

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH



4.REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH



Fact Sheet

Based on material supplied by Mrs Babbsie Giddings, Ministry of Health,
HFLE Task Force

Reproductive health:

- Is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity in all matters relating to the reproductive system.
- Implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life.
- Implies that people have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to do so.
- Men and women have the right to be informed and have the right to safe, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning.
- Also includes sexual health, the purpose of which is the enhancement of life and personal relations.

Did you know?

Nearly 6 million people become infected with HIV every year.

Source:
www.peopleandplanet.net



Your sexual responsibility:

- Work out your values and stick to them.
- Decide what you want to do with your life.
- Work out your goals and plans for life.
- Go out in groups.
- Avoid being alone for long stretches of time with your boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Say “No” to sex before marriage

Reflection:

- At what age do boys and girls “go out” with each other?
- What does it mean to have a boy or girlfriend?
- What does “being friends” versus “being one’s boy or girlfriend mean”?
- Why do young people have sex?
- What are the scenarios that may lead to having sex?
- What forms of pressure do young people experience to have sex?
- How do young people learn about sex. What advice do they receive and from whom?
- How is someone with many boy or girlfriends considered?

Friendship

Outside of our family, perhaps the most important influences on our lives are the friendships we make. Unlike our own families, we *can* pick and choose our own friends. They might influence the way we dress, think about life, the music we listen to, the interests we have and even the way we speak. Indeed, friends can greatly influence and even change our opinions, our attitudes and our beliefs about life.

In theory, any of the 700,000 people living in Guyana and indeed people living elsewhere could be our friends. In practice, most of our friends come from the area where we live and most of these will be around our age.

We might meet and make friends in a variety of ways:

- Through our neighbours
- Through our church, mosque or temple
- Through work or school
- Whilst on holiday
- At discos/dances
- At evening classes.

What attracts us to some people?

Some of the factors that go into making us friendly with people might include:

- Appearance
- A sense of humour
- Common interests
- Somebody's nature (similar or opposite to ourselves)
- Admiration for somebody
- Being thrown together in a situation and getting to know somebody.

'No man is an island' (John Donne). Human beings are generally sociable – we need other people's company. Friendships help us to share our experiences with others, learn from others, feel wanted, help our self-confidence, and so on. Many of the friends you have now may no longer be your friends in, say, five years' time. Sometimes our best friends can be from the opposite sex. (This is called platonic love.) It is possible to love our friends in the same way as we love members of our family.

Jesus said to his discipline:

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.'

(John 15: 12 – 14)

Reflection:

- ▶ Make a list of the ten qualities you consider to be most important in friendship.

Human beings have been called social animals. Instinctively we need to be around other people. The way we are, the way our personalities have developed, is a result of our relationships with other people.

However, relationships with other people are not always easy. Even relationships between people who feel very deeply about each other are often fraught with difficulties. In fact, there is an old saying, 'We hurt most, those we love most'. This can be especially true of family relationships, and is sometimes true between friends. There are many reasons why relationships cause conflict. Our emotional needs, wants and requirements are many, and these, if not met can create all sorts of problems. However relationships are very important. Through them we come to a better understanding of ourselves – the sort of people we are.

Qualities

Through relationships with others we learn about ourselves and about others. This learning process requires a certain amount of wisdom, demanding that people develop their abilities to:

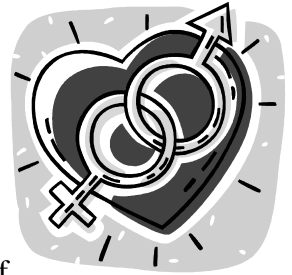
- **Compromise:** the act of settling an argument by both sides giving in to some of the other person's demands
- **Co-operate:** the act of working together for a shared purpose
- **Tolerate:** to suffer someone's opinions, moods, behaviour, without complaining to let another person be him/herself
- **Keep humorous:** to be able to laugh at another without hurting their feelings and to be able to laugh at oneself and not take oneself too seriously
- **Be honest:** especially about how one feels
- **Forgive:** nobody is perfect, everybody makes mistakes – it is important to develop the ability to forgive others, and sometimes to forgive oneself
- **Remember the Golden Rule :** this rule, which is to be found in all religions and cultures is, 'Whatever you wish that men do to you, do so to them' (Matthew 7:12). In other words, 'Always treat others as you would like them to treat you'. This teaching too enables us to put ourselves in somebody else's shoes.
- **Remember** that, 'The only way to have a friend is to be one'.

Reflection:

With a friend discuss some of the above qualities.

Love:

If we look at this week's popular songs we can be sure that many of the songs will be about love. Ever since men and women have written songs and poems, one of the most popular themes has been love. Hit songs often ask 'What is love?' and this question has been asked many times.



The word 'love' means many different things. Some of the main types of love are:

- Warm affection or liking something, e.g. 'I love the Rupununi mountains'
- Sexual affection, passion or desire
- Love of friends
- Love of family
- Humanitarian love, which includes things like charity, tolerance and respect towards all people.

