

RHRP NEWSLETTER



EMPOWER
TANZANIA



Njoro Primary



Mwembe Primary

WELCOME!

This year is what is called a leap year! For those who don't know what a leap year is: February normally has 28 days, but on a leap year (every four years) February has 29 days. There are some myths and traditions around the 29th day of February across the world. Some of these myths relate to marriage. For example, a tradition that originated in Ireland is that women can propose to men on February 29th. In other European countries, if a man refuses the marriage proposal, he is supposed to buy a gift of 12 pairs of gloves for the woman who proposed! In Greece it is considered unlucky to get married during a leap year. In India, the myths and traditions follow more around the date itself and they have a myth that someone who is born on February 29th is considered to be unlucky.

When we consider myths and traditions, it is often strange to consider how they started and why we still follow them. After all, a woman can ask a man to marry any day of the year, and 12 pairs of gloves won't help the feeling of rejection if the proposal is declined! And realistically, how can being born on a particular date lead to changes in someone's luck?

Think about some myths and traditions that are present in society, why they might have started, and whether these are practical and useful to continue in the current day. In this newsletter we will be looking at myths and traditions surrounding relationships and reproductive health.

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NOTES FROM DR. JEFF...

Myths are beliefs that are not based on reason or scientific knowledge. Myths are often created to explain something when there is a lack of knowledge about events such as those in nature or events of chance. In America, for example, there is a myth that eating chocolate causes acne in teenagers. This myth seems to give a simple explanation for the cause of acne, but it is not true. Acne occurs when oil glands in the skin of the face, neck and shoulders become plugged with oil, dead skin or bacteria. Plugging of the oil glands results in the raised red, tender bumps on the skin of people who have acne. Hormone changes during puberty can cause acne because they increase oil and dead skin production. Family genetics and some medications can also increase the chances that a young person will have acne. However, chocolate does not cause acne. This is a health myth.

Another situation where myths are created is when people are reluctant to talk openly about a topic. For example, I know of a myth in Tanzania that insecticide-treated mosquito nets can lead to impotence in men. The term impotence means that a man has difficulty achieving or maintaining an erection during sexual intercourse. It is understandable that erections and sex are difficult topics to talk openly about, so this leaves room for some wild stories and myths to develop. To be clear, insecticide-treated nets prevent malaria and save many lives and have NO effect on sexual function at all. This is a myth of ignorance about sexual function. Impotence has several potential causes including some medical conditions or medications, but insecticide-treated nets have nothing to do with impotence.

One of my favorite myths, because it is so silly, is the myth in America that a boy who masturbates will grow hair on the palms of his hands. Whenever this myth is brought up, one can see all the boys in the room glancing at their palms, because we know that masturbation is a common practice, even if it is denied. This is an example of a myth about a sexual topic that people are uncomfortable discussing in an open way.

Myths about sex and relationships are a serious threat to the education we are providing to young people through the Reproductive Health and Relationships Program. There are so many sex and relationship myths that is impossible to know all of them. What we can teach the students, however, are the normal sexual functions of the human body and educate them about the various types of relationships people have. If we hear about something odd that sounds like it may be a myth, we can compare it with the facts that we know to help determine if it is a myth or a fact. If we are unsure, we can do research on the question by asking a knowledgeable source such a healthcare professional or a reliable website. **Education eventually conquers myths!**

FOCUS SECTION:

We want to focus on one topic each issue to provide additional information. These are picked at random, but if you have a request, please contact Jessica!


Kisiwani

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: ⚡ Myth Busting Edition ⚡

MYