

Talking about sex



LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To understand the meaning and importance of sexual health
- To discuss the language of sex and become familiar with sexual language
- To agree language and ground rules for the programme
- To begin to feel comfortable and supported in talking about sex and sexual health
- To consider the positive and negative reasons people have sex
- To develop understanding and respect for the views of others

RESOURCES

- Flipchart paper, small sticky notes and pens
- **Resource 1: *Why do people have sex?***
You may need copies for each person on the programme or you can prepare this to project it, using an OHP, LCD projector or electronic whiteboard
- **Resource 2a: *Men's Bits*** diagram. You will need copies for each person on the programme and you should prepare this to project it, using an OHP, LCD projector or electronic whiteboard
- **Resource 2b: *Women's Bits*** diagram. You will need copies for each person on the programme and you should prepare this to project it, using an OHP, LCD projector or electronic whiteboard
- **Resource 2c-d: *Types of sex*** diagram. You will need copies for each person on the programme and you should prepare this to project it, using an OHP, LCD projector or electronic whiteboard
- **Resource 3a-b: *Good sexual health*** cards.
You will need to photocopy and prepare these cards. You will need one set of cards per group of 4-6 learners
- Copies of the **Glossary**, for each learner

RELATED THEMES

Sexually transmitted infections
HIV and AIDS
Safer sex
Contraception
Getting help / accessing services

HEALTH SKILLS

Health promotion work giving people information about sexual health issues and signposting them to specialist sexual health services needs to be underpinned by work on the meaning of sexual health and how this relates to the lives of learners, their partners and their friendship networks. In particular, people need the language to talk about sex and sexual health, they need to feel comfortable and supported in talking about sex and sexual health and they need to know that sex and sexual health are an important part in all our lives.

You need to create a safe, supportive and non-judgmental learning environment where learners are able to explore, consider and discuss sexual health, including sexuality and issues around coercive sex, openly and without anxiety. This will provide the foundations for learning about this topic and help to ensure that learners engage in the process, retain the information and ultimately feel more able to access sexual health support services in the future.

This learning programme starts at a point at which learners have knowledge and understanding of the basic biology of sex and conception. However, be aware that even people with complex and sophisticated sex lives may have misunderstandings or misconceptions about these basic facts. It is also worth remembering that not all learners will have actually had sex.

You need to be aware of how cultural and religious issues might affect discussion and learning. In particular it should be recognised that some groups may be unable / unwilling to engage in mixed gender groups and / or mixed cultural groups. You may need to take advice about this, perhaps from community or cultural leaders.

Related health information

All these sites have good information about sexual health. Some have leaflets you can order.

www.hpa.org.uk

www.nhs.uk/Livewell

www.fpa.org.uk

www.tht.org.uk

www.lgbthealth.org.uk

www.lgf.org.uk

www.direct.gov.uk (look under health and well-being, then sexual health)

www.tacade.com

Telephone service:

NHS Direct 0845 4647

Sexual health helpline 0800 567 123 (free)

SKILLS FOR LIFE

In order to understand issues around sexual health, learners need to be able to discuss matters freely. There are several barriers to this, some of which may be experienced by literacy learners:

- Learners may be shy or embarrassed about talking about intimate matters.
- Learners may use a wide range of words for parts of the body and sexual acts. These words may not be used by all members of the group.
- Some of the language involved in sexual health is quite technical and may be difficult for some learners.
- There may be cultural or religious influences that get in the way of free discussion. You may need to take advice about this.

For all learners, including those with literacy needs, it is important to give plenty of time in this first session to developing a shared vocabulary and setting some ground rules for discussion, that includes respecting the views of others and allowing others to express their views.

There is information for each activity about support and ESOL. 'Support' is usually for literacy or numeracy skills, but also more general issues that might arise. 'ESOL' relates to learners whose first language is not English, and may include language or cultural issues. You may find that some of these suggestions apply to other learners as well.

