



Group Agreement / Guidelines / ROPES Activity

It is important when discussing topics surrounding sexual health to try and create an environment where everyone feels like they can voice their thoughts in a safe manner. These “ground rules” often take various forms, but the framework remains consistent.

Write “ROPES” on a large piece of paper or classroom board. Time-permitting, ask the students how ropes are used in real life. Answers may include: provide boundaries, safety and support, tie someone or hold them back.

The concept of ROPES helps us to set our rules, provide some boundaries and also offer safety and support for our discussions. If we make our ROPES too ridged, participants might feel constrained and that can limit their sharing and learning.

If time permits, ask the students to share words that begin with each letter of ROPES that they think will help the program run smoothly. Examples may be:

R: Respect, responsibility, keep it “real”, reporting

O: Open mind, opportunity, “Oops/Ouch”

P: Participating (with the right to “pass), personal questions, prepared

E: Empathy, education, excited, “escuchar” (Spanish for listen), ELMO

S: Said here, stays here (confidentially, unless...), safe space, self-aware, share, sense of humor

Students may suggest “secrets” for S. For some, the word “secret” can have a negative or triggering connotation and should be avoided.

It may be important for the facilitator to explain their role in mandatory reporting and what that would look like.

ELMO: Enough! Let’s Move On can be useful for identifying items that may need to be moved to the group “parking lot” for discussion later.

Oops/Ouch can be a useful way to allow people to make honest mistakes when discussing difficult issues. Students who may be offended by something said can say “ouch” to indicate they feel uncomfortable about what was just said. “Oops” allows the person who made the statement to apologize. The “oops” needs to be genuine and not used as a scapegoat to purposefully offend others.