

### Introduction to Session 4

Session 4 of SEPA is called “Ways to Improve Communication with Our Partners.” Key topics include self-esteem, communication, and condom negotiation.

The agenda for Session 4 is found on the following page. The session lasts about two hours and there is a note that indicates the halfway point for the session. With active discussion and participation, the session will likely last close to two and one-half hours. Please ask participants to schedule two and one-half hours for the session.

After the agenda, we list the materials, supplies, and equipment you need for Session 4.

We also provide the core elements and associated activities that apply to Session 4 to emphasize the importance of maintaining fidelity to core elements by not eliminating related discussions and activities.

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## SEPA Facilitators Guide

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### Session 4: Ways to Improve Communication with Our Partners Agenda

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### Equipment, Supplies, and Materials for Session 4

- Facilitators Guide
- Participant Workbooks
- CD of Session 4 PowerPoint slides
- LCD projector
- Laptop computer
- Screen
- Podium
- Newsprint
- Easel stand
- Paper
- Markers
- Pens and pencils
- Nametags
- Hat or bowl

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CORE ELEMENT	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>Core Element 1:</b> Provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information to sexually active women at risk of acquiring HIV from unprotected sex with male partners in interactive, small group sessions that focus on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HIV and STD transmission and prevention;</li> <li>• human sexuality and male and female anatomy;</li> <li>• interpersonal communications; and</li> <li>• relationship violence.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Discussions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is self-esteem?</li> <li>• What is communication?</li> <li>• Communication styles</li> <li>• Assertive communication</li> <li>• Condom negotiation</li> <li>• How to begin a conversation about condom use</li> </ul> <p><u>Group Activities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-esteem and how it affects relationships</li> <li>• Practicing condom negotiation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Core Element 2:</b> In addition to presentations and discussion, incorporate skill-building activities to enhance women’s self-efficacy for safer sex behaviors, including demonstrations and practice exercises on male and female condom use and role-playing on assertive communication with sex partners, including condom negotiation.</p>	<p><u>Role-Plays</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicing assertive communication skills</li> <li>• Practicing condom negotiation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Core Element 3:</b> Build self-efficacy and knowledge for safer sex behaviors, improved communication with partners, and violence management through homework exercises and the sharing of personal experiences.</p>	<p><u>Homework</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework review</li> <li>• Homework assignment</li> </ul>

### SESSION 4: WAYS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION WITH OUR PARTNERS

#### WELCOME PARTICIPANTS



#### Discussion



**Purpose:** To welcome participants back, review the key messages from Session 3, review Session 3 homework, and introduce Session 4



**Needed Equipment, Supplies, and Materials:** Session 4 Slides 1–3, Participant Workbooks



**Time:** 10 minutes

Welcome participants back to SEPA and encourage them to talk to each other before you officially begin the session.

*Welcome back. It's great to see you again, and I hope you all had a good week. I've been looking forward to this session. Today we will discuss self-esteem, partner communication, and condom negotiation. I hope you enjoy participating in this session and learning from each other. Remember that by participating in SEPA, you are helping yourself, your family, and your community. There is a lot to cover in this session so let's get started.*

### Session 3 Review

Session reviews help reinforce lessons learned from the previous session. Use this time to answer questions about topics in Session 3.

*During Session 3 we learned the ABCs — Abstinence, Be faithful, and Condom use — of HIV prevention. We also learned how to use male and female condoms. Here are some review questions.*

- *What is the most effective way for a woman to prevent getting a sexually transmitted disease?*

(Answer: abstinence)

- *When is a good time to use a female condom?*

Possible responses:

- When you don't want to ask your partner to use a condom.
- When you know your partner will argue about using condoms.

- *What kind of lubricant is best to use with male condoms?*

(Answer: water-based lubricants, not lubricants with oil, such as petroleum jelly and lotions)

*Before we begin Session 4, let's review key messages from Session 3.*



### Session 3 Key Messages

- There are three ways to protect yourself from sexually acquired HIV and other sexually acquired STDs:
  1. Abstinence from sex
  2. Mutual fidelity to one partner who you know is free of infection
  3. Correct and consistent use of condoms
- Abstinence from sex is the only foolproof way to prevent sexually transmitted HIV.
- You can protect your health by refusing to have unprotected sex until you know your partner is not infected with an STD, including HIV.

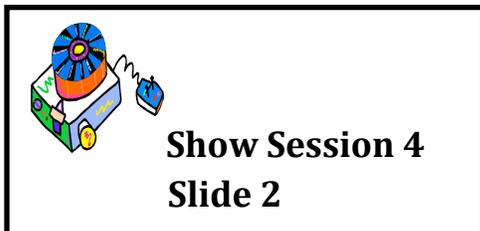
SEPA Session 4: Ways To Improve Communication With Our Partners



*There are three ways to protect yourself from sexually acquired HIV and other STDs: abstinence from sex, mutual fidelity with one partner who you know is free of infection, and correct and consistent use of condoms.*

*Abstinence from sex is the only foolproof way to prevent sexually transmitted HIV.*

*You can protect your health by refusing to have unprotected sex until you know for sure your partner is not infected with an STD, including HIV.*



**Session 3 Key Messages**

- Correct and consistent use of male or female condoms is an effective way to prevent HIV, and many other STDs. Condoms also prevent unwanted pregnancy.
- Check the expiration date on the condom package.
- Use only water-based lubricants on male latex condoms.
- Never use the same condom more than one time.

