

Cross the Line

This activity is often used as an icebreaker to bring participants' different views on abortion at or after 13 weeks to the surface and address the connection between abortion and stigma. It helps participants understand how stigma affects people's diverse views and experience with abortion at or after 13 weeks, 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 abortion at or after 13 weeks;
- Identify diverse views among participants;
- Describe how people and societies view women who need second-trimester abortion services.



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

1 hour



Advance Preparation

- Clear an 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 the 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 they agree with the statement, they should step 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. Inform participants that they should answer honestly and not feel pressured to follow the group. Let everyone know that we want to respect people's responses even if they are different from our own and that everyone should be allowed to express their thoughts or beliefs openly and without judgment or negative responses from the group.
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. 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
7. 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. Solicit responses from a few different participants.
8. Invite all participants to move back to one side of the line.
9. Repeat this for the remaining statements.
10. After the statements are read, ask participants to take their seats.
11. 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?*
12. Debrief in particular the last statement, "You believe all women deserve access to safe, high-quality abortion services at or after 13 weeks 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 abortion at or after 13 weeks in that setting.
13. 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.
14. 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 Statements

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 have ever felt uncomfortable or embarrassed talking about abortion
- You have or have heard about providers having religious concerns about providing abortion services at or after 13 weeks
- You have ever avoided the topic of abortion at or after 13 weeks to avoid conflict with others
- You have heard the term “baby killers” applied to women who have abortions at or after 13 weeks or health workers that perform them
- You have known women who risked their own health or lives to have an abortion at or after 13 weeks
- You believe young, unmarried women who have an abortion at or after 13 weeks should be provided with a long-acting reversible contraceptive method if they want one
- You believe young, unmarried women should be able to receive an abortion at or after 13 weeks for any indication
- You feel uncomfortable with abortion at or after 13 weeks if there is transient fetal survival
- You believe all women deserve access to safe, high-quality abortion services at or after 13 weeks if they need them
- * Optional if appropriate in your setting: You feel uncomfortable if a woman wants a sex selective abortion

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