Love is a two-way process. We both receive love and give love. People who find it difficult to love have not always received love in the first place.

Young people sometimes get very confused by the emotions connected with love. Often at school relationships between boys and girls can cause problems. We can 'fall in love' with somebody who we 'like' and usually this means we are physically attracted to them. Sometimes we can fall in love with somebody and find out later that we don't even like them. Sometimes we can 'fall out of love' as quickly as we fall in love.

Love is different from lust. Lust is defined as an 'animal desire for sex'. In conversation today the word 'sex' is usually taken to mean the physical act of sex relations between a couple. The word 'love' is usually taken to mean the whole personal relationship between a couple, including sex. Thus 'love' covers a far wider area than 'sex'.

'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.'
(John 13:34)

'Love is patient; love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men's sins, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope and endurance. Love will never come to an end.'
(I Corinthians 13: 4 – 8)

Reflection:

*'When love beckons to you, follow him,
Though his ways are hard and steep.
And when his wings unfold you yield to him,
Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you
And when he speaks to you believe in him,
Though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north wind lays waste the garden.
For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you ...
But if in your fear you would seek only love's peace and love's pleasure,
Then it is better for you that you cover your nakedness and pass out of love's threshing –
floor, into the seasonless world
Where you shall laugh, but not all of your
Laughter, and weep, but not all of your tears.
Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself.
Love possesses not nor would it be possessed;
For love is sufficient unto love.
When you love you should not say "God is in my heart", but rather "I am in the heart of
God".
And think not you can direct the course of love, for love, if it finds you worthy, directs your
course.*
(Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet)

Sex

Most healthy human beings have the ability to reproduce. Unlike some other less complex forms of life, we do this sexually – involving the male and female of our species. Without this ability to reproduce there would be no biological survival. The sexual drive is one of the strongest drives known to us – at its biological level it is the desire to reproduce. However, human beings are different from other animals in that the sex drive is linked to our emotional and psychological needs as well.

We live in what is often called a 'permissive society'. This means that many people are open minded about sex. Often we like to think that sex, with all its problems, is a new thing and that our particular generation 'discovered' it.

Attitudes to Sex

Often young people are under tremendous pressure about sex. Young boys feel pressurized to boast about their 'sexual conquests'. Girls are called names if it is believed that they have had sexual relationships. They are called different names if they have not. Society put pressure on young people, through advertising and the media, with sexual images communicating ideas that sex is acceptable without the responsibilities of a whole and fulfilling relationship. Younger children often learn about sex through their peers and sex is seen as being something that is 'naughty' or 'dirty'. Unless young people are allowed to express and share their feelings with each other in a community free from the sorts of sexual conditioning that exist, then many people, when they grow older, find themselves with a whole number of sexual hang-ups.

In order for people to grow up experiencing happy and fulfilled sexual relationships they must learn the value of respecting other human beings not as objects of their own gratification but as other people with the same feelings, emotions and hopes as them.

Sex outside marriage, and having affairs once one is married, have now become more common, possibly because of the following reasons:

- for some people virginity is not considered to be so important
- contraceptive devices have improved
- abortions are easier to obtain
- sexual permissiveness is often encouraged in the media
- fewer people follow the teachings of their religion

However, the results have been very serious

- sexually transmitted diseases are increasing
- more children are being born out of wedlock
- emotionally immature young people are sexually active
- divorce rates have risen
- there is now a risk of contracting AIDS.

Sex outside marriage

People who are trying to follow the `spiritual path' generally would say that sex outside marriage is wrong not just because it leads to the problems listed above but because the great religious teachers spoke out against it.

The great religions teach that:

- sex is a beautiful gift from God demanding responsibility, commitment and total love
- it is always wrong to use a person as a thing
- sexual intercourse is very special (it can create new life)
- sex is the most beautiful expression of a deep loving, life-long union between two people.



It is a deeply creative power that apart from creating new life, creates human relationships, intimacy, self-discovery, humour, joy, playfulness and the giving and receiving of love. Sex is such a powerful force, that if approached without responsibility or self-discipline, can ruin our own lives and the lives of others.

Society has often made people feel guilty about their sexuality rather than helping them praise it and has largely failed to teach about the mystery, wonder, beauty, sacred origins and creative power of sex. Indeed, sexuality was a creative act of the universe which made our unique planet possible, where every flower and blossom on this planet is a reproductive organ.

Reflection:

What sort of pressures are young people put under as regards their sexual identities?

In groups of two to three:

Imagine that you had to plan a sex education programme for people of your own age. There are 10 sessions of 45 minutes to organize. Discuss what topics you would like to be covered. Take 20 minutes to do this.

Pornography

Pornography – ‘that which exploits and dehumanizes sex so that human beings are treated as things and women, in particular, as sex objects.’

Whether it is overtly violent or not, pornography shows women in a degrading, humiliating way, often with the message that women enjoy this and want to be abused. It seems that pornography has become acceptable in some societies – overseas the top shelves of newsagents are full of pornographic magazines and tabloid ‘newspapers’ display half-naked women on their pages.