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*Correct and consistent use of male latex condoms or female condoms is an effective way to prevent HIV and many other STDs. Condoms also prevent unwanted pregnancy.*

*Check the expiration date on the condom package.*

*Use only water-based lubricants on male latex condoms.*

*Never use the same condom more than once.*

Emphasize to participants the importance of the knowledge they gained during Session 3 and how it is vital to share this knowledge with their partners, families, friends, and neighbors.

*It's so important to share the knowledge you gained during Session 3 with partners, families, friends, and neighbors. By sharing what you learn with others, you help educate the people you care about and teach them how to protect their health.*

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### Homework Review

Homework reinforces concepts presented during each session. During Session 3, participants were asked to discuss with family members, friends, or neighbors how they think the spread of HIV in the community can be prevented. Participants were also asked to clear up misinformation and share something they learned from SEPA.

*Let's spend a few minutes talking about your homework assignment.*

Questions to prompt discussion:

- *Who did you speak with about HIV prevention?*
- *What was it like to start the conversation?*
- *What information did you share about HIV prevention?*
- *Do you have any questions or comments about talking to others about HIV and STD prevention?*

*Are there other questions before we begin?*



#### **Facilitator's Note:**

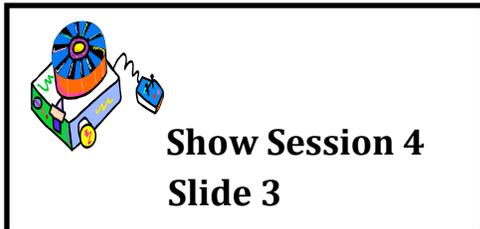
Thank the participants for completing their homework and sharing with the group.

# SEPA Facilitators Guide

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## Session Objectives

Review session objectives with SEPA participants.



**Session 4 Objectives**

By the time we finish today, you will be able to:

- Explain how self-esteem impacts relationships
- Use assertive communication
- Negotiate the use of condoms with your sex partners

SEPA Session 4: Ways To Improve Communication With Our Partners



*Here are the objectives of Session 4.*

*By the time we finish today, you will be able to:*

- *Explain how self-esteem impacts relationships*
- *Use assertive communication*
- *Negotiate the use of condoms with your sex partners*

### WHAT IS SELF-ESTEEM?



#### Discussion



**Purpose:** To discuss self-esteem and identify how self-esteem impacts intimate relationships



**Needed Equipment, Supplies, and Materials:** Slide 4, newsprint, markers



**Time:** 15 minutes

*In this session, we will discuss how to communicate effectively with an intimate partner. However, before we learn effective communication strategies, it is important to understand the concept of self-esteem and how self-esteem affects a relationship.*

Question to prompt discussion:

- *What is self-esteem?*

Possible responses:

- Whether you think you're a good person
- What you think about yourself

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Encourage participants to share their personal definitions of self-esteem. Write these definitions on the newsprint. After participants have shared their definitions, define self-esteem.



### What Is Self-Esteem?

- Self-esteem is how you feel about yourself.
- Your level of self-esteem affects your relationships.
- A partner's level of self-esteem affects his relationship with you.



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*Here's how we define self-esteem in SEPA: Self-esteem is someone's subjective appraisal of his or her value as a person, or, how you feel about yourself. Self-esteem may be low or high or somewhere in between.*

*Your level of self-esteem affects your relationships, including intimate ones.*

*Your partner's level of self-esteem affects his relationship with you.*

*A woman with high self-esteem knows she is a valuable person. She treats herself with respect and requires respectful relationships. This means she protects her physical and mental health, and she doesn't let other people mistreat or take advantage of her. A woman with high self-esteem is not threatened by people who have different opinions and may disagree with her. Words that describe her are mature, confident, self-assured, and honest.*

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Questions to prompt discussion:

- *How do you think a woman with low self-esteem would think about herself?*
- *What characteristics would you use to describe a woman with high self-esteem?*

Possible responses:

- A woman with low self-esteem could think her opinions don't matter and that her feelings are not important.
- A woman with high self-esteem is strong; she doesn't have to depend on a man to make all the decisions.

*Here's an important point about self-esteem: Our self-esteem affects how we relate to others. Women with low self-esteem may not communicate well with their partners, whereas women with high self-esteem have the ability to communicate with their partners about important issues. This kind of communication can lead to fewer conflicts.*

### Self-Esteem and How it Affects Relationships



#### Group Activity



**Purpose:** To identify how self-esteem impacts intimate relationships



**Needed Equipment, Supplies, and Materials:** Slides 5–6, Participant Workbooks

Many women do not realize how self-esteem impacts relationships. The goal of this activity is to help women understand how their self-esteem and the self-esteem of partners relate to the health of their relationships.

