CLEAR Menu Sessions

Sexual Risk Session 5:
How Do I Refuse Unsafe Sex?
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How Do I Refuse Unsafe Sex?

(55 Minutes)

Session Aims:

- To reinforce the client’s strengths and values by developing guidelines for living.
- To use the client’s Ideal Self to motivate refusal of unsafe sex.
- To increase the client’s ability to use assertive communication to refuse unsafe sex.
Summary of Activities:

Check-In (10 minutes)
- The purposes of this activity are to set a positive tone for the session, create a safe environment, increase self-esteem, and shape positive behaviors. Goals set during the previous session are reviewed, and the activities and purposes of the session are outlined.

How Do I Refuse Unsafe Sex? (35 minutes)
- The purpose of this activity is to increase the client’s skills for refusing unsafe and unwanted sex. Guidelines are reviewed and applied to situations in which he or she would like to refuse unsafe sex.

What’s Next? (15 minutes)
- The purposes of this activity are to reinforce today’s learning, set weekly goals, and to motivate the client to return to the next session by wrapping up on a positive note.
Required Materials: Sexual Risk 5

Handouts
- Assertive Communication

Worksheets
- F-T-D Grid

Wall Charts
- Feeling Thermometer
- Guidelines for Goal Setting
- SMART Problem-Solving Guidelines

Laminated Cards and Additional Items
- None

Materials Needed in Every Session
- Client Workbook
- Goal Card
- Handout: Guidelines for Goal Setting
- Worksheet: Individual Prevention Plan
- Worksheet: Substance Use Weekly Schedule
Activity 1: Check-In

Time
- 10 minutes

Activity Materials
- Worksheet: Individual Prevention Plan

Counselor Note
The purposes of this activity are to set a positive tone for the session, create a safe environment, increase self-esteem, and shape positive behaviors. Goals set during the previous session are reviewed and the activities and purposes of the session are outlined.

Goal Check-In

- Welcome back! Let’s start off by sharing the positive steps you’ve taken over the past week.
- These positive steps might include the progress you made on your goals, something beneficial you did for yourself, or an important insight you gained about your thoughts, feelings, or behavior.

Engage the client in a discussion. Encourage the client to report progress on the two goals set at the end of the last session:

1. A short-term weekly goal that supports accomplishment of the client’s long-term life goal identified during Core Skill Session 2.

2. A short-term weekly goal that relates to the last session’s topic and supports the client’s prevention goal.

In response to accomplished goals:
- Praise the client’s efforts and success.
- Relate the accomplished goal to the F-T-D framework.
In response to unaccomplished goals:

- Praise any small effort and approximations to achieving the goal.
  - In order to maintain a safe and non-judgmental environment and in response to clients who may lose their motivation by not having accomplished their goals, positively reframe the unaccomplished goal (i.e., “You did not accomplish your goal because you were trying to take care of yourself by not creating more stress.”).
  
- Model goal setting by suggesting that perhaps the “right” goal was not chosen the previous week (e.g., “Maybe the goal was too difficult or could not realistically be accomplished within the designated time frame.”). Use this as an opportunity to emphasize the importance of setting realistic goals in order to optimize success.
  
- Identify barrier(s) to goal accomplishment and apply SMART Problem-Solving steps to any barrier(s).
  
- Relate the unaccomplished goal to the F-T-D framework.

Use the client’s Individual Prevention Plan worksheet to record his or her progress against each goal.

**Substance Use Weekly Schedule**

If the client has set a substance use prevention goal and completed the first Substance Use Risk Session, review the Substance Use Weekly Schedule worksheet. Allow time for the client to complete the worksheet if it has not been completed in advance of the meeting.

**Introduction to Today’s Session**

Introduce today’s session.

- I see you’ve been working really hard. Unless there is something pressing that you feel we need to discuss today, let me introduce you to today’s session topic.

- Today we are going to talk about refusing unsafe sex. We will spend some time talking about why you might choose to refuse unsafe sex and explore what that decision would mean. Finally we will come up with strategies for refusing unsafe sex for if and when you make that decision.
Introduction to Today’s Session - continued

- Remember that our sessions are about looking at how our feelings, meaning our Feeling Thermometer readings, thoughts, and actions are related to each other. Understanding how our feelings, thoughts, and actions affect each other can help us to make healthy choices, to think and act like our Ideal Self, to have less stress, and to protect ourselves and other people from transmitting or acquiring HIV or STIs.

- Any questions before we get started?

Answer any questions the client raises.
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Activity 2: How Do I Refuse Unsafe Sex?

Time
- 35 minutes

Activity Materials
- Handout: Assertive Communication
- Worksheet: F-T-D Grid

Counselor Note
The purpose of this activity is to increase the client’s skills for refusing unsafe sex. Guidelines are reviewed and applied to situations in which he or she would like to refuse unsafe sex.

Refusing Unsafe Sex
- Let’s talk about situations when you have refused unsafe sex. How has this issue come up for you?
- Have you ever been in a situation with a new, casual, and/or steady partner and refused to have unsafe sex with him or her?

Counselor Note
If the client answers “no”, ask the client what might happen if he or she were to refuse unsafe sex with a current partner or a new partner. Modify the series of questions below to probe what he or she thinks will happen.

Ask the client to describe the situation(s).
- What happened?

Distribute the F-T-D Grid worksheet and use the information shared by the client to complete it.

Use the Feeling Thermometer to assess the client’s comfort level before, during, and after the refusal.
Where were you on the Feeling Thermometer before, during, and after the refusal?

What were your thoughts before, during, and after the refusal?

What did you do (e.g., not have sex, have safer sex, etc.)?