Some people, usually men, argue that pornography is harmless. However, if we think clearly about the existence of pornography in our everyday lives we should begin to see that the effects of pornography have dangerous consequences for us individually and as a society.

Reflection:

Divide into pairs, if possible with someone of the opposite sex. Read and discuss the following together.

Pornography ruins family relationships
Pornography degrades both women and men.
Pornography promotes destructive fantasy.
Pornography damages young people.
Pornography triggers sexual assault.
Pornography destroys God’s Creation.

Explain in your own words how pornography exploits, dehumanizes, subordinates, objectifies, violates and stereotypes women.

As Ted Bundy says:

‘My experience with pornography that deals on a violent level with sexuality is that you become addicted to it – I would keep looking for more potent, more explicit, more graphic kinds of materials. Like an addiction, you keep craving something which is harder. Something which gives you a greater sense of excitement. Until you reach a certain point where the pornography only goes so far. Well-meaning, decent people will condemn the behaviour of a Ted Bundy, while they’re walking past a magazine rack full of the very kinds of things that send young kids down the road to be Ted Bundys. That’s the irony.’

Ted Bundy – an American serial sex killer.

Class Debate

'This house believes that it should be an offence to publish in newspapers, pictures of naked or partially naked women in sexually provocative poses'.

AIDS

'AIDS is caused by a virus called HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). This can damage the body's defence system so that it cannot fight certain infections.

HIV is not passed through everyday social contact.

HIV is transmitted in three main ways:

- through unprotected sexual intercourse (anal or vaginal)
- by injecting drug users sharing equipment including syringes and needles.
- from an infected mother to her unborn child.'

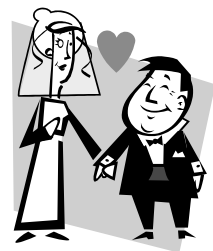
Since 1981 tens of thousands of cases of AIDS have been reported worldwide and the numbers are increasing fast. The main groups at risk are:

- Practising homosexual and bisexual men who do not practise 'safe sex'
- Drug users who share injection equipment
- Haemophiliacs and others who have received blood products
- Sexual partners of all these people
- Babies born to infected people
- Heterosexuals with more than one partner who do not practise 'safe sex'.

At first it was thought that only homosexuals could contract or pass on AIDS, but it is now accepted that AIDS can affect the whole community.

How to protect yourself

The only 100% reliable form of protection is abstinence before marriage and complete faithfulness after marriage.



HIV – the virus that can cause AIDS – is found in the fluids exchange during sexual intercourse (men's semen and women's vaginal fluids)

- **Try to make 'safer sex' part of your life**

The more people you have unprotected sexual intercourse with the more likely you are to meet someone with HIV and become infected yourself. The same applies for your partner.

Some ways of having sex carry a higher risk than others:

- **Unprotected anal intercourse**
This is when the penis enters the anus or back passage. It carries a particularly high risk.
- **Unprotected vaginal intercourse**
This carries a risk. The virus can be passed by both man and women to their sexual partners through men's semen and women's vaginal fluids.
- **Oral sex**
When one partner stimulates the other's genitals with the mouth or tongue (oral sex) there is theoretically *some* risk. The virus could pass through semen and women's vaginal fluids into the other person's body, particularly if they have cuts or sores in their mouth. However, this is extremely unlikely to occur.
- **Sharing sex toys**
Sharing sex toys, like vibrators, could carry a risk as the infection could be passed from one person to another.

It is extremely unlikely that the virus could be passed on through deep French Kissing and there have been no proven cases of this happening.

Using a condom

A condom can help stop the virus – and other sexually transmitted diseases – passing from one person to another. It must be used properly.

PHONE THE NATIONAL AIDS HELPLINE ON 223-7138 OR 223-7139 FOR MORE INFORMATION

(Their counseling service is free and confidential.)

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'Celibacy, chastity, virginity and faithfulness are no longer old –fashioned virtues. They are back and here to stay because of AIDS.'

An AIDS epidemic is something that should concern us all. It raises many moral issues. When AIDS first hit the headlines it was assumed that it would only affect the gay community and intravenous drug users. However, we now know of cases of people who have contracted AIDS through dental treatment, blood transfusions and heterosexual intercourse. There has been great debate about the origin of the AIDS virus and, as with much information about AIDS, there has been a great deal of misinformation. The fact remains, however, that AIDS is a reality which is taking a terrible toll in many countries around the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that every day at least 6,000 people are newly infected.

AIDS raises many issues:

1. Should there be compulsory testing of people who are in the high risk groups?



2. If someone is found to be HIV positive should this information be passed to his or her employer?
3. Should babies carried by HIV positive mother be aborted.
4. How should people be educated about AIDS so that the prejudices surrounding AIDS can be minimized?
5. Should the multi-national companies, who are spending billions of dollars in trying to find a cure for AIDS, be made to work together so that there is not a competitive element brought into this area of medical research? Obviously, the company that discovers a 'cure' will make enormous profit.
6. Should people with AIDS be allowed to move freely from country to country?
7. On a personal level, how can people who have AIDS be made to control their sexual activity so that they do not infect others?
8. Should condoms be made freely available in schools, colleges, places of employment, etc?
9. How can the families of AIDS sufferers be supported?

