



Engage Youth: Girls, Boys, &/or Mixed groups – The Dignity of Human Life

This interactive exploration session is tailored specifically for the youth – whether girls alone, boys, or mixed youth groups – providing them with thoughtful opportunities to understand FGC and its consequences. How to engage different subgroups of youth will depend on local circumstances, but key messages remain constant:

The session should be facilitated by a faith leader, an elder, or any other member of the community who would normally be responsible for leading the regular youth group sessions. Because this topic is particularly sensitive, there are two main activities outlined in the module, one for children 14 and younger, and one for young adults ages 15-18.

Materials needed: In preparation for the youth group meeting, read the scriptural support elements in Module 2 to identify verses that you may want to use as part of the lesson. For information about FGC, refer to the “FGC Information Sheet”. And finally, use the anatomical flipchart in Module 2 for the anatomy lesson.

Activity

Creating a Safe Space – Before You Begin

Suggested Time: 15 minutes

Before you begin your first workshop with a group, it is important to establish what is called “**safe space**.” Safe space doesn’t just happen – it’s up to you to take a proactive role in creating an atmosphere that will best support the growth and learning of each participant. Here’s a quick activity that will help establish safe space:

- 1) Explain to participants that the workshop(s) they’ll be taking part in are not just about you teaching them, but rather about everyone discussing difficult issues and learning from one another. Say that in order to do this, we need to have a space in which each person feels comfortable and safe.
- 2) Ask the group, ‘How can we create a safe space?’ or ‘What do you need in order to feel comfortable with everyone in this group?’ Write the various answers that you hear on a large piece of paper or on a chalkboard so that everyone can see them.
- 3) Once you have received answers from as many women as would like to contribute, read everything that is written on the paper aloud, and ask the group if they think anything should be added. If not, ask the group if they are willing to commit to upholding what is written as group standards for the workshop.
- 4) Have participants raise their hands if they promise to make this a safe, comfortable space for everyone!

It doesn’t have to end there! You can always come back to your safe space agreement. If your group ever meets again, you can remind people of their commitments at subsequent sessions. Additionally, if there is ever a difficult conversation or tension in the group, you can remind people of their safe space agreement and hold people to the intentions and norms that they set.

KEY TERM:

SAFE SPACE refers to a cooperative learning environment in which all participants feel comfortable and safe to fully participate. A safe space is one in which every person respects the ideas and thoughts of each other and people are supportive of each other’s growth and learning.

Topic: God's perfect creation.

Initial icebreaker: "Things in Common."

- 1) Have all children stand in the center of the room/outdoor area. Begin the game by calling out things that may be true about many of the children in your group, e.g., "I like playing football (soccer)!" "I have brown eyes!" "I have brothers and sisters!" and standing in a corner of the room (or designated "corner" in an outdoor space). Anyone who agrees or think that statement applies to them must stand in the same corner. Anyone who disagrees or think that the statement does not apply to them must go stand in the opposite corner.
- 2) Once it has been established who has been in what corner, call out a new statement. You can get more and more specific, e.g., "I know how to do a cartwheel!" "I am afraid of snakes!" "I have lived in the same house all my life!" If the children are comfortable enough to do so, have them call out the statements/things in common and walk over to the designated corners. Do this for 5 minutes or so, or until everyone is sufficiently warmed up/comfortable talking/standing/moving around with each other.
- 3) Then, sit down with everyone and discuss what they thought about the game, what they learned about each other. There should be common threads, and sometimes children may be surprised at with whom they share something in common. This should lead into a discussion about how we are unique, perfect creations of God, and that while all have individual value, we may have things in common that we did not even realize – because we are all human, whether we are boys or girls!

Context: Use the "FGC Information Sheet" to talk to the participants about 1) the definition of FGC, 2) Key Facts about FGC, and finally, 3) the frequently asked questions or myths about FGC. Take questions after each section.

MUSLIM - Supporting verse: "Verily we created man of the best stature." (Quran: 96:4)

CHRISTIAN - Supporting verse: "God saw all that He had made, and (said) it was **very** good." (Genesis 1:31)

Main activity:

Ages 14 and younger: Because there is some confusion about whether or not **FGC is a practice accepted in our religion**, it's good to show how one true statement can get garbled and distorted before time, to the point where it becomes a completely false statement. Have the children sit in a circle, as appropriate, for a game of "Telephone." Pick someone to start, and have that child whisper two things that they did that day into the ear of the child to their right. That child whispers what he heard to the child on his/her right, and so on, until the whispering has reached the last child in the circle. That child will then repeat out loud what s/he last heard. This will inevitably be an altered version of what was originally said. Let everyone react, then ask why they think that happened. This should lead into a discussion about how true teachings can get twisted over time, to the point where they are completely untrue. People's beliefs on FGC are the same way: there is nowhere in our **holy book that says FGC is right**, but over time, some people decided that FGC was not just an ancient tradition, but part of their religion as well, just like in the game of "Telephone."

Discussion questions: What did you think of this activity? Have you ever misunderstood something a friend or family member said, and thought it was the truth? **Have you ever asked your Faith Leader if you had a question about a particular tenant or verse? Do you think boys and girls should be treated with equal love and respect?**

Ages 15-18: Have the participants divide up into small groups. Instruct them to discuss what "evidence" they have that FGC is a **faith-centered practice**. Do this for about 10 minutes. When the conversation dies down, have one person from each group present what they talked about to the larger group. This will lead to a discussion of how things become accepted even though they are not necessarily true. You can use excerpts from our holy book to refute "evidence" during the discussion.

Discussion questions: Do you believe FGC is a faith-supported practice? Have you ever asked your Faith Leader if you had a question about **our faith's teaching on a similar topic**? For girls: have you undergone FGC? **(Please let them know there is no obligation to answer.)** How do you feel about your experience? For boys: What are your feelings about FGC?

Supporting verses: Go through the verses read before the main activity, and ask the children to think about what they mean. Emphasize, after all verses are read and discussed, that God/Allah wants us to seek out the truth on things we don't understand, and always stand up for what is right, even if our society says it is wrong, and wants us to practice something harmful; we must above all love one another and do no harm. Then, turn their attention to these verses:

CHRISTIAN – “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” (Acts 10:15)

“Jesus said, ‘A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.’” (John 13:34-35)

MUSLIM - “And if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he/she has saved the life of the whole people.” (Quran 5:32)

Anatomy Lesson

FACILITATOR SPEAKING GUIDE: “Now, we are going to learn a little bit about God/Allah’s perfect creation, and why FGC is harmful to girls.”

Refer to anatomy flipchart in the **Activity and Resource Kit** and its accompanying speaking guide. Go through anatomy, as appropriate, and explain that *Chincha* is a myth. Use illustrations as age-appropriate. For very young children, it may only be appropriate to teach the participants that *Chincha* is a myth, as creatively as you can.

If you wish to do so, and if your participants are old enough, refer to the anatomy lesson included in this toolkit, and use the speaking guide to explain the various parts of the female anatomy to all participants. Allow plenty of time for questions and discussion.

Supporting verses:

CHRISTIAN - “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful.” (Psalm 139:14)

MUSLIM - “...and there is no changing Allah’s creation. And that is the proper religion but many people do not know.” (Quran 30:30)

Conclusion: We are creations of a perfect God, and we must treat each other with the love and kindness that such creations deserve. FGC is an act of violence, and a violation of God’s plan: it is almost like saying, “your creation is imperfect, let me correct it for you!” However, sometimes what is wrong can be perceived as what is right, simply because it has been garbled/distorted through multiple generations. We must seek knowledge on things we do not understand, and stand up for what is right, even if our society/tradition stands against us – that’s what God wants us to do!

Wrap-up & Thank you!