Core curriculum

Activities in this theme will contribute to learning in the following curriculum areas:

- Listening to other points of view (SLlr/E3.5)
- Respecting turn-taking in discussions (SLd/E3.3)
- Reading and writing words for parts of the anatomy and sexual acts (Rw/E3.1; Ww/E3.2)
- Using a glossary (Rw/E3.3)
- Summarising ideas (SLc/E3.3)
- Discussing and sharing points of view (SLlr/E3.5)

Introduction

- Introduce the purpose of the programme (to improve sexual health) and why this might be important to them. Ensure that learners are willing to participate.
- Describe briefly the whole of the programme (6 themes: Talking about sex and sexual health; Sexually transmitted infections; HIV and AIDS; Safer sex; Contraception; Getting help / accessing services) and what will be covered in each section. Confirm that some of the images and words used and sexual activities discussed will be quite explicit, but that it is an important aspect of the programme to be open and honest.
- Talk about the need for ground rules for the programme. The group should be involved in determining these. These will vary according to the group but should include:
 - the need to develop a shared language that includes some words that others might find offensive or rude
 - the need to listen to all group members
 - the need to respect the views of group members, including cultural views and beliefs, even if they are different from your own
 - that the discussions in the group should be treated as confidential to the group.
- It may be that there is an element of disclosure (about sexual acts, experiences, partners) in sessions and you will need to have a strategy to deal with this. You may feel you need to discuss this with the group at the beginning. You will need to have a referral route (e.g. a line manager) for any disclosures that may involve serious consequences, e.g. sexual assault, sexual abuse.
- Ask learners to discuss (in pairs or small groups) what they understand by the term **sexual health**. Then as a whole group, invite learners to share their thoughts and ideas. You should record these on flipchart paper. Note that you will refer to these notes later in the session.
- Remind learners about taking turns in discussions, listening to the points of view of others and making sure everyone is included.
- Summarise contributions and give your own definition of sexual health, that it is about having sex that is agreed between partners (i.e. consensual, mutual and equal – see definitions below or in the glossary), and that it does not put your health, mental or physical, at risk or result in an unintended pregnancy. The FPA definition is 'Sexual health means enjoying the sexual activity you want without causing yourself or anyone else suffering, physical or mental harm.' You can also take this opportunity to talk about sex as part of a relationship, long- or shorter-term, loving or not so loving.

The programme is about sexual health. What do you think 'sexual health' means? What do you have to do, or not do, to be sexually healthy?

ACTIVITY 1

Why do people have sex?

- Using **Resource 1: *Why do people have sex?*** diagram, talk through the reasons given by people about why they have sex. You should read out each of the speech bubbles. Learners may want to discuss some of the reasons, for clarification, or if the reasons raise particular issues. For instance the bubble about *'everyone else is doing it'* might give rise to a discussion about whether or not this is always true.
- Ask learners if they can think of any other reasons why people have sex and write their responses on flipchart paper. Confirm that there are many reasons but that they may not always be good reasons.
- Ask learners to consider which of these are good reasons for having sex and which are bad reasons. You could write these up as two columns (Good reasons; Bad reasons) on a flipchart.
- Of the good reasons, ask learners which of these can only be met through actually having sex and which could be met in other ways. For instance, wanting to show love to someone can be done in many different ways.
- You may want to extend this part of the discussion to talk about the role of sex in long-term relationships.
- Learners may identify with some of the bad reasons for having sex from their past experiences and this could bring up strong feelings of regret, guilt or remorse. Be prepared to take some time to deal with this carefully.
- Conclude by acknowledging that we all have sex for different reasons at different times in our lives. Good sexual health is about having sex that is consensual, mutual and equal. You will need to explain these words:
 - Consensual – partners agreeing to what happens, at all times
 - Mutual – each partner considers the needs and feelings of the other partner
 - Equal – the needs and feelings of each partner are given equal importance.

Good sexual health doesn't put anyone's health – emotional or physical – at risk.
- You may need to extend the discussion to consider occasions which demonstrate sex that is not consensual, mutual or equal. The topic of sexual abuse may come up, whether of children or within an abusive adult relationship. Rape may also be mentioned. You will have to handle this discussion respectfully and sensitively, given that some learners may have personal – and painful – experience of these.

Support

- Learners with literacy skills at Entry 3 or below may find learning sessions like this threatening, as there is always a risk that someone is going to expose what they may perceive as poor or inadequate reading or spelling skills.
- This fear can manifest itself as withdrawal from the sessions, aggressiveness or anger, or even taking a humorous approach (the 'class clown').
- The programme is designed to be accessible to all learners irrespective of their literacy or numeracy skills, but make sure you take time to explain all the 'technical' vocabulary carefully, where indicated in the teacher notes.
- Don't make assumptions about the accuracy of the knowledge and understanding of sexual matters that learners bring to the programme.