Reflection:

To even begin to address the AIDS crisis a massive input of government funding is needed. This would mean a complete change in government policies and priorities. America spends more money in one day on 'defence' than was spent in total on research and treatment during the first ten years of the AIDS crisis.' Can you think of some of the misinformation that surrounds the issue of AIDS?

The Facts

- In sub-Saharan Africa 8.5 million people had AIDS by the end of 1995.
- Between 1995 and 1999 new AIDS cases in homosexual and bisexual men may fall by 7% in the UK; new cases in heterosexuals are expected to increase by 25% over the same period, from 420 to 525.
- Between 1984 and 1995, 25,220 cases of HIV infection were reported in the UK.
- Throughout the world more than 6,000 people are newly infected every day. Globally, heterosexual transmission accounts for 75% of HIV infection. By 2000 it is expected that between 30 and 40 million people will have been infected.
- In Western Europe 450,000 people were diagnosed as HIV positive by the end of 1995; 3 million in South-East Asia and over 750,000 in North America.

Contraception:

Contraception – ‘various methods by which a couple can avoid an unwanted pregnancy.’ Why is contraception used today?

- A couple may decide not to have children.
- A family may already be large enough.
- It helps people to plan their future.
- It enables couples to enjoy sex without worrying about pregnancy.
- It helps to control the population.
- In cases of pre-marital sex, it can prevent unwanted pregnancy.

Methods of contraception

- **Natural Family Planning (NFP)**

NFP refers to the woman becoming aware of her own fertile and infertile cycles by recording the natural signals of her body (e.g. the temperature method, the Billings (or ‘ovulation’) method and the symptothermal method). Many Roman Catholics prefer these methods.

Is it safe?

The World Health Organization puts the symptothermal method in the top three methods of birth control.

- **Rhythm method**

Some days during the menstrual cycle a woman is not fertile – so a couple can have sex during those days. But they need to work out the ‘safe days very carefully indeed – the woman will have to take her temperature regularly – and this has to be done every month as the cycle is different every time.

Is it safe?

This method is not safe at all, as it is so easy to make a mistake.

- **Withdrawal method**

The man withdraws his penis before his sperm is released, so that none of them enter the woman’s vagina.

Is it safe?

No, because the man may not withdraw his penis in time. Also, sperm can be released at any time while the couple are having sex.

- **The Pill**

The Pill is now taken by tens of millions of women worldwide. It works by altering the hormone balance of the woman’s body, so that she does not become fertile.

Is it safe?

As a method of contraception, it is the safest. There may be side-effects in that other parts of the body such as the breasts, or body hair may be affected. Women taking the Pill may also suffer from depression. The long-term effects are not known.

- **The vault cap and diaphragm**

These are both rubber domes on a flexible ring. The diaphragm is wider and flatter. Both are smeared with contraceptive jelly and slipped into the woman's vagina. The cap fits over the mouth of the cervix. The diaphragm fits right across the vagina. Both must be fitted by a doctor and checked regularly or they may not remain effective. They must be left in place for at least six hours after the couple have had sex.

Are they safe?

Both are reliable so long as they are fitted and used correctly.

- **The sheath or condom**

This is the method a man can use. He pulls the sheath on to his erect penis and leaves it there until his sperm has been released. It's safer if the woman puts contraceptive cream in her vagina as well.

Is it safe?

Again, it is safe if correctly used. More and more people are using the sheath now because (apart from abstinence) it is the best available protection against infection by the AIDS virus.

- **The IUD (inter-uterine device) or coil**

This is made of plastic or metal and has a small piece of copper wire attached to it. It is fitted inside the woman's womb by a doctor. No one is sure how it works, but it is thought to prevent a fertilized egg from attaching itself to the wall of the womb, where it can begin to grow into fetus.

Is it safe?

The IUD is a reliable way of preventing pregnancy. Side-effects may be heavy or prolonged periods, cramp-like pains, or infection. Occasionally the woman may expel it from her body

Three views on contraception:

- Some people regard sex as one of the greatest pleasures of life, not just the means of reproduction. If contraception helps a relationship, then it is a good thing.
- The Catholic Church teaches that the primary purpose of sexual intercourse is the begetting of children. Intercourse is a sin unless the procreation of children is intended, or at least not hindered, because children are a gift from God. In the Papal Encyclical *'Humane Vitae'* (1968) all artificial forms of contraception are condemned.
- The Anglican view on contraception is that a couple may practice forms of contraception that are acceptable to both partners.

Reflection:

'The availability of contraception makes society less moral than it used to be.'

'Sex is a function primarily for having children.'

'The method of contraception is not just up to the woman's.'

Celibacy, chastity and virginity

Celibacy – 'the state of being unmarried, especially as the result of a religious promise'.

