easel and paper
- Comfort Continuum statements



## Timeline

20 minutes to complete the group exercise

20 minutes to discuss the exercise

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40 minutes total



## Advance Preparation

- Label three signs on paper: “A Little,” “A Lot” and “Not At All.”
- Rearrange chairs and tables, if necessary, to create an open space in the room for participants to move around.
- Review and revise statements if necessary, selecting statements that are most relevant for this group of participants and the specific topics covered in your workshop. (There are two sets of statements, one that is more appropriate for health-care providers and workers and the other for reproductive health professionals or a general audience). Choose the statements you will read and the order in which you will read them. You may want to read only five to eight statements, as too many may make the exercise less interesting. Begin with easier statements and then progress to harder or more complicated ones. It is advisable to use an overarching, final statement, such as the one listed here.
- Prepare correct information on abortion laws and policies in the country in case questions arise.

**Note to facilitators:** You may have to change or reword some of the statements in order to fit the context of the country or community you are working in.



## Instructions

1. Place the three signs on the floor or the wall in an open area of the room where there is enough room for participants to move around. Place the signs in order in a row to indicate a continuum:

**NOT AT ALL**

**A LITTLE**

**A LOT**

2. One at a time, read aloud the statements and ask participants to physically move to the point along the continuum that best represents their feelings. Encourage participants to be honest about their feelings and to resist being influenced by where other participants are placing themselves.
3. After participants have arranged themselves, ask volunteers at different points along the continuum to explain why they are standing there. Record key phrases from these explanations on a flipchart.
4. If, based on someone's explanation, participants want to move to another point on the continuum, encourage them to do so.
5. Once you have finished reading the statements, ask participants to return to their seats. Ask one or two participants to share their feelings about the activity. Some discussion questions you may want to ask include:
  - How did you feel during this 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 about your responses to the statements surprised you?
6. Refer to the notes on the flipchart to facilitate a brief discussion about the different responses and levels of comfort in the room. Some discussion questions could include:
  - What observations do you have about your own responses to the statements?
  - How would you summarize your level of comfort with second-trimester abortion?
  - What observations do you have about the group's responses to the statements overall (not individual people's responses)?
  - How would you summarize the group's overall level of comfort with second-trimester abortion?
7. Ask participants to reflect on the life experiences that influenced their levels of comfort or discomfort. Invite them to imagine how a different set of life circumstances might have led to a different level of comfort with second-trimester abortion. Ask a few people to share their thoughts on this.
8. Discuss what relationship their and others' level of comfort with second-trimester abortion has on societal norms on second-trimester abortion, women's feelings about themselves when they have a second-trimester abortion and providers' feelings about performing these services.

9. If participants are health-care providers, facilitate a discussion on how their comfort levels affect the provision and quality of second-trimester abortion services. Emphasize what a large impact providers' attitudes have on their provision of services and women's experience and satisfaction with those services.
10. If questions arise during the discussion, for example on abortion laws and policies in that country, be prepared to provide correct information once participants have finished the discussion.
11. Ask one or two participants to share what they learned from this activity.
12. Solicit and discuss any outstanding questions, comments or concerns with the participants. Thank the group for their participation.

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**Note to facilitators:** You may want to refer to Ipas's Woman-Centered Abortion Care: Reference Manual, Counseling module, for more information on provider attitudes at <http://www.ipas.org/english/publications/abortion.asp>.

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

# Comfort Continuum: Statements for Health-Care Providers and Health Workers

## Facilitator Instructions

Below are statements appropriate for health-care providers and health workers. You can choose some of the following statements or develop other statements that are most relevant in your country or setting.

### Statements for health-care providers and health workers:

1. How comfortable are you with safe and legal induced second-trimester abortion services being provided in your country?
2. How comfortable are you discussing second-trimester abortion with colleagues at work?
3. How comfortable are you discussing second-trimester abortion outside of your work setting?
4. How knowledgeable are you about your country's laws and policies on second-trimester abortion services?
5. How comfortable are you working in a facility where second-trimester abortions are performed?
6. How much disapproval would you expect to feel from your family and friends if you provided second-trimester abortion services?
7. How comfortable are you performing an abortion in the first trimester? (If you are not authorized to perform abortion in your country, how comfortable are you assisting with an abortion in the first trimester?)
8. How comfortable are you performing an abortion in the second trimester? (If you are not authorized to perform second-trimester abortion in your country, how comfortable are you assisting with a second-trimester abortion?)
9. How comfortable are you with the idea of every woman having the right to access safe second-trimester abortion services?
10. How comfortable are you providing (or assisting with) second-trimester abortion for every woman who desires it, regardless of her reasons?

Activity adapted from:

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

# Comfort Continuum: Statements for Reproductive Health Professionals or General Audience

## Facilitator Instructions

Below are statements appropriate for reproductive health professionals or a general audience. You can choose some of the following statements or develop other statements that are most relevant in your country or setting.

### Statements for reproductive health professionals or general audience:

1. How comfortable are you with safe and legal induced second-trimester abortion services being provided in your country?
2. How comfortable are you discussing second-trimester abortion with family members? Friends? Colleagues at work?
3. How knowledgeable are you about your country's laws and policies on second-trimester abortion services?
4. How comfortable are you advocating for women's access to second-trimester abortion?
5. How comfortable are you publicly supporting women who have second-trimester abortions and the health-care providers who provide them?
6. How much disapproval would you expect to feel from your family and friends if you advocated for safe second-trimester abortion services?
7. How comfortable are you with the idea of every woman having the right to access safe second-trimester abortion services in your country?
8. How comfortable are you advocating for second-trimester abortion care for every woman who desires it, regardless of her reasons?

Activity adapted from:

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