

THINKING ABOUT MY VALUES

Facilitator guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

This self-reflection and analysis activity consists of a three-part worksheet that is completed individually, followed by group or paired discussion about each part, and then debriefed as one whole group. The worksheet helps participants consider the role of certain external influences, including family/social norms, displacement, religious beliefs and age/life stage that contribute to their current values and beliefs about abortion. This is a more in-depth, advanced exercise that is appropriate for highly literate audiences and may need to be translated into the local language.

OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify and examine the role of external influences, such as family and social norms, displacement, religious beliefs and age/life stage, on the formation of their values about abortion
- Explain the ways in which their values have changed over time, in response to new knowledge and experiences

MATERIALS

- Copies of “Thinking about my values” worksheet for all participants
- Pens

TIMELINE

Total time: 1 hour 25 minutes

ADVANCE PREPARATION

- Photocopy “Thinking about my values” worksheet, one per participant.
- Review activity purpose, instructions and worksheet with small group facilitators. The worksheet questions are in-depth and contain terms and concepts that may be new to some participants. Facilitators need to make sure they understand the instructions and worksheets and that they can facilitate participants as they complete the worksheets and have small group discussions.

**NOTE TO FACILITATOR**

Facilitators need to be very conscious of time in this activity. Keep small groups moving through the worksheet and discussion questions or you may not get to all three parts.

If you have a small number of participants, you can facilitate this activity in a single large group and have participants discuss the worksheets in pairs rather than in small groups.

INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1: Introduce the activity:

The social groups in which we grew up often play an important role in shaping the core values that inform our beliefs. Social groups may include your immediate and extended family; racial, ethnic or cultural group; heritage; and socioeconomic group. The role of these external influences, however, is often subconscious and operates in the background of our beliefs and interactions. At different points in our lives and for different reasons, we may challenge these beliefs and underlying values. The purpose of this activity is to reflect on the source and influence of these core values on your present beliefs about abortion and how they may have changed over the years.

What questions do you have about this?

STEP 2: Divide participants into small groups and assign each group a facilitator. Ask each group to assign a reporter who will take general notes about the group's discussion and report out during the large group discussion. Advise the facilitators to assign a timekeeper who will ensure they cover all of the tasks during the allotted time.

STEP 3: Distribute worksheets to participants. Ask participants to take the next several minutes to individually complete **Part A** only. Their responses to the questions are for their personal reflection; they need share them with the group only to the extent that they feel comfortable. To save time, advise participants to write brief notes rather than full sentences. Groups will not discuss every worksheet question.

STEP 4: Once everyone in the group has completed Part A, have small group facilitators ask some of the following questions and facilitate a discussion on their responses.

- What were some of your social group's values or beliefs about abortion and how do they compare with your own?
- If your family did not discuss abortion, what conclusions have you drawn about this silence?
- What observations do you have about the social groups to which you belong and their beliefs about abortion? What about these social groups' beliefs about marriage/ partnerships, family structure and topics related to sexuality? How are these beliefs or values related?

STEP 5: After participants have finished discussing Part A, have small group facilitators introduce **Part B** and allow them time to complete it:

Now we're going to talk about the influence of our spiritual or religious beliefs—defined very broadly and individually by each person—on our values, beliefs and decisions. Religion or spirituality may be a private matter for some people, though others may prefer to share their spiritual or religious beliefs and life openly with others. In Part B of your worksheet, you will answer questions about your current spiritual or religious beliefs versus those you held in childhood. You will also compare your present beliefs to those held by your family members. We want to consider the influence of our religious or spiritual beliefs on our values, beliefs and decisions about abortion and how we reconcile any conflicts.

What questions do you have about this?

STEP 6: Once everyone has completed Part B, ask some of the following questions and facilitate a discussion on their responses.

- How do your current spiritual beliefs compare to the beliefs you had when you were growing up?
- How do your personal spiritual or religious beliefs about abortion compare to those of your spiritual or religious group (if you belong to a group)?
- To what extent do your religious beliefs influence your decisions?
- What are some examples of events or circumstances that called for an action not supported by your religious or spiritual beliefs and how did you attempt to reconcile these conflicts?

STEP 7: After participants have completed Part B, introduce **Part C**, and allow participants time to complete it.

With age comes increased knowledge, experience and ways of understanding the world. Additional years influence our emotions and reactions to the events that happen around us and how we interpret them. Age also offers the benefit of perspective that is provided by an accumulation of life experience, so long as we have reflected on these experiences and incorporated them into our worldview. The last part of this activity encourages you to reflect on the influence of your age and life experience on your current life perspectives.

What questions do you have about this?

STEP 8: Once everyone has completed Part C, ask some of the following questions and facilitate a discussion on their responses.

- In what ways have age and life experience affected your views about romantic relationships and reproductive decisionmaking? How about abortion, specifically?
- Can you think of other related views or priorities in your life that have changed over time?
- Apart from age, what factors have influenced your views about relationships, childbearing and/or abortion?

STEP 9: Call participants back to the large group. Ask reporters to share three highlights from their small group discussions. Solicit one or two additional comments.

STEP 10: Ask participants to reflect on each part of this activity and to share what they learned or gained from their small group discussions.

STEP 11: Solicit and discuss any outstanding questions, comments or concerns with the participants. Thank the group for their participation.

STEP 12: Summarize the key points this activity is intended to convey:

- Our personal values can impact the type of care we provide to women. We may feel more sensitive to women whose experiences resonate more closely with our own. Regardless of our personal values, we should commit to providing each woman with compassionate, safe care regardless of her circumstances.
- It is important to recognize where our personal values can sometimes be a barrier for us. Recognizing our own biases can help us to be aware of them and to maintain a level of professionalism when we are in a work environment.

THINKING ABOUT MY VALUES

Participant worksheet

INSTRUCTIONS

Please think carefully about the following questions and answer honestly, according to your personal experiences. Please keep your written responses brief. You will be asked to share only the responses you feel comfortable discussing with others.

Part A: Family and social groups

1. Did the family who raised you discuss specific beliefs or values regarding abortion?
 Yes No Please describe: _____

2. Have you experienced any personal events that changed your beliefs or values about abortion?
 Yes No Please describe: _____

3. Do you think that being displaced by conflict or other crisis changes a person's beliefs or values about abortion?
 Yes No Please describe: _____

4. Do your family's values about abortion reflect the values commonly held by your family's racial or ethnic group, cultural heritage or nation?
 Yes No Please describe: _____

5. Which one social group or factor has had the greatest influence on your current values related to abortion?
 Racial/Ethnic Family who raised you Friends
 Socioeconomic status Religious/spiritual Professional colleague
 Activist community Other (describe: _____)

Part B: Religion and spirituality

1. Have you held the same spiritual/religious beliefs since childhood?

___ Yes ___ No

If yes, describe what they are:

If no, describe how they have changed:

2. How do your personal spiritual/religious beliefs relate to your views on abortion?

3. Describe a time when you felt challenged by a life event or circumstance that called for an action not supported by your religious/spiritual beliefs?

How were you able to reconcile this action with your beliefs?

Part C: Age/life Stage and experience

1. Describe how your insights about romantic relationships have changed from when you were an adolescent; in your mid-20s; mid-30s; 40s and older:
2. What do you think is the ideal age for a woman to have her first child? How have your views about this changed over the years?