Chastity – 'the state of being sexually pure'. To refrain from having sexual relations (sexual abstinence) for personal reasons is known as 'chastity'. People decide to be chaste for a number of reasons:

- To practice self-control
- To concentrate all their energies in other directions
- To practice birth control
- To dedicate themselves to some religious ideal
- As an experiment within a relationship.

Virginity – 'the state of being a virgin (one without sexual experience)'.

Is being a virgin important?

The most important thing about virginity is for a girl or boy to be sure in their own mind why they do or do not wish to have sexual intercourse. It is important to be sure in your own mind what you want to do and to realize that having sexual intercourse is something that should not be undertaken lightly.

Men may be called 'Casanova', 'Don Juan' or 'a bit of a lad' if they have a lot of different sexual partners. But if women do, they may be called horrible names. There is no history of men being punished for loss of virginity. And until contraception was widely available, many women chose to remain virgins rather than risk unwanted pregnancy. The attitude that it is more acceptable for men to be sexually active is still common. In reality, both men and women are capable of feeling jealous if their partner has already 'slept around'.

Why do people choose to remain virgins?

There may be a number of reasons:

- They may refrain from sexual intercourse because their partner does not feel that the time is right for sexual intercourse. In this way they are respecting the rights of the individual.
- They may be nervous, insecure, or unsure about sexual intercourse and its implications.
- They may wish to remain virgins so that they can make a gift to the one they really love.
- They may be deeply religious and follow the teachings of their religion. For instance, 'Every sexual act must be within the framework of marriage' (Catholic teaching in the encyclical, '*Casti Conubii*'); 'The Christian affirms abstinence from sexual intercourse outside the

marriage bond' (Methodist Conference, 1981). In these cases they will remain virgins until they marry.

Reflection:

Make a list of some of the dangers of 'sleeping around'.

What do you think about the following two statements? Compare and discuss them.

- 'It's a good idea to have sex before marriage so that you'll be able to be experienced when you meet your marriage partner.'
- 'If you sleep around you soon lose the wonder and mystery of sex, which should only be shared with your loved one.'

Write a letter back to 'Ms. Confused'

Dear Marj,

'I am 15 and a virgin. I have been going out with this 18-year-old boy for six months. We have quite heavy petting sessions but he wants me to have sex with him. I have told him 'No' – but he's threatened to finish with me if I don't go to bed with him. I love him but don't want to lose my virginity. Help me – Mr. Confused.

Homosexuality

Homosexuality is the attraction of sexual preference for the same sex. Female homosexuality is also described as 'Lesbianism'. Evidence suggests that the incidence of homosexuality among adult men and women is about 5% - but these figures are mainly from Western societies. There has been much debate among scientists about the causes of homosexuality but, because of the complexity of human sexual drives, no conclusion has yet been reached.

The traditional religious teachings has been that homosexual people must remain physically inactive, or celibate, on the grounds that the only form of proper sexual behaviour is between married men and women.

Reflection:

In many Sacred Scriptures homosexuality is condemned. As the Catholic Church states, *'This does not permit us to conclude that all those who suffer from homosexuality are personally responsible for it, but it does point to the fact that homosexual acts are disordered and can in no case be approved of.*

(Roman Catholic Declaration on Sexual Ethics, 1974)

How do you respond to the following statement from a gay man?

'It two people of the same sex behave towards each other in a loving way and if their relationship brings them happiness then they should be wished well, and not treated as lepers by society.'

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Activities

1. Discuss the following scenario:

Mary thinks she is in love with a boy in school. She is not concentrating on her school- work and is eating very little. One day Mary overhears a conversation in which she learns that the boy has had many other sexual partners. What should Mary do?

- Mind her own business.
- Forget about the boy because a relationship with him might be too risky.
- Buy condoms in preparation for a future relationship with the boy.
- What else could she think of doing?

2. Some psychologists say that the early adolescent years are a stormy time for teenagers. Discuss.

3. Which physical/emotional changes in puberty are the most difficult to deal with?

4. How do parents and other adults react when young people go through puberty?

5. What difference, if any, does it make that girls usually enter puberty one or two years earlier than boys?

6. Role play the situation:

- John wants to have sex with Mary. Mary likes John very much, but does not feel ready to have sexual relations with him.
- Role-play this scenario showing how Mary handles the situation.
- What can John do to show understanding and respect for Mary?
- What are some of the pressures Mary is under to have sex with John?

