

U Choose to Know

Does humor belong in sex education?

Humor and laughter are probably going to happen in your classroom during sex education whether you plan for it or not. While teaching about sexuality is serious business, there can be moments when humor helps students feel more comfortable and engaged. But how do you know what is appropriate and what is “over the line?” How would describe these situations?

1. A student makes a comment that condoms don't feel good. The teacher says, “Then I guess you think burning and itching from a sexually transmitted infection feels good.”
2. The teacher says, “Trust me—you REALLY don't want this sexually transmitted infection.”
3. To “break the ice,” the teacher tells this joke: “What's long and hard and full of seamen (the homophone for semen)? A submarine!”

If you thought that all of these were poor examples of using humor, you were right! In the first example, the sarcastic response would probably just make the student feel insulted and less receptive to anything else the teacher has to say. And the second example crosses professional boundaries. The joke in the third example might generate some laughs, but it will probably make some students uncomfortable.



Follow these four tips to make sure humor and laughter are helpful, rather than harmful:

- 1** Make sure the joke is on you, and only you. It's OK to laugh at yourself for saying or doing something wrong (like accidentally ripping a condom during a demonstration), but not OK to make a joke or sarcastic comment that disrespects a student.
- 2** Let them “get the giggles out.” It's normal to laugh when something seems strange or a little uncomfortable, like looking at pictures of reproductive anatomy for the first time. Allow a moment for students to laugh and then move on.
- 3** Keep yourself out of the funny stories. Sharing personal information about sexuality, or even hinting at it, is not a good idea.
- 4** Skip the crude comments and jokes. Even though it might make you seem more relatable to some students, remember that they are diverse in their backgrounds and experiences, and not all will feel comfortable joking about sex.

Want to see some positive examples of humor related to sexuality? Check out these resources showing a lighthearted way to talk about some serious topics:

[Tea and consent video](#)

[Amaze videos](#)

[TED talk: “Sex needs a new metaphor. Here's one...”](#)

[Humor in the sexuality education classroom](#)



For more information,
visit: UChooseBaltimore.org