

# Session 9: Healthy Marital Relationships, Sexuality, Alcohol and Communication



## 9.0: Introduction

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| <b>Participants</b> | Women and Men separately  |
| <b>Objectives</b>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To learn how excessive drinking affects relationships and children.</li><li>2. To learn how to help a partner reduce alcohol consumption and other socially unacceptable practices/ behaviour.</li><li>3. To discuss what constitutes a healthy marriage relationship and sexuality and the importance of healthy communication in marriage.</li></ol> |
| <b>Duration</b>     | 2 hours   |
| <b>Preparation</b>  | Review advance information about participants; revise/ expand questions accordingly and prepare questions on flipcharts.  |

## Activity 9.1: Review of home practice

**Time** | 10 minutes

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- 1** | **Welcome** everyone to session nine
- 2** | **Review** home practice by asking two individuals to share their experience (*Encourage them to discuss benefits and challenges when they spent time with their children, and the domestic chore or child care activity they did with their wives*).
- 3** | If participants had challenges, ask others to suggest ways that these problems might be overcome.
- 4** | Encourage parents to always do the home practice.

## Activity 9.2: Throw the Drunk Ball

**Time** | 40 minutes

### **What the facilitator needs to know**

- a) In preparation for the “Throw the Drunk Ball” game, the facilitator should have an idea of examples of the various alcoholic drinks (beer, banana beer, etc.) and other substances (drugs) that are known to participants and/or used in their community.
- b) While discussing what is perceived as too much alcohol, look at quantity and frequency per day/week/month
- c) In the past, women were known to drink less than men. But in recent years, the gap has narrowed in relation to how much each gender ordinarily drinks.
- d) Excessive alcohol use has a number of negative effects on men, women, children and their families. The effects can be both indirect and direct for example social distress, spousal violence, child abuse and neglect. Children are also likely to drink and develop other behavioural problems, medical and mental health problems, which may interfere with their development.

- Objective**
1. To learn how excessive drinking affects relationships and children.
  2. To learn how to help a partner to reduce alcohol consumption and other socially unacceptable practices/ behaviour.

**Materials** | Flipchart, markers, masking tape and a ball.

**STEPS**

**1** **Explain** that you appreciate everyone in the group for who they are as people of good character, and that this activity is to help us become better or deal with some things regarding excessive drinking that have been challenging.

**2** **Explain** that in this game, we will make a circle and use this ball to identify the reasons why people drink and the problems associated with excessive drinking

**3** **Ask** participants to stand in a circle and start passing (*throwing*) a ball from one person to another. Whoever receives the ball has to give one reason (*positive or negative*) why men/ women use alcohol (*Each participant is encouraged to give a different reason. The other facilitator can take notes of key issues that can be discussed later*)

**4** **Ask** participants to resume the second round of passing the ball, and this time, whoever receives the ball has to name a problem caused by excessive drinking.

**5** **Ask** participants to join 2-3 groups for 20 minutes and discuss the questions below. Let each group decide on about 2 – 3 issues they can share with the rest of this group.

**Discussion questions (Facilitator should help the group to come up with resolutions about these issues)**

- a) What is the difference between low risk drinking and excessive drinking that leads to problems? What are the signs that one is engaged in excessive/high risk drinking?
- b) Do you think men/women drink alcohol to be 'real men' or 'real women'? Why?
- c) How does excessive drinking influence marital violence?
- d) How would you help your partner to control the problem of excessive drinking?

**Close the activity by highlighting the following:**

1. Men and women drink alcohol for different reasons some of which may be positive and others negative.
2. Excessive drinking of alcohol creates serious problems for individuals, including medical problems and even death, and in families, it contributes to violence and conflicts between partners. It also leads to poverty (e.g., money spent in bars).
3. In addition, living in an alcoholic family also suggests that children may be more vulnerable to abuse, including incest and being battered.

## **Activity 9.3: Marital Relationships and Communication**

**Time** | 1 hour

### **What the facilitator needs to know**

- ⊙ All cultures recognise marriage but due to confusion about the right purpose of marriage, many people are unsure about how to express themselves in marriage relationships.
- ⊙ Marriage is a gift from God, and the family arises from marriage.
- ⊙ Marriage should not be used as a trap to expose a woman or man or even their children to violence, torture and mistreatment of any kind.
- ⊙ Sex is safe only within the context of marriage where faithfulness is practiced by both husband & wife. It is like a river which is only safe when water is within the boundary. Although there are no firm rules about sex in marriage, it is important to:
  - Let your goal be to fulfil your spouse's sexual needs
  - Be considerate
  - Communicate freely
  - Resolve conflicts/misunderstandings
- ⊙ Overcoming challenges in marriage can be difficult but the ingredients of a healthy marriage can be learned. If the partners are interested and motivated, a healthy marriage can be built for the benefit of the husband, wife and children.

**Objective** | To discuss what constitutes a healthy marriage relationship and sexuality, and the importance of healthy communication in marriage

**Materials** | Story, flipchart, masking tape and markers

**STEPS****1****Provide** an overview of the session objectives.**2****Invite** participants to pay attention to the story.**3****Read** the story for the participants:**Story**

“But I did not do anything wrong, we are just friends”, Adome insisted, when a family member voiced concern over the time he was spending with the girl working in the bar and restaurant. In Adome’s mind, he had not crossed any lines because there was nothing much that was happening. “I only tap her behind sometimes, just for fun, and I have no problem spending time with someone who cooks and serves us food and beer very well, daily.

Adome and his wife Dorotia have been happily married for 5 years. But Dorotia is argumentative and sometimes, an aggressive talker, who tries to win every argument. She cannot sustain a good discussion and often threatens to leave her husband because of his behaviour, especially physical violence and non-involvement in child care. Adome often feels lonely even when they are together. As a result of this, they have problems in their intimate relationships and each of them does not get sufficient intimate satisfaction (sex) but they do not talk about it. Both of them have challenges with their body hygiene including brushing, shaving, bathing cutting nails among others.

The restaurant girl, however, is a good listener and easily reads Adome’s moods. She is quick to laugh with him and is fun to have around. As the two continued to spend time together, a friend to whom Adome had casually told about the relationship mentioned it to Dorotia. When Dorotia confronted Adome, he dismissed her concerns. Dorotia was so disturbed and decided to fight her husband and the bar girl.



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**Ask** participants to join 2-3 groups for 20 minutes and provide copies of the story. Within the group, discuss the questions below and let the group decide on a total of five issues they can share with the rest of the members during the plenary.

**Discussion questions**

- a) What do you like about marriage?
- b) What don't you like about marriage?
- c) Why did Dorotia and the lady at the bar / restaurant relate differently with Adome?
- d) Why is it good or bad for married couple/partners to relate like the couple in the story?
- e) What would make you lose interest in intimate issues with your partner?
- f) How do most married people communicate about intimate issues?

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After 20 minutes, invite participants back to the plenary and let each group share some of their views.

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**Drawing from the participants' views, challenge them to think about some of these issues:**

- a) the meaning of openness and transparency in marriage.
- b) providing a safe environment to express feelings and frustrations about their relationship.
- c) commitment to making change in one's own behaviour first, rather than trying hard to change the other partner.
- d) building more trust and loyalty to one's partner.
- e) focusing on a spouse's strengths rather than their weaknesses should be key in marriage.
- f) your goal in the bedroom should be to fulfil your spouse's sexual needs.
- g) never to use sex to manipulate and/or punish your spouse. Tell participants that another activity 'openness and transparency' will build on the discussion later during mixed sessions.

**Close the activity by highlighting some of the following:**

1. *We need to keep proper communication in our relationships for example, play together, laugh together, consult each other on intimate issues and give each other feedback.*
2. *We need to understand each other properly as married people. Know when to give positive and negative feedback but do that with patience and in love.*
3. *Marriage expresses companionship, motherhood and fatherhood, and should be complementary. Therefore it is important to focus on building a good and healthy relationship.*
4. *Sex in marriage is an honourable and noble act. Sexual union strengthens love between husband and wife. Therefore, faithfulness is essential to marriage.*
5. *Respect is a key element that sustains a marriage. But infidelity, alcoholism and violence are the worst threats to a healthy marriage.*

## Activity 9.4: Home Practice

**Time** | 15 minutes

### **S T E P S**

1

If you have a partner, this week discuss with them the goals of your marriage and how to improve marital satisfaction without resorting to blaming one another.

2

Identify one thing that you would deeply wish to improve in your marriage and tell your partner how you want to improve it. Go ahead and try it.