7. What has helped you to make choices about expressing your sexuality?

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READINGS

‘Such a chaste and holy life, with its implications of modesty, purity, temperance, decency and clean mindedness, involves no less than the exercise of moderation in all that pertains to dress, language, amusements, and all artistic and literary avocations. It demands daily vigilance in the control of one’s carnal desires and corrupt inclinations. It calls for the abandonment of a frivolous conduct, with its excessive attachment to trivial and often misdirected pleasures’¹

“You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say unto you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”²

A chaste and holy life..` condemns the prostitution of art and literature, the practices of nudism and of companionship marriage, infidelity in marital relationships, and all manner of promiscuity, of easy familiarity, and of sexual vices’.³

A chaste and holy life, ` can tolerate no compromises with the theories, the standards, the habits, and the excesses of a decadent age. Nay rather it seeks to demonstrate through the dynamic force of its example, the hollowness of such claims, the perversity of such habits, and the sacrilegious character of such excesses’.⁴

‘Samsara, the transmigration of life, takes place in the mind. Let one therefore keep the mind pure, for what one thinks, which he becomes: this is the mystery of Eternity’.⁵

‘Chastity in no way implies withdrawal from human relationships. It liberates people from the tyranny of the ubiquity of sex. A person who is in control of his sexual impulses is enabled to have profound and enduring friendships with many people, both men and women, without ever sullying that unique bond that should unite man and wife’.⁶

‘Chastity implies both before and after marriage an unsullied, chaste sex life. Before marriage absolutely chaste, after marriage absolutely faithful to one’s chosen companion. Faithful in all sexual acts, faithful in word and deed. The world today is submerged ...in an over-exaggeration of the importance of physical love, and a dearth of spiritual values’.⁷

‘Whatever passes beyond the limits of moderation will cease to exert a beneficial influence’.⁸

PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT



5. PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Fact Sheet: based on material from: Conservation International, Iwokoroma and Conservation International

What is the environment?

The environment refers to the soil, water, air and the living things inhabiting these systems.

Did you know?

That parts of forests the size of 37 football pitches are lost every minute?

Source: www.peopleandplanet.net

Why should we protect the environment?

- Food: Man depends on the environment for both plant and animal food.
- Shelter: Man uses the earth's resources to shelter himself from rain, sun, wind and snow.
- Livelihood: Fishermen, farmers, loggers, miners etc depend directly on the environment for their livelihoods.
- Inspiration and recreation: People need the environment for inspiration and recreation.
- Water and air: Our survival and that of other living things is impossible without water and air.

What is being done to protect the environment?

- International level:** At the international level several conventions have been signed by governments for the protection of the environment.
- National level:** Guyana has developed a National Strategy for the Conservation and sustainable use of Biodiversity and developed a National Biodiversity Action Plan. The Environmental Protection Act was enacted in 1996, which also brought about the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Community and individual level:** there is a need for greater awareness of and responsibility for the environment.

What are the threats to the environment?

Can the environment support life infinitely? The ability of the environment to support life is threatened by the way man is changing the environment.

- Soil:** soil is a resource that is threatened by exhaustion, erosion and salinization.
- Water:** water resources are under the threat of pollution from industries, agriculture, sewage and other sources.
- Atmosphere:** The effect of air pollution on health is a cause for concern as is the depletion of the ozone layer.
- Biological diversity:** deforestation, pollution and overexploitation are three major threats to biological diversity.

The planet in crisis – causes for concern

There are more than five billion people in the world today and the number could be doubled in the next 50 years. The higher the population, the greater the strain on the environment; more people use more natural resources and produce more waste. It is not just the *quantity* of human life which should concern us. It is also the *quality* of life. As the countryside is choked by pollution, and disappears under concrete we are losing something of immense psychological value. Attractive and inspiring, the natural world is essential for human happiness.

The oceans

The seas and oceans cover more than 70% of our planet's surface. They provide homes for an incredible variety of wildlife, from seals and fish to seabirds, corals and turtles. There is even life in the permanently dark world of mountains, canyons, valleys and cliffs deep down on the ocean floor. But human activities underwater tend to be even more irresponsible than on the land. The sea is viewed by many people as nothing more than a huge dumping ground and pollution from oil spills, raw sewage and industrial waste is an ever-growing problem. Coral reef destruction, hunting, over-fishing and coastal development are also taking their toll.



At the same time, efforts to care for marine life are complicated by the fact that seas and oceans belong to everyone. No single country has to take responsibility for their protection – or is accountable for their misuse.

Life on earth

The world contains a staggering diversity of plants and animals. Centuries of study have so far revealed nearly one and a half million species. But although new ones are being found all the time we have discovered only a tiny proportion of all the living things with which we share the planet.

A rich biological diversity is important to our own survival. We rely, directly or indirectly, on the many different characteristics of plants and animals for our food, building materials, medicines and other necessities of life.

Tropical rain forests

Tropical forests cover only 7% of the Earth's surface, yet they contain more than half of the world's species. From the highest treetop to the darkest forest floor, they are alive with a teeming variety of animals and plants – jaguars, gorillas, tapirs, parrots, frogs, birds, butterflies, orchids. But half the world's rain forest have been destroyed since the 1940s – cleared by timber companies, farmers, ranchers and miners. The forest cover that remains is roughly equal to the size of the USA. But the cutting, burning and bulldozing continues – an area half the size of California is being cleared or seriously degraded every year. We are losing species even before we have named them. If current trends continue, most of the world's rain forests could be cleared completely within the next 50 years. The message is clear – drastic action needs to be taken immediately if they are to be saved.