ESOL

- Issues for ESOL learners are likely to revolve around selecting and understanding the shared vocabulary of sexual health.
- There may also be quite strong cultural or religious barriers to open discussion. Ideally you will have found out about these in advance.
- Some ESOL learners may not want to discuss such issues in mixed-gender groups.
- Make sure ESOL learners understand all the words or terms in Resource 1.
- Make sure you explain carefully the meaning of 'technical' words such as consensual, mutual and equal.

ACTIVITY 2

The language of sex

- Divide the group into three small groups. Give one group a flipchart sheet headed **Men's bits**, another group one headed **Women's bits** and the third group one headed **Types of Sex**. Ask for a volunteer from each group to write words down – confirm that correct spelling is not needed.
- Ask each group to think about words they know to describe men's and women's sexual 'bits' (sexual parts) and for sexual activity. Ask each group to think of all the words they have heard or read or know of to describe that topic. Confirm that it is OK to write down 'rude' words for intimate parts of the body and sexual activity. If learners find this difficult to do, remind them that you are looking for words that are 'out there', i.e. they don't have to be medical words, they can be slang or street words. The purpose of the activity is to get as many words written down as possible.
- After a few minutes move the flipcharts round and ask the groups to read the words and add any extra words they can think of.
- After a further few minutes move the flipcharts around again so that each group has had the opportunity to read and add to all three headings.
- Bring the whole group back together and invite them to take a look at all three flipcharts. Ask learners what they notice about the words. Are there more words for one sex than another? (Note that there are often more words for male 'bits' than female. Why is this?) Which words would they use with:
 - their partners? – their families?
 - their friends? – a doctor?

Can I have a volunteer to write the words?
Don't worry, this isn't a spelling test – and it's OK to write rude words!

- Conclude by stating that we usually use different words on different occasions and in this learning programme the teacher will use the words shown in **Resource 2a: Men's bits** and **Resource 2b: Women's bits**. Present these resources and talk through with the group. If necessary, you may want to adapt **Resources 2a** and **2b** to reflect the words used by the group. Make sure these words are accurate.
- If you have time, you can write the words learners have suggested on small sticky notes and ask learners to match them to a large-scale version of Resources 2a and 2b (male and female anatomy). Give a word written on a sticky note to each learner in turn and ask them to stick it in the correct place on the diagram (e.g. cock / penis). You need a large version of the diagram either projected onto the wall or whiteboard, or perhaps using a diagram you have sourced yourself.
- If it is more appropriate, you can run this activity as a group activity – see the Support notes below. The important thing is to arrive at an agreed list of words, to be used in the rest of the training. It is also important to help learners to become comfortable talking about sexual health matters in a group.
- If you are introducing more technical/medical terms then make sure all learners understand these and how they link to the more colloquial terms they might use.
- For **Resource 2c: Types of sex**, agree the words you will use in these sessions for the sexual activities illustrated. You may want to decide these terms before the session. Ask learners to write these words alongside each illustration. You can write them up on the flipchart so people can copy them.
- If you have time, you can write the words learners have suggested for types of sex on small sticky notes and ask learners to match them to the illustrations in Resource 2c. Give a word written on a sticky note to each learner in turn and ask them to stick it on the correct illustration (e.g. blow job / oral sex, man on man, woman on man).
- Learners may mention sex toys or other objects used in sexual activity. Agree a term to use for these.
- This activity provides a useful opportunity to introduce the glossary. Show learners how it is organised in alphabetical order and that it is not a full dictionary but just includes words used in this programme. The glossary is used in later activities.

Support

- It is important not to force the task of writing words onto any learner. People who feel lacking in confidence about their literacy skills can look very confident in all other areas of their lives. Support learners who do not want to or cannot write. Make sure you give spellings on the flipchart and confirm that some of the spellings are a bit tricky.
- Be aware that learners may not be able to read all the words and you should be prepared to read them all from the flipcharts.
- Dependent on literacy levels within the group, this activity could be done as a whole group 'shout-out' exercise with the teacher writing the words on the flipchart as they are suggested.
- Learners may refer to sexual activities in language familiar to them. Teachers need to acknowledge this, but use the proper terms in their responses, e.g. if a learner talks about 'bumming', call it anal sex in your responses but make sure learners understand that you are talking about the same thing.