Thank you for sharing your experience.

As you can see, there are many factors that can be weighed in your decision to refuse unsafe sex. That decision often comes with conflicting thoughts and feelings, especially if your partner is pressuring you.

The “right” thing to do is act in a way that is consistent with your Ideal Self.

Think about the characteristics of your Ideal Self. How do those characteristics inform decisions about refusing unprotected sex?

Engage the client in a dialogue. Help the client understand how the Ideal Self can be a decision-making framework that can be applied to situations like refusing unprotected sex.

Striving to be your Ideal Self may mean convincing your partner to use condoms, only connecting with people who want safer sex, and learning how to communicate your desires and your bottom line.

**Assertive Communication**

Let’s talk about what successful refusal of unsafe sex would look like for you.

What type of communication would you use: aggressive, assertive, or passive?

Engage in a brief discussion.

Assertive communication can work with new partners, casual partners, and partners that you may have been with for a long time.

Give the client a copy of the Assertive Communication handout and review it.
Assertive Communication - continued

- Earlier you told me about a situation(s) in which you refused unsafe sex. I wrote down the situations and people that you mentioned. I would like for us to apply the assertive communication guidelines and develop options for refusing unsafe sex.

- Here’s what we will do. First, for each situation, we will measure the level of discomfort you have refusing to have unsafe sex with that person. Then we’ll look at your corresponding thoughts. If you have a high Feeling Thermometer reading and unhelpful thoughts, we’ll think of ways for you to lower your discomfort and think helpful thoughts.

- Then, we’ll role-play ways to respond to the person and refuse unsafe sex.

Refer the client to the completed F-T-D grid. Start with the Feeling Thermometer reading before, during, and after the refusal. If the client has a high Feeling Thermometer reading, brainstorm ideas for reducing the reading (e.g., doing a relaxation activity, planning in advance, etc.). Reframe any negative thoughts by coaching the client in replacing unhelpful thoughts with CLEAR Thoughts.

Unscripted Role-Play

Ask the client to role-play refusing unprotected sex. You play the part of the partner.

Debrief after the role-play.

- How was the role-play for you?

Use the Feeling Thermometer to assess the client’s comfort level during the role-play.

- What was your Feeling Thermometer reading?

- What thoughts were going through your mind? How did you use CLEAR Thinking?

- Tell me one thing you did that you liked and one thing that you would do differently?
Explain to the client what you felt as the partner. Cover the following points:

- Your Feeling Thermometer reading.
- One thing that you liked about what the patient did.
- One thing that you would differently if you were the patient.

► This was a wonderful activity. I am very impressed!
Activity 3: What’s Next?

Time

- 15 minutes

Activity Materials

- Goal Cards
- Handout: Guidelines for Goal Setting
- Worksheet: Individual Prevention Plan
- Worksheet: Substance Use Weekly Schedule

Counselor Note

The purposes of this activity are to reinforce today’s learning, set weekly goals, and to motivate the client to return to the next session by wrapping up on a positive note.

Review of Session Content

Review today’s session.

- We are at the end of our session. Before we set our weekly goal, I want to review what we learned and share some observations that I noticed about you during the session.

- Today we started off by developing guidelines for living that are based on your Ideal Self. We then explored how refusing unsafe sex fits in with your sex life and situations in which you would want to refuse unsafe sex. Finally we practiced using assertive communication by applying it to refusing unsafe sex.

Praise the client for something positive he or she did during the session. For example, “I really liked that you engaged in every activity we did today.”
Review of Goal Guidelines

Review the Guidelines for Goal Setting.

Guidelines for Goal Setting

- Important to you, and you are committed to it.
- Realistic. Not too hard and not too easy (40-60 on the Feeling Thermometer).
- Brief, specific, and clearly stated.
- Easy to tell when you have accomplished it.

Answer questions and clarify as necessary.

Refer to the client’s prevention goal related to sexual risk.

The client’s Ideal Self characteristics, prevention, and life goals should be consistently integrated into weekly short-term goal setting.

The client is encouraged to identify two goals:

1. A short term weekly goal that supports the client’s accomplishment of the long-term life goal identified during Core Session 2.

2. A short term weekly goal that relates to today’s session topic.

If the client appears to struggle with having two simultaneous goals, the client may select only one goal related to today’s session.

Suggestions for Weekly Goals

Give the client suggestions for weekly goals.

- Some examples of possible goals for this week could be:
  - Write down a list of reasons why you would want to refuse unsafe sex.
  - Practice using assertive communication in challenging life situations.
Suggestions for Weekly Goals - continued

Discuss the goal with the client. Have the client record it on the Weekly Goal Card. Record it on the Individual Prevention Plan in the client’s workbook.

- I also would like to follow up with you about your life goal. Is there a weekly goal that you would like to set related to your Life Goal? We will review your goal at the beginning of our next session to see how you did.

Discuss the goal with the client. Have the client record it on the Weekly Goal Card. Record it on the Individual Prevention Plan in the client’s workbook.

Substance Use Weekly Schedule

Distribute the Substance Use Weekly Schedule

If the client has set a substance use prevention goal and completed the first Substance Use Risk Session, distribute the Substance Use Weekly Schedule worksheet. Ask the client to complete it prior to the next session.

Closing

Announce the day, date, and time of the next session.

Ask the client to share something he or she got out of, or liked best about today’s session. Model this by going first. Acknowledge and praise the client as appropriate.

Have the client identify benefits of participation in CLEAR. Ask the client the following questions:

- What did you like most about today’s session?
- What did you learn that you can apply to your life?
- What could be improved about today’s session?

END OF SESSION