We lull ourselves into a false sense of security by believing that, somehow, nature will cope with the damage and cover up our mistakes. Yet the dangers of using natural resources wastefully and excessively, instead of carefully and sensibly, are obvious.

Deforestation

This colonialism, which has been going on for 400 years, continues to day with ever increasing tragic results. The rain forests are home and source of life to 50 million indigenous people. Destruction of the forests alienates forest people from themselves and each other. The outsiders who do it also bring disease, conflict, displacement and death. The most vulnerable people are those who have previously had little contact with the outside world. For example, measles and whooping cough brought in by workers have wiped out more than 30% of the population among some groups of Venezuelan Yanomami. Between 1900 and 1970 one Amazonian tribe, on average, became extinct each year.



It is a sad fact that because of the profitable US market for beefburgers, million upon millions of trees in South America are being cut down to make way for cattle ranches. Soon, unless the rich world sees sense, virtually all primary forest in Guatemala, India, the Phillipines, Malaysia and Thailand will have gone and about 8 million indigenous people will have lost their forest homes.

The desire for timber, land, oil and cattle ranches, and the damming of huge areas to provide electricity for cities, continue to destroy the living space of the indigenous peoples. Mining is perhaps the greatest threat to their continued existence. It pollutes vital water supplies; it imposes an economy that doesn't work and alien social values; it destroys sacred sites, disfigures familiar landscapes, and separates people from their homes, their past and each other.

Stewardship

For many, human beings are seen as being 'stewards' of the planet. A steward is somebody who doesn't own land but is employed to look after it. Humankind does not own the Earth – all of us are passing visitors and as such we should take care of the Earth and look after it responsibly. Our 'duties' as stewards, are to make sure that we can pass on the Earth to future generations and not cause harm to generations living today.

The average Western household throws away about one ton of rubbish a year, including around 132 kg of food. Nearly a third of this garbage is from packaging and the rest from bottles, cans and plastic containers. If we walk along the seawall we will have to pick our way through all sorts of waste. Our streets are littered with polystyrene fast food containers.

Pollution, however, is about more than individual behaviour. It breaks over us in great waves. Take acid rain. Half of West Germany's trees are dying from acid rain. Take nuclear power. The 'accidental' dumping of half a ton of uranium in the Irish Sea helps ensure those waters are the most radioactive in the world. So waste is not just a messy habit of individuals. It is a by-product of industrial growth. We are overburdening the planet with our rubbish, the effluence of our affluence.

Little or no accounting is done, for instance, on the damage to clean air or water. If we argue that pollution means profits, then it follows that industry's worst offenders should be the biggest and wealthiest. And this is the case. Petro-chemical, car and electronic companies predominate. They are the most profitable precisely because they are getting something for nothing: use of never-to-be-repeated finite resources, like oil and natural gas. Created millions of years ago, these fossil fuels are being fast used up. Nothing is put in their place. And a by-product of their use is waste.

The 400 million cars in the world today are the cause of the choking smog that covers so many of our cities. Their emissions contain lead and cause the build up of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere. At present rates of emission, CO₂ concentrations will have doubled in 60 years. This could trigger the destruction of the ozone layer which shield the Earth from the harmful effects of the Sun's ultra-violet rays. If this happens it could cause a 'hot house' effect, increasing temperatures by two or three degrees, enough to melt the Arctic and the Antarctic ice caps, raising sea levels and flooding all low-lying areas.



The industrial, capitalist world encourages us to consume more and more. We can see the effects of this if we pick up a current affairs magazine. Half the pages are concerned with violent crime, economic disaster and war; the other half shows shinning new cars. Glossy advertising encourages greed and produces envy in a world where the consequences of such selfishness are all too obvious. We live in a world which supports huge industries for pet-foods and cosmetics while claiming it cannot afford to build hospitals or schools. We clearly need to look at our values and morality.

Nuclear waste

After 30 years of trying nobody has yet come up with a way of safely disposing of nuclear waste. Plutonium from a nuclear reactor is still lethal after a thousand years. Nuclear waste has polluted the seas to a terrifying degree. It contaminates the fish we eat and the water we swim in. Buried underground, no one is certain that nuclear waste won't eventually seep into water reserves and so contaminate the water we drink and the food we eat.

Acid rain

The pollutant gases of industry pour into the Earth's atmosphere and dissolve in rain. They come down again as sulphuric and nitric acid, eat into trees and deaden our lakes.

Pesticides

According to the World Health Organization, every year half a million people are poisoned by pesticides, which can easily enter the food chain. Pesticides are a \$10 billion business in the USA and some of the most deadly are exported to the Third World.

Hazardous waste

Developed countries manufacture over 70,000 chemicals every year, many untested. The USA alone produces some 250 million tons of toxic industrial waste – one ton per person per year.

The waste is not easy to get rid of. To overcome this problem some companies ship their waste to the Third World for disposal.