ESOL

- ESOL learners may find it helpful to have a copy of Resources 2a-c and to record words with which they are familiar, in their own language, under each English word. This is only an option for learners who have reasonable levels of literacy in their own language.
- In some languages, words for sexual organs do not exist (particularly for women's sexual organs) or the words are considered too vulgar to say. Do not press people to use words from their language of origin if they appear reluctant to do this.

ACTIVITY 3

Alternatives to penetrative sex

- Referring to the discussions and resources from Activity 2, state that when people talk about having sex, they usually mean penetrative vaginal sex or sometimes anal or oral sex. Tell learners that 'penetrative' sex is where the penis, or a sex toy, penetrates (pushes into) a hole in the body. This could be a vagina, a mouth or the anus (bottom). You could check the meanings of these words in the **Glossary**. You should also look again at Resources 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d.
- Ask learners to think about all the things people do sexually and which give sexual pleasure that do not involve putting a penis or other object used instead of a penis into someone else's vagina, anus or mouth.
- Write the responses to the question on flipchart paper.
- Summarise the list by saying that there are lots of things people can do and do that aren't about penetration. And that in terms of sexual health, these are not only safer in terms of sexually transmitted infections and in avoiding unwanted pregnancy but can be fun too. You should also confirm that it is OK to insist on non-penetrative sex, using condoms or the type of sex you are happy with.
- Note that this consideration of alternatives to penetrative sex is referred to in the themes about STIs, HIV and safer sex, so it is important that learners understand that there are acceptable – and enjoyable – other options. These themes also include safer sex using condoms and femidoms.

Support

- The words 'penetrate' and 'penetrative' are quite difficult and may be unfamiliar to learners, however they will understand what it means in this context, once you explain it.
- This activity is a good opportunity to use the glossary, but note that not all learners will be familiar with the alphabetic organisation and may need support for this. Dyslexic learners in particular may not know the alphabet in sequence, so word finding may be tricky. Be prepared to support this.

ESOL

- ESOL learners may find it helpful to have a copy of Resource 2c–d to remind themselves about what is meant by penetrative sex.

ACTIVITY 4

What is good sexual health?

- Remind learners about the definition you have decided on for good sexual health. (See the **Engage** section.)
- This is another good opportunity to use the **Glossary**.
- Using cards prepared from **Resource 3: Good sexual health means...**, divide the group into smaller groups of four to six people and give each group a set of cards.
- Go through each card with the whole group, checking that everyone understands what each card means.
- Ask the groups to discuss each card and what it means and whether they think this contributes to having good sexual health.
- Then ask the groups to put these cards in the order they think best describes the most important contributor to good sexual health to the least important. Confirm that there is no right or wrong answer to this.
- Bring the whole group back together and ask each group to feed back. One member of each group should summarise what others have said. Other group members should confirm that this is accurate. In particular, ask each group:
 - which card did they think was the most important contributor and why?
 - which card did they think the least important contributor and why?

Support

- Explain 'technical' terms: STI, sexually transmitted infection, contraception, abortion, sexual health check-up.
- Support learners to look up the words in the glossary. Note that dyslexic learners or learners whose literacy skills are at Entry 1 or below may struggle with alphabetical order.