Ask participants to turn to the “Session 4, Worksheet 1: Low vs. High Self-Esteem” in their workbooks. Ask them to identify which traits or characteristics reflect low and high self-esteem. Give them five minutes to complete the worksheet. After participants have completed the activity, review their choices with the group.

*Let’s start. When a woman is confident, do you think she has low or high self-esteem?*

Continue going through the list of traits.

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Question to prompt discussion:

- *Is it possible for a woman to have high self-esteem in some situations and low self-esteem in other situations?*

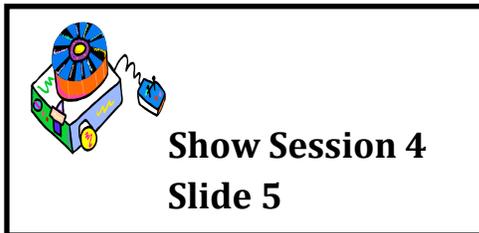
Possible responses:

- I don't think so. You either have good, or high, self-esteem or you don't.
- Yes. For example, a woman can be confident and have high self-esteem but not be confident giving a presentation before a big audience.
- You can generally have high self-esteem and be confident, but certain people can scare you and when you're with them your self-esteem is not so good.

*Because some of us think that self-esteem can vary based on a situation or being with certain people, we should keep in mind that the following remarks apply in general. They do not apply to all people.*

*Women with high self-esteem are generally confident and feel good about themselves. They will not allow other people to mistreat them. On the other hand, women with low self-esteem are less likely to be confident, generally don't feel good about themselves, and often allow people to take advantage of them. Because of low-self esteem, some women may engage in risky behaviors.*

*In general, people with low self-esteem tend to have unhealthy relationships, whereas people with high self-esteem tend to have healthy relationships.*



## Self-Esteem and the Health of Relationships

In general, partners in an unhealthy relationship are likely to have:

- poor communication skills.
- a tendency to avoid talking about issues that can cause conflicts.
- difficulty expressing their feelings.
- a hard time accepting each other's different thoughts and opinions.
- problems with loyalty and trust.
- extreme psychological, economic, and sexual dependence on each other.



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*In general, partners in an unhealthy relationship are likely to have:*

- *poor communication skills.*
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- *problems with loyalty and trust.*
- *extreme psychological, economic, and sexual dependence on each other.*



## Self-Esteem and the Health of Relationships

But, partners in a healthy relationship are more likely to have:

- frequent dialogue without the fear of conflict due to different opinions.
- open expression of feelings.
- acceptance of individual differences.
- mutual loyalty and trust.
- a violent-free relationship.
- mutual support without extreme dependence on each other.

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*But, partners in a healthy relationship are more likely to have:*

- *frequent dialogue without the fear of conflict due to different opinions.*
- *open expression of feelings.*
- *acceptance of individual differences.*
- *mutual loyalty and trust.*
- *a violent-free relationship.*
- *mutual support without extreme dependence on each other.*

### WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?



#### Discussion



**Purpose:** To define communication, identify different communication styles, and focus on assertive communication



**Needed Equipment, Supplies, and Materials:** Slides 7–11



**Time:** 35 minutes

This discussion helps participants define communication and understand that there are different communication styles.

*Now we're going to discuss a topic that is the subject of hundreds of books, classes, and other discussion groups; but we need to be brief. The topic is communication.*

Question to prompt discussion:

- *What's your definition of communication?*

Possible responses:

- Talking to another person

- Being honest in what you say
- Listening when someone else is talking
- Facial expressions — a dirty look
- Body language — arms crossed, looking disgusted



### What Is Communication?

- Communication is the exchange of information, ideas, and feelings.
- Communication requires that someone else understands what you mean.
- We are always communicating. Communication starts as soon as we are born.
- Communication can be verbal or non-verbal.



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A presentation slide with a purple header and a light purple background. The title "What Is Communication?" is in white text on the header. Below the title is a list of four bullet points. In the bottom right corner, there is a small SEPA logo. At the very bottom, there is a small text line: "SEPA Session 4: Ways To Improve Communication With Our Partners".

