

## The words of love

The aim of this activity is to break down taboos about sexuality and intimacy. It aims to become aware of the dynamics, including power dynamics, that are at work when using vocabulary related to sexuality. It also gives space to the diversity of terms and possible uses. Having a group of people with different mother tongues is a plus. Beware, however, that it requires people to be comfortable in the group and not to be afraid of using vocabulary that is considered crude and vulgar. It can be adapted to become a radio activity. It can include an intergenerational dimension.

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| <b>Duration</b>     | Between 30 minutes and 1 hour  |
| <b>Participants</b> | From 8 to 15   |
| <b>Objectives</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Understand the reasons why we use a certain vocabulary</li><li>- Breaking down taboos about sexuality and intimacy</li><li>- Questioning power and gender relations in relation to sexuality</li><li>- Hearing different languages and uses</li></ul>  |
| <b>Material</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Sheets of paper</li><li>- Pens</li><li>- A flip chart or whiteboard</li><li>- Magnets or fixative paste</li><li>- Coloured markers</li></ul>   |
| <b>Preparation</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Create discussion spaces that can accommodate groups of two, three or four depending on the number of participants. We recommend creating "cozy" spaces, with cushions on the floor, blankets, so that everyone feels comfortable. If this is not possible, use chairs and tables.</li><li>- Provide sheets of paper, pens and markers in appropriate colours for each group.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Instructions</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Ask participants to pair up according to their affinity.</li><li>2) Once the pairs have been formed, ask each person to write down at least 10 words/verbs/phrases that mean "having sex". Give them 5 minutes maximum. Feel free to give them examples from different registers.</li><li>3) Once everyone has written a series of words/verbs, ask them to circle them:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- in red = the two proposals they don't like to use at all</li><li>- in orange = the two proposals they would not like their partner to use to talk about their relationship</li><li>- in yellow = the two propositions they hear most in general, in life</li><li>in purple = the two proposals they use most often, without really thinking about it</li><li>- in green = the two proposals they think it best to use</li></ul></li></ol> |

- 4) When they have finished, ask them to discuss the words/verbs chosen with their pairs by colour. Ask them to contextualise the uses, to try to understand together why these words are circled, to notice the differences... If there are different languages involved, don't hesitate to ask people to take time to explain the meaning, the origin and the context in which these words are used. Give them 10-15 minutes.
- 5) Then distribute between two and four cards (see annex) per group and ask them to agree to fill in the cards with the two proposals that seem to fit best. Give them 10 minutes. Invite them to write in fairly large letters.
- 6) Once done, collect the cards and glue them to the flipchart with masking tape or magnet them to the whiteboard.
- 7) Invite participants to come around the board, look at the words and categories and sit in a circle when done.
- 8) Ask them to share the exchanges they had in groups by selecting some cards or by letting the participants do it spontaneously. Let the discussion take place.
- 9) After 10 minutes of discussion, conclude the activity.

### **Variants**

- 1) If you want to include an intergenerational dimension, draw two perpendicular lines that intersect in the middle on a flip chart. Hand out one sheet to each group. Write a + on the vertical arrow at the top and a minus on the opposite side, do the same for the horizontal line with the + on the right.
- 2) Once the first 3) steps have been completed for each participant, ask them to cut out the words circled above.
- 3) Participants should discuss their preferences for the vocabulary, but also the time of their preferences in their lives. For example, a young adult might place "make love" on the - side horizontally but on the + side vertically, meaning that it was a vocabulary they used a lot in the past.
- 4) Ask them to place the words (adapt the requests according to your intervention context):
  - As a child I used to...
  - During the teenage years it was...
  - As a young adult...
  - As an adult...
  - As a parent...
  - Now...
- 5) Let the groups discuss the differences and commonalities. Allow 15-20 minutes.
- 6) Conclude the activity by putting everyone in a circle and asking each group to share their observations.

### **Advice for facilitators**

- Point out that the words/verbs/expressions can come from different registers: scientific, militant, religious, violent, slang, childish...

## Debriefing

- Before the activity starts, make sure everyone is comfortable and explain that this is a non-judgmental space, that the aim is almost to do a 'shopping list', without thinking too much.
- It is important that you notice which words/verbs/phrases stand out the most. Often the uses are manifestations of sometimes violent power relationships. In French, for example, "défoncer", "prendre", "tringler", "fourrer", "se taper quelqu'un.e" and others, have an extremely violent connotation that it is important to be aware of. Point out that the words used often refer only to penetrative sexuality, which is predominantly oriented towards cisgender men. Put yourself in an explanatory position and try to bring in more inclusive vocabulary if this was missed in the activity: "circling" (image of the vagina taking something in), "having sex"... Also point out that people who are socialised as women often find it harder to use crude and vulgar language in the common imagination. Is this a reality? Ask the group this question and point out that women are often expected to take a romanticised approach to intimate relationships. A person who uses the vocabulary of sexuality without taboos can be devalued and judged. It is therefore important to reappropriate this vocabulary, to make it heard and understood in order to use it better.
- Ask the participants how they felt during the activity, if there were any moments of embarrassment or questioning.

## Annex

# The two most romantic

**The two that are  
confusing**

**The two that are  
violent**

**Both of which our  
parent(s) would say**

**The two we don't like  
at all**

**The two most talked  
about**

**The two we use with  
friends**

**The two that are said  
during**

**The two whose  
etymology (i.e. the origin of the word) we  
would like to know**

**The two who make us  
laugh**



**The two that disgust us**

**The two that make us  
want to**

**The two we said as  
children**

**The two things that  
cisgender men say**

**The two we say with  
our lover(s)**