ESOL

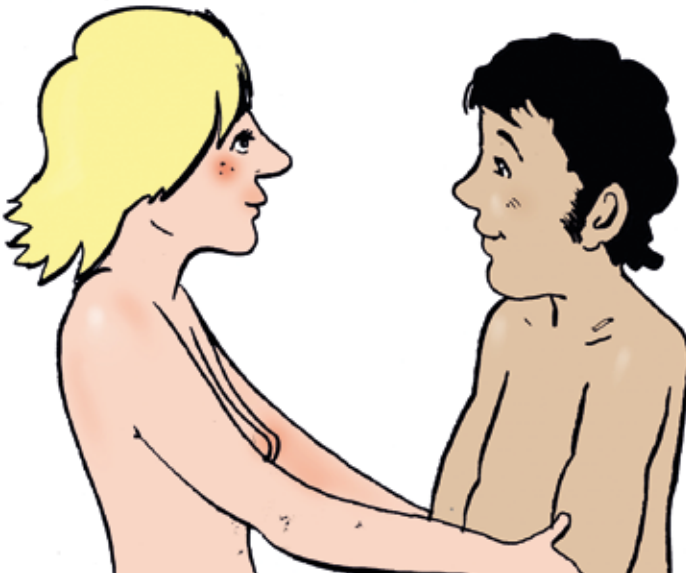
- Ensure that you go through each card, talk about meanings and learners' understandings of these.
- Understand that some learners will have cultural or religious objections to contraception and abortion. This should not prevent them from sorting these cards.
- All the sentences are structured in the same way with a common introductory phrase followed by the -ing form of verbs, e.g. 'Good sexual health means... having a regular sexual health check-up.' It will help some ESOL learners to point this out.

Action

- Look again at the flipchart notes you made at the beginning (Engage) section of this theme. Are there any similarities or differences between initial thoughts, the cards used in this activity and final thoughts? This activity gives you the opportunity to confirm that learners have a solid basis of understanding for the next theme.
- As an extension to work in this theme, ask learners to make a note of any words to do with sex or sexual health they do not understand, for the next session.

Why do people have sex?

RESOURCE 1

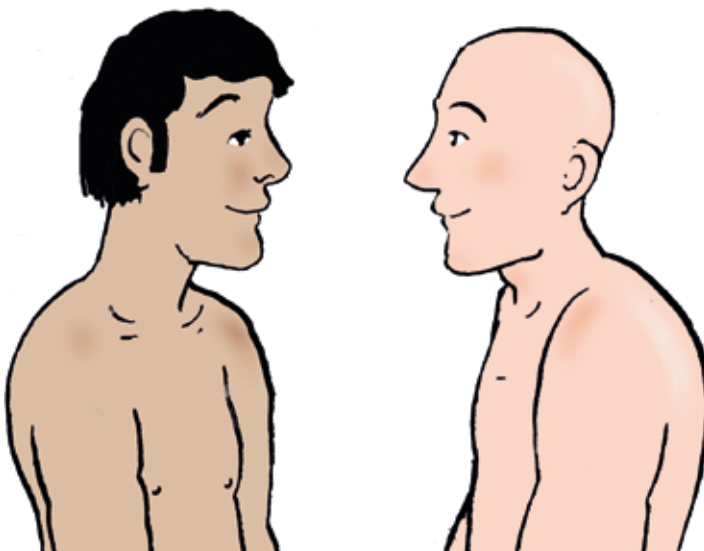


We want to make a baby.

We want to show love for each other.

We enjoy it – it feels great!

Everyone else is doing it – it's expected!

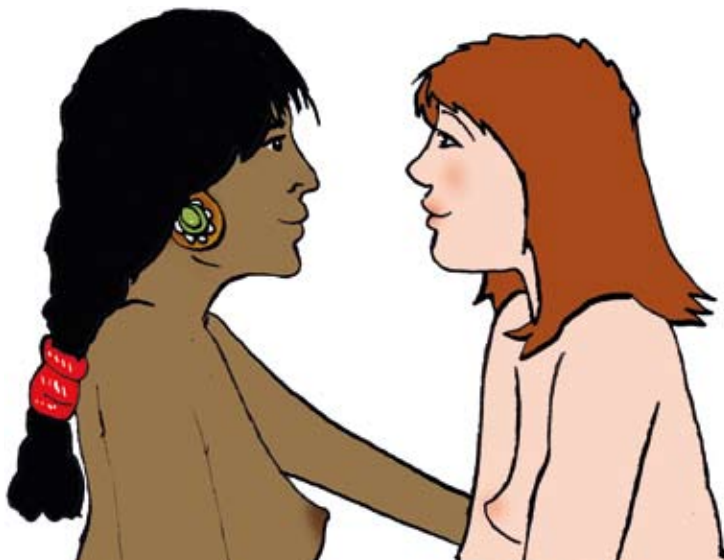


She might think I'm not a real man if I don't.

She wants me to do it.

He wants me to do it.

He might think I'm frigid.

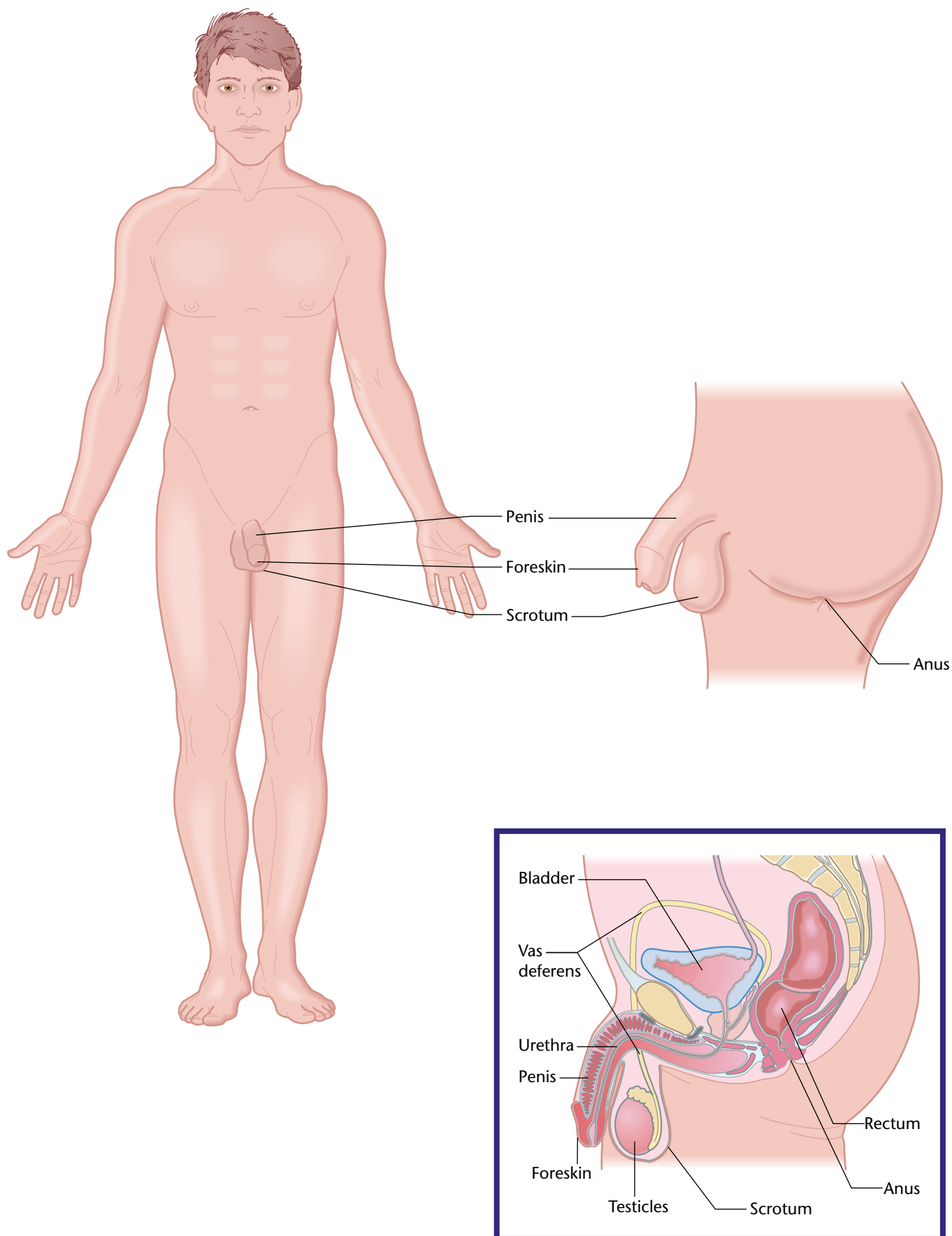


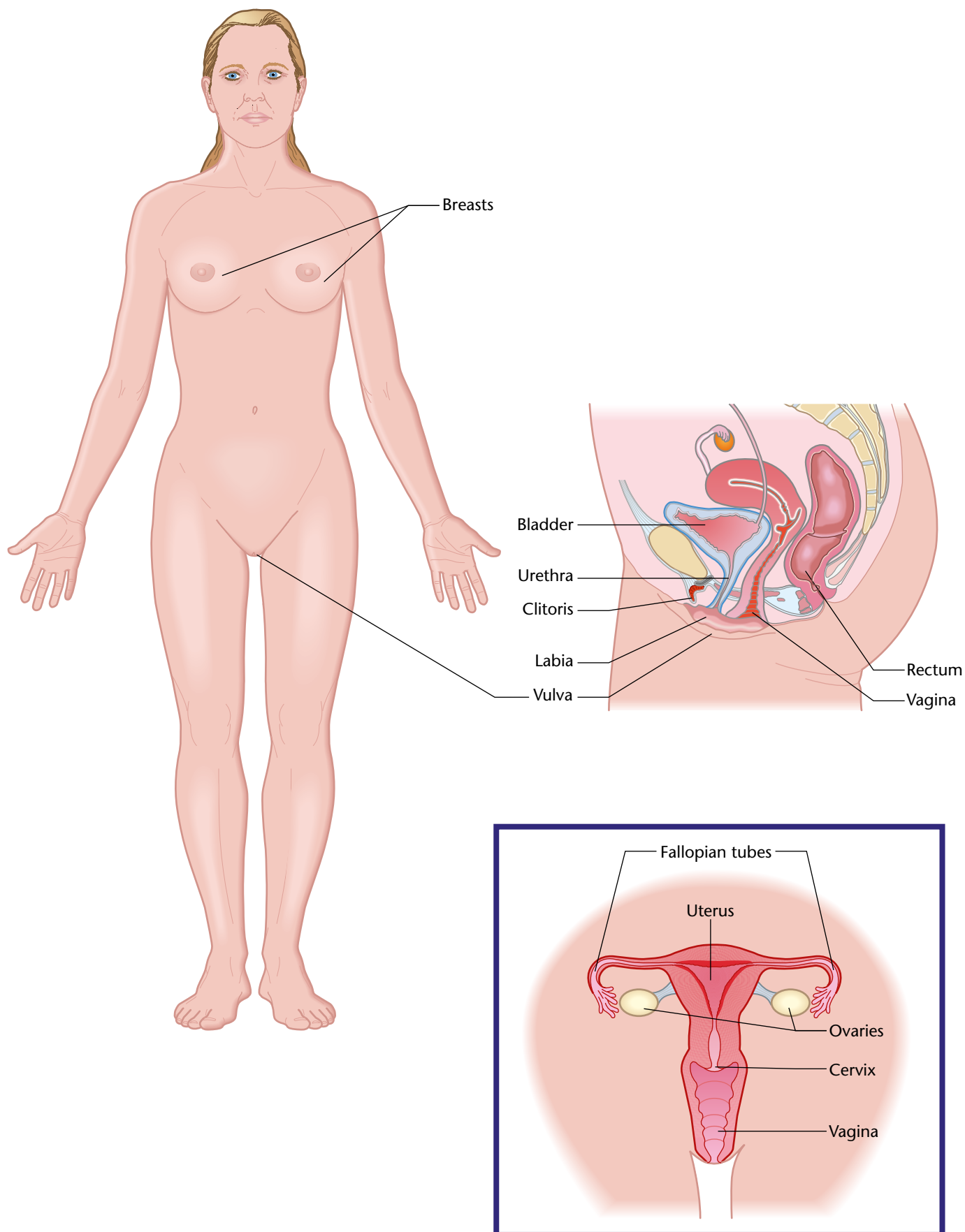
I'm frightened my partner might leave me if I don't do it.

I enjoy it – it feels great!

I'm drunk and out of control.