*Communication is the exchange of information, ideas, and feelings.*

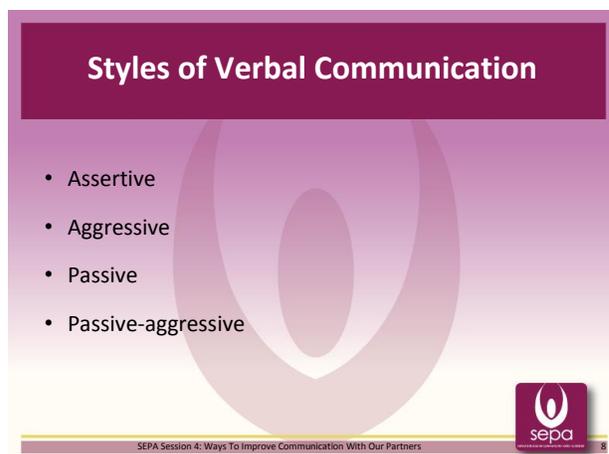
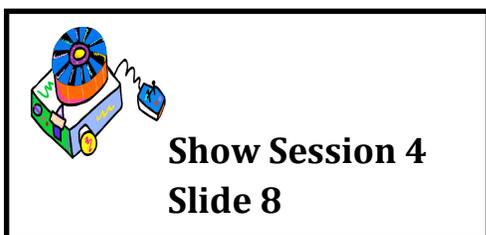
*Communication requires that someone else understands what you mean.*

*We are always communicating. Communication starts as soon as we are born.*

*Communication can be verbal or non-verbal.*

### Communication Styles

Healthy relationships depend on good communication between partners. The following discussion focuses on communication styles that are likely to promote negative responses. These communication styles are highlighted to help participants understand the differences between good and poor communication. Assertive communication, which is likely to promote positive responses, is described later in the session.



*Just as there are different languages, such as Spanish, English, and French, there are different styles of verbal communication. These include assertive, aggressive, passive, and passive-aggressive.*

*Some types of verbal communication promote positive responses from other people, whereas other types tend to promote negative responses. Aggressive, passive, and passive-aggressive communication styles are more likely to bring about negative responses. Let's briefly discuss each of these styles of communication before we focus on assertive communication, which is a type of communication that can lead to healthier relationships.*

### **Aggressive Communication**

Question to prompt discussion:

- *What is aggressive communication? Can anyone provide an example of aggressive communication?*

Possible responses:

- When you're angry and talk in an angry or mean way.
- When you yell at someone.
- When you say something demanding, like, for example, "Get out of my sight!"

*Aggressive people tend to fight, accuse, and threaten others. Individuals who communicate aggressively speak in an argumentative way and do not care about hurting the other person's feelings. The aggressive person tries to get what he or she wants regardless of how it may affect others.*

*In a couple where one of the persons communicates aggressively, the other person may be afraid to express his or her thoughts and feelings. Being an aggressive communicator means that you usually get your way because most people are afraid to disagree with you.*

### **Passive Communication**

Question to prompt discussion:

- *What is passive communication? What's an example of passive communication?*

Possible responses:

- When you don't speak up
- When you say, "whatever"

*An advantage of being a passive communicator is not being rejected by others. People who are passive give in. As long as the passive person doesn't argue her opinion, her partner can do what he wants. For example, the male says what must be done and makes the decisions and the woman agrees to everything regardless of her opinion. Unfortunately, passive communicators are frequently taken advantage of and rarely feel comfortable objecting to their partner's decisions or demands. By not feeling heard, passive communicators may feel resentment and irritation toward their partners.*

### **Passive-Aggressive Communication**

*You may have heard of passive-aggressive people. What is passive-aggressive communication?*

Allow participants to brainstorm.

*Passive-aggressive communication is a style where people appear passive on the surface, but are angry and hurt on the inside. Instead of being honest and communicating their feelings in a positive way, they don't really say what's on their minds. Instead, they avoid the issue — they beat around the bush.*

Question to prompt discussion:

- *Who can provide an example of passive-aggressive communication?*

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Possible responses:

- You know I love you and want you to do whatever makes you happy.
- I don't really care; you can do whatever you want.

Question to prompt discussion:

- *Let's use the situation of a woman being upset over her boyfriend's smoking to show these different types of communication. Who can give an example of aggressive communication by this woman?*

Possible responses:

- You are making me sick. How many times do I have to tell you that you better stop smoking?
- I've told you a million times that you have to stop smoking. You better stop smoking by tomorrow.

Question to prompt discussion:

- *Who can give examples of passive communication?*

Possible responses:

- I saw a news report on TV saying that second-hand smoke is bad for the health of people around smokers. Did you know that?

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- Do you know that most of the restaurants in town don't allow smoking because it bothers so many people and can cause health problems for the people who work in the restaurant?

Question to prompt discussion:

- *Our last type of communication is passive-aggressive communication. Using the smoking situation, who has an example of passive-aggressive communication?*

Possible responses:

- Don't you think that if a man really cares for his girlfriend, he wouldn't endanger her health and his own health by smoking?
- I've been coughing a lot lately. Do you think it has anything to do with your smoking?

Question to prompt discussion:

- *Think about the discussion we just had on self-esteem. Do you think people — both men and women — who have high self-esteem communicate aggressively?*

Possible responses:

- Yes — when they're angry.
- Probably not because they wouldn't want to hurt another person's feelings.