Health

Human health is everywhere being affected by pollution. In Los Angeles and Calcutta thousands of children are diagnosed with permanent respiratory damage by the age of ten. In Mexico City every citizen is breathing the equivalent of two packets of cigarettes a day because of the fouled air. In Australia skin cancer is epidemic because of the hole in the ozone layer.



What is the solution?



Obviously we cannot continue in this way for ever. The world is a delicate organism, and we are in the process of destroying it. On a personal level we can use bottle banks, recycled paper, 'environmentally friendly' products. We can try to save energy and reduce our use of cars. If the world is to be saved, however, we need to do *more* than this. We need to put pressure on companies and governments to become more responsible. At the moment profit, not environmental health, dictates the way that governments and huge multinational companies behave. This must change.

Reflection:

'It s tragic that our technological mastery is greater than our wisdom about ourselves.'
(Pope John Paul II)

'The love of money is the root of all evil '
(I Timothy 6:10)

'Continue to contaminate your bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.'
(Chief Seattle, 1855)

Save the planet

In principle, religions have taught that God created the Earth and that human beings are the responsible 'stewards' or managers, of creation. Human beings should work wisely to protect what has been given to them, to work with nature and not against it. However, people have, and still do, exploit nature for greedy economic gain. Today enormous multinational companies make vast sums of money by exploiting the Earth's natural resources and show little concern for the environmental damage that they themselves cause.

Reflection:

'If the Earth were only a few feet in diameter, floating a few feet above a field somewhere, people would come from everywhere to marvel at it. People would walk around it marvelling at its big pools of water, its little pools and the water flowing between. The people would marvel at all the creatures walking around the surface of the ball and at the creatures in the water. The people would declare it as sacred because it was the only one, and they would protect it so that would not be hurt. The ball would be the greatest wonder known, and people would come to pray to it, to be healed, to gain knowledge, to know beauty and to wonder how it could be. People would love it and defend it with their lives because they would somehow know that their lives could be nothing without it. If the Earth were only a few feet in diameter.'

Joe Miller, artist.

'We all moan and groan about the loss of the quality of life through the destruction of our ecology, and yet each one of us, in our own little comfortable ways, contributes daily to that destruction. It's time now to awaken in each of us the respect and attention our beloved mother deserves.'

Ed Asner, American actor

5. PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Activities



Main Ideas:

- The earth is our home and all humanity are the inhabitants of the same earth
- The world's resources are adequate to meet the needs of the world's population
- The problem in the distribution of the world's resources is a spiritual problem and needs a spiritual remedy
- When the entire world understands the concept of the Oneness of Humanity, then the needs of all humanity can be met
- The problems of the environment affect everyone and one country's problems will have an effect on the rest of the world.

Activities:

1. 'Unless we change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are going.' Illustrate this proverb in a poster as it relates to the direction we are going with the world's environment.
2. Make a chart showing different environmental problems and then identify which areas of the world are affected by this problem.
3. Imagine that you are a reporter. Write the questions that you would ask a world leader if you could get him/her in a live interview.
4. Take a walk around your immediate neighbourhood taking special notice of unfriendly environmental practices. Then come together as a group and share your observations. Make plans for two or three simple acts that can help to educate your neighbours about friendly environmental practices.
5. Write a theme song for an anti-litter campaign in your neighbourhood.
6. Make a crossword puzzle for youth that will teach them about caring for the environment.
7. Plan and perform skits that show both the negative habits and then the important positive habits to learn about conserving our natural resources, such as water, land, trees, animals etc.

5. PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT



READINGS

...`that whatever I behold I readily discover that it maketh Thee known unto me, and it remindeth me of Thy signs, and of Thy tokens, and of Thy testimonies'.¹

`and every time I turn my gaze unto Thine earth, I am made to recognize the evidences of Thy power and the tokens of Thy bounty'.²

`The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.'³

`and every time I behold the sea, I find that it speaketh to me of Thy majesty, and of the potency of Thy might, and of Thy sovereignty and Thy grandeur'.⁴

`And at whatever time I contemplate the mountains, I am led to discover the ensigns of Thy victory and the standards of Thine omnipotence'.⁵

`No creature is there crawling on the earth, no bird flying with its wings, but they are nations like yourselves. We have neglected nothing in the Book; then to their Lord they shall be mustered.'⁶

`Consider for instance how one group of created things constituteth the vegetable kingdom, and another the animal kingdom. Each of these two maketh use of certain elements in the air on which its own life dependeth, while each increaseth the quality of such elements as are essential for the life of another. In other words, the growth and development of the vegetable world is impossible without the existence of the animal kingdom, and the maintenance of animal life is inconceivable without the cooperation of the vegetable kingdom. Of like kind are the relationships that exist among all created things'.⁷

`Surely those without sin should receive the most kindness and love – except animals that are harmful... But to blessed animals the utmost kindness must be shown, the more the better. Tenderness and loving-kindness are basic principles of God's heavenly Kingdom. Ye should most carefully bear this matter in mind'.

`Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement, his power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men'.⁸

...`the proper exercise of this (man's) responsibility is the key to whether his inventive genius produces beneficial results or creates havoc'...⁹