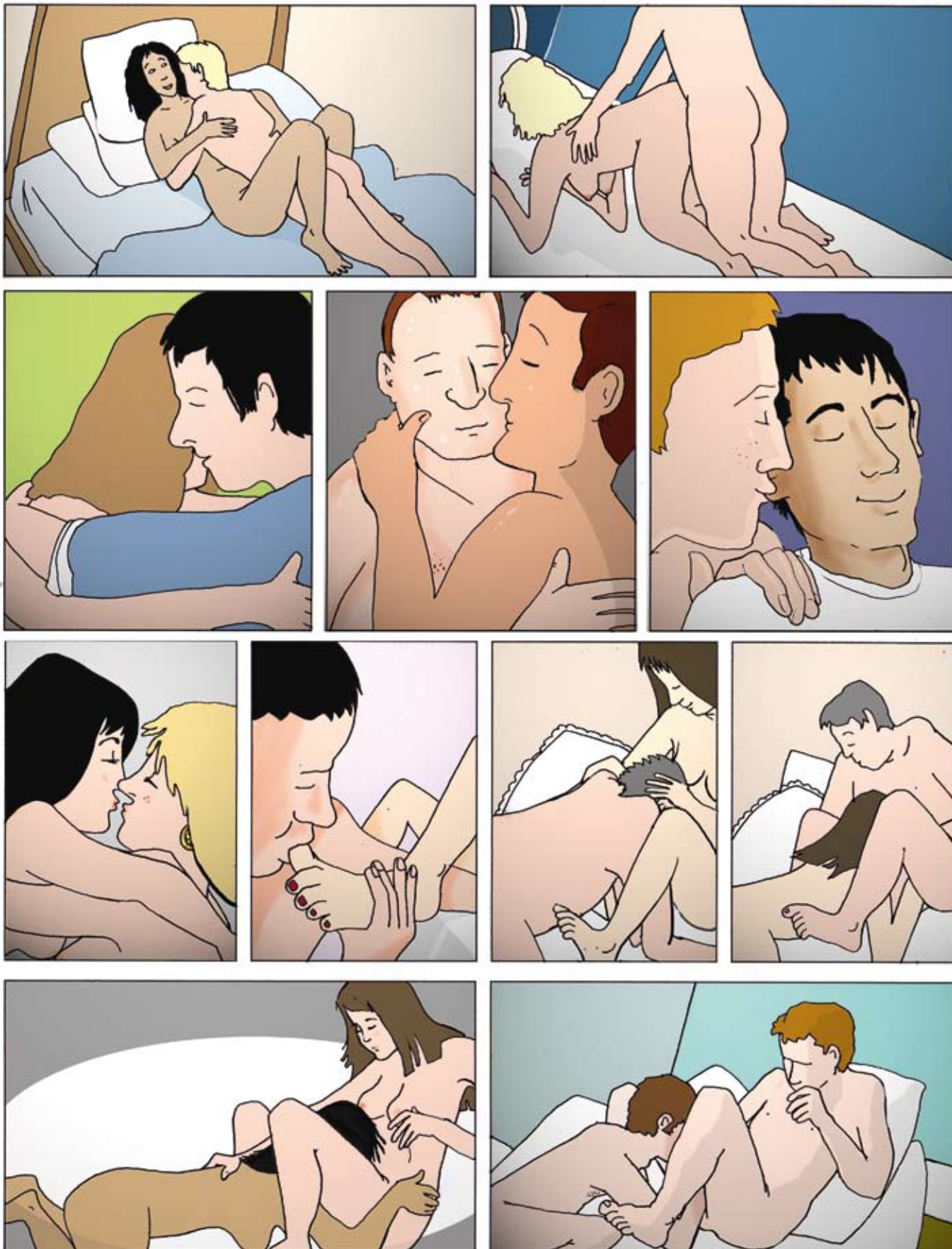
If I do it I'll get that new car I want...





Types of sex

RESOURCE 2C



Types of sex

RESOURCE 2D



Good sexual health means...

feeling good about your body and how you can give and get pleasure from sex.

Good sexual health means...

being able to talk about the sex you like with your partner.

Good sexual health means...

not getting a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

Good sexual health means...

knowing how to protect yourself and your partner from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Good sexual health means...

deciding when to get pregnant and being able to get contraception.

Good sexual health means...

**having a choice if you get pregnant:
to have the baby, to have the baby
adopted or to have an abortion.**

Good sexual health means...

enjoying the sex you have.

Good sexual health means...

**not being forced into having sex you do
not want.**

Good sexual health means...

**not forcing other people to have sex
they do not want.**

Good sexual health means...

having a regular sexual health check-up.

Good sexual health means...

**using condoms until you have both had
a health check.**