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Question to prompt discussion:

- *Do you think they communicate passively or in passive-aggressive ways?*

Possible responses:

- Yes. You can have high self-esteem but you still have feelings — you can be mean and sarcastic.
- I don't think so because if you have good self-esteem you can be honest with other people and not worry about what they think of you.

*Thank you. That was a great discussion.*

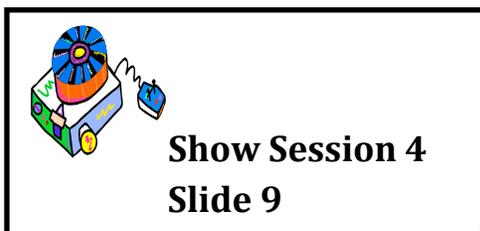
### **Assertive Communication**

Assertive communication is likely to promote positive responses from others. Being assertive is a necessary skill for negotiating condom use. During this part of the session, participants will learn about assertive communication.

*Now we will focus on assertive communication. An assertive response is upfront and honest and is communicated by self-assured and confident individuals. Think about our discussion about women with high self-esteem. Do you think that women with high self-esteem have the ability to communicate assertively?*

*Assertive persons express their opinions and desires without hurting others. A person who is assertive listens to what the other person has to say and considers that person's opinions. Even though the assertive person may not agree with the other person's points of view, she responds in a calm, firm, and self-assured manner. Thus, the assertive person is able to respond to the other person without being aggressive or threatening.*

*Assertive people often get what they set out to achieve without the other person feeling victimized, cheated, or lied to. Being assertive is a good way to resolve problems and an important way to communicate with your partner.*



### Examples of Assertive Phrases

- I think I understand what you mean. Here's what I think.
- There's something I want to talk to you about. Please sit down and listen to what I have to say.
- You seem to be upset and angry. I honestly don't know what's bothering you. Sit down and tell me what's going on.



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*Here are some examples of assertive phrases:*

- *I think I understand what you mean. Here's what I think.*
- *There's something I want to talk to you about. Please sit down and listen to what I have to say.*
- *You seem to be upset and angry. I honestly don't know what's bothering you. Sit down and tell me what's going on.*

*Assertive communication enables you to clearly talk about your point of view without making the other person feel defensive. In a couple's relationship, assertive communication helps to resolve problems in a mutually beneficial manner. In other words, both parties can win.*



## "I" Statements

- Allow you to express your needs and feelings
- Allow you to be direct and honest without blaming others
- Examples of "I" statements:
  - I feel frustrated when you don't help to discipline the children. I don't like feeling like I'm the bad guy.
  - I feel angry when you make decisions for both of us without discussing these decisions with me. I want to be included in decisions that affect our family and me.
  - I understand that you don't want to visit my family as often as I do; however, being with my family is important to me. Can we work on a compromise?

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*To be assertive, it's important to express your needs and feelings. To do this, use "I" statements. An "I" statement allows you to be direct and honest without blaming others. Here are some examples of "I" statements a woman can use when assertively communicating with her partner:*

- *I feel frustrated when you don't help to discipline the children. I don't like feeling like I'm the bad guy.*
- *I feel angry when you make decisions for both of us without discussing these decisions with me. I want to be included in decisions that affect me and our family.*
- *I understand that you don't want to visit my family as often as I do; however, being with my family is important to me. Can we work on a compromise?*



### Tips for Effective Communication

- Maintain eye contact while expressing your ideas.
- Keep an appropriate distance from the other person.
- Let the other person talk and don't cut him or her off.
- Don't finish other peoples' sentences.
- Respect the other person's turn to speak.
- Listen to what the other person has to say.
- Don't be afraid to express your feelings.

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*Women who use assertive communication can communicate effectively. Use the following tips for effective communication with friends, family, and your partner.*

- *Maintain eye contact with the other person while expressing your ideas.*
- *Keep an appropriate distance from the other person. If you are too far away, you may appear disinterested and you may need to raise your voice, which could make you seem angry and argumentative. If you are too close, the other person can feel intimidated and think his or her personal space has been invaded.*
- *Let the other person talk and don't cut him or her off. When the other person finishes, wait a couple of seconds to make sure he doesn't have anything else to say.*
- *Don't finish other peoples' sentences. Don't interrupt and say what you think they are going to say.*
- *Respect the other person's turn to speak. A monologue is not communication.*

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- *Listen to what the other person has to say.  
Sincerely listen to the other person and don't plan what you want to say next.*
- *Don't be afraid to express your feelings.  
It's important for people to express their feelings. When we communicate about how we are feeling, it's possible to eliminate much of the misunderstanding in relationships.*

### Practicing Assertive Communication Skills



### Role-Play



**Purpose:** To practice assertive communication skills



**Needed Equipment, Supplies, and Materials:** Participant Workbooks, role-play scenarios, hat or bowl

The following role-play will help participants practice assertive communication.

Instruct participants to pick a partner and an assignment from a hat or bowl in order to conduct a role-play. Tell participants that the goal of the role-play is to respond assertively. Ask them to practice the role-plays with their partners. Once all participants have had time to practice, the pairs will perform their role-plays in front of the group. Participants who are watching the role-play should provide feedback about the assertive responses. If the response was not assertive, ask participants to create an assertive response and repeat the role-play.

*Next we are going to practice assertive communication using a role-playing exercise. Please partner with someone in the group. Look at "Session 4, Worksheet 2: Assertive Responses Scenarios" in your workbook. Each pair will have a scenario to role-play. To make this fair, pick a paper out of this hat. The paper has a number on it for your role-play. Refer to the worksheet for your role-play. After you practice, each pair will act out its scenario for the group.*

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### **Facilitator's Note:**

There may not be a role-play for each pair. You may write your own or some pairs may duplicate a scenario.

Ask pairs to role-play their scenarios. When they finish, both the facilitator and group members should provide feedback.

Questions to prompt discussion:

- *How does it feel to communicate assertively?*
- *Was it hard to be assertive? If yes, what was difficult?*

Possible responses:

- It wasn't too hard here but it will be hard in real life.
- I felt like I had to restrain myself from saying what I really thought.

*When you use "I" statements, it's easier to express your feelings, which could help your partner express how he feels and help you understand him better.*



### **Facilitator's Note:**

At this point, you should be halfway through implementation of Session 4.

*We are about halfway through Session 4. Are there any questions or comments?*

### CONDOM NEGOTIATION



#### Discussion



**Purpose:** To discuss condom negotiation and identify why it may be hard to talk about condom use with a partner or husband



**Needed Equipment, Supplies, and Materials:** Slides 12–13, newsprint, markers



**Time:** 10 minutes

Discuss condom negotiation in the context of healthy relationships. Emphasize that partners in healthy relationships can openly discuss difficult topics, such as condom negotiation.

*We have discussed many topics during this session. We've talked about self-esteem and how women with high self-esteem respect themselves, their bodies, and their health. We've talked about how self-esteem influences relationships. Women with high self-esteem insist on healthy relationships with their partners. In healthy relationships, men and women are able to communicate about difficult topics, including sexuality and sex. One way to have an effective conversation about difficult topics is to use assertive communication. Now we know that this means you express how you feel and what you want in a way that also respects how your partner feels. You have done a great job practicing assertive communication.*

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*During Session 3, we learned about condoms and how to use both the female and male condom as protection against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.*

*Even though women may know how important it is to use condoms, many find it difficult to talk with their sex partners about using condoms for STD and HIV prevention. This is understandable. To help make this discussion easier, we're going to learn more about assertive communication and practice condom-negotiation skills. Condom negotiation is the term we use for having a two-way conversation with a sex partner about using condoms.*

*First, let's talk about difficult conversations.*

Questions to prompt discussion:

- *Are there topics that you avoid discussing with your partner? If you don't currently have a partner, think about a past relationship.*
- *Why do you think it is difficult to discuss these topics?*

Possible responses:

- I don't talk too much to my men about my family because there's a history of domestic violence and it's embarrassing.
- If my boyfriend brings up how much money I spend on clothes and shoes, I won't talk to him about it because it's none of his business.
- I don't talk about how many boyfriends I've had; it's something from the past.

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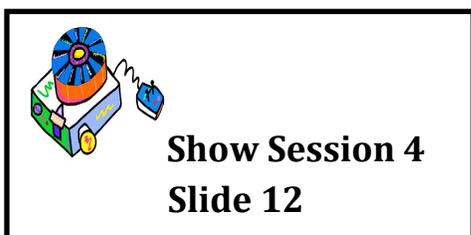
Question to prompt discussion:

- *Why do you think it can be hard to start a conversation with your partner about HIV prevention and the need to use condoms for safer sex?*

Write comments on the newsprint.

Possible responses:

- He could think I sleep around.
- He'll think I have an STD.
- We could get into a fight because he could think I don't trust him.



**Discussing Condoms with Sex Partners**

It's difficult to discuss condoms because:

- My partner may think I don't trust him.
- My partner may think I have an STD or HIV.
- My partner may think I'm bossing him around.
- It's an uncomfortable topic to talk about.
- My partner may leave me.

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*Some people's responses to this question could sound like this:*

*It may be difficult to discuss condoms with sex partners because:*

- *My partner may think I don't trust him.*

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- *My partner may think I have an STD or HIV.*
- *My partner may think I'm bossing him around.*
- *It's an uncomfortable topic to talk about.*
- *My partner may leave me.*

*Remember how we said assertive communication can help in difficult situations? Using assertive communication will help you talk about condoms whether you're talking to a long-time partner or with a man you've recently started seeing.*



### Assertive Communication about Condoms

Examples of assertive communication about condoms with a new boyfriend:

- I believe having sex is a big decision and something we should talk about.
- I think unprotected sex can be a serious threat to our health.
- I don't want to get an STD and I worry about HIV; that's why we need to talk.
- I have a policy of always using condoms until I know for sure that my partner does not have HIV or an STD.



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*Discussing condoms with a new boyfriend may be difficult at first, but it's very important. Here are some examples of assertive communication that you can use.*

- *I believe having sex is a big decision and something we should talk about.*
- *I think unprotected sex can be a serious threat to our health.*
- *I don't want to get an STD and I worry about AIDS; that's why we need to talk.*

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- *I have a policy of always using condoms until I know for sure whether my partner has HIV or an STD.*

*Many people believe myths about condoms or think that using a condom means that partners don't trust each other. Condom use is about taking responsibility for yourself and your partner.*

Ask participants to talk about their experiences negotiating condom use.

Question to prompt discussion:

- *Who wants to share an experience of talking to a partner about condoms?*

### HOW TO BEGIN A CONVERSATION ABOUT CONDOM USE



#### Discussion



**Purpose:** To discuss strategies for beginning condom negotiation



**Needed Equipment, Supplies, and Materials:** Slide 14, newsprint, markers



**Time:** 10 minutes

Starting a conversation about condom use is an important skill for all women to have. Participants should brainstorm about when they should bring up the subject of condom use. Write ideas on the newsprint.

Question to prompt discussion:

- *When should a woman bring up the subject of condom use with her sex partner?*

Possible responses:

- When they walk to the bedroom
- When they're kissing



### Tips for Discussing Condoms

- Bring up the discussion before you have sex.
- When talking to your partner, use “I” statements.
- Always give reasons for wanting to use a condom; address your partner’s reasons for not wanting to.
- Emphasize the positive aspects of your relationship and the importance of protecting each other’s health.
- Tell your partner it will be fun to make condoms sexy and exciting.



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*Here are some tips for discussing condoms:*

- *Bring up the discussion before you have sex. Don’t wait until the heat of the moment.*
- *When talking to your partner, use “I” statements. You can refer back to the examples of assertive communication for talking about condoms with a new boyfriend.*
- *Always provide your reasons for wanting to use a condom. Listen to your partner’s response and address his reasons for not wanting to use one if he objects.*
- *Emphasize the positive aspects of your relationship and the importance of protecting each other’s health.*
- *Tell your partner it will be fun to make condoms sexy and exciting. For example, putting the condom on and using lubricant can be stimulating and part of foreplay. Trying different types of condoms, such as textured, glow-in-the-dark, and flavored condoms, can be sexy. You can even learn how to put a condom on your partner with your mouth.*

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Question to prompt discussion:

- *What other strategies can make condoms sexy?*

Possible responses:

- Touch your partner while you put the condom on him.
- Kiss him while you put the condom on him.
- Tell him you want to try every kind of condom, so there will be a lot of sex in store for both of you.
- I can wear a female condom or you can wear a male condom. They even come in different sizes and colors. What do you think?



### **Facilitator's Note:**

Participants in long-term relationships who haven't used condoms with their partners may ask for examples of ways to discuss condoms without creating potential problems in their relationships. If this happens, ask participants for their ideas and consider the following examples.

- I know we haven't used condoms in the past, but I want to do something new until we both get tested for HIV, let's try condoms.
- I've been thinking about health issues, like HIV and STDs. I would feel much more comfortable if we both got tested and used condoms until we get the results.

### PRACTICING CONDOM NEGOTIATION, PART 1



#### Group Activity



**Purpose:** To identify strategies and practice skills for negotiating condom use



**Needed Equipment, Supplies, and Materials:** Participant Workbooks



**Time:** 15 minutes

During this activity, participants will practice negotiating condom use.

*What do you do if your partner doesn't want to use a condom? Think about the communication lessons you learned today. Remember: It's your responsibility to educate your partner about the importance of preventing HIV and STDs.*

*We are going to have a small group activity that should be a lot of fun and a good learning experience. Divide into groups that have at least three but no more than five participants. Turn to the "Session 4, Worksheet 3: My Partner Doesn't Want to Use a Condom" in your workbooks.*

*This worksheet lists statements that your partner or boyfriend might make if he doesn't want to use a condom after you explain that it's important to you. In your groups, come up with a response using assertive communication. Let's discuss an example.*

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Question to prompt discussion:

- *You ask him to use a condom and he says that he loves you and is having sex with no one else but you. How can you respond using assertive communication and “I” statements?*

Possible responses:

- I love you too. Using a condom will protect our health so we can continue to love each other for a long time to come. People who love each other want to protect each other.
- I am so happy to hear you say that you’re having sex with only me, and know that I’m having sex with only you. But I bet I’m not the only woman you’ve ever slept with. Let’s use condoms until we get tested for HIV and know for sure that we are safe.

*After each group has completed the activity, we will discuss your responses in the larger group.*

Assign each group a situation, or let the groups choose a situation. After about five minutes, ask each group to go through their responses using assertive communication. Ask other participants for their comments.

Question to prompt discussion:

- *Was it hard to think of an assertive response? If yes, why? If no, why not?*

Possible responses:

- It wasn’t too hard to think of something because of what we’ve learned in SEPA.

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- In real life it will probably be more difficult than here where it's not a real situation.



### **Facilitator's Note:**

Acknowledge that real-life situations will be more difficult than the group activities in SEPA. Point out that is why we practice condom negotiation. Note that it takes thought and practice in order to feel comfortable and confident communicating with partners at the right time about being safe and protecting each other.

Questions to prompt discussion:

- *What other reactions may your boyfriend or husband have when asked to use a condom? How would you respond?*

Possible responses:

- He may say the topic makes him lose his desire. I would talk about how condoms can be sexy.
- He could say he doesn't have any condoms, but then I'll get mine from the night table.
- He might say he doesn't know how to wear them and I'll show him how in an erotic way.

### PRACTICING CONDOM NEGOTIATION, PART 2



#### Role-Play



**Purpose:** To practice condom-negotiation skills



**Needed Equipment, Supplies, and Materials:** Participant Workbooks



**Time:** 15 minutes

Being able to negotiate condom use takes a lot of practice. The following role-play scenarios will help participants practice their newly learned condom negotiation skills.

*I hope you enjoyed that group activity.*

*We're going to continue to practice condom negotiation. Please partner with someone in the group. Look at "Session 4, Worksheet 4: Condom-Negotiation Scenarios" in your workbooks. Choose a scenario to role-play with your partner. The goal is to negotiate condom use. One person will play the role of the man who doesn't want to use a condom and the other will play the role of the woman who does. Do your best to use assertive communication and "I" statements. Each pair will have time to practice and then each of you will act out the scenarios for the larger group.*

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*Let me make sure each scenario is covered. Who is doing #1?*

Check that all three scenarios will be used.

After about five minutes, ask each pair to demonstrate their scenario.

After each role-play, ask the group for comments.

Question to prompt discussion:

- *These were role-plays and you did an excellent job. But what about real life? What have you learned so far that will help you the most with talking to your sex partner about using condoms?*

### **Possible responses:**

- Using “I” statements and being honest about how I feel seems best.
- Knowing that condoms can prevent infection and serious illness is all I need.
- Having condoms available and putting them on him in a sexy way is the strategy I like.
- I like to think of myself as a woman with good self-esteem and that will help me if I get nervous talking about condoms.
- We keep forgetting about female condoms. I want to try them and then I don’t have to worry about saying anything to my date.

## WRAP-UP ACTIVITIES



**Time:** 10 minutes

Review key messages, assign homework, and provide time for session evaluations.

*We're just about finished for today. Let's summarize the main ideas we discussed today. If you have any doubts or questions, this is the time to talk about them.*



Refer participants to “Session 4, Worksheet 5: Session 4 Key Messages” in their workbooks, and review Slide 15.



**Facilitator's Note:**

If you think participants will be comfortable, ask for volunteers to read the messages.



### Session 4 Key Messages

- Couples in healthy relationships respect and trust each other and communicate about important topics, like protecting their health and not getting STDs and HIV.
- When you use assertive communication, you listen to the other person and respond in a confident way to express how you feel and what you think.
- When you make the decision to use condoms and when you use assertive communication, condom negotiation will be much easier.

SEPA Session 4: Ways To Improve Communication With Our Partners



*Couples in healthy relationships respect and trust each other and communicate about important topics, like protecting their health and not getting STDs and HIV.*

*When you use assertive communication, you listen to the other person and respond in a confident way to express how you feel and what you think in an honest way and using “I” statements.*

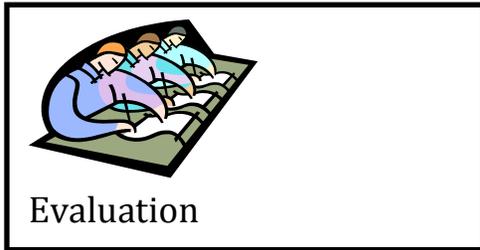
*There are many reasons to talk to your partners about condoms. When you make the decision to use condoms and when you use assertive communication, condom negotiation will be much easier.*



### Homework

Refer participants to the “Session 4, Worksheet 6: Homework – Practicing Assertive Communication” in their workbooks.

*Your fourth homework assignment is to practice using assertive communication with a friend, family member, partner, or neighbor. Any topic will do. For example, you can talk to a girlfriend about something that’s bothering you about your relationship with her or you could talk to a neighbor about something he or she does that’s annoying you. Come prepared to discuss what happened during the next session.*



Ask participants to fill out the “Session 4, Worksheet 7: Session 4 Evaluation” in their workbooks.

*Before we leave, please complete the evaluation sheets. When you are finished, tear the sheets out of your workbook and place them on the table. I will review them and see where improvements are needed.*

*Thank you and I look forward to seeing you at our next session, which is [date/day/time]. We will discuss the very important topic of domestic violence. If you know any of the participants who weren't here today, please encourage them to attend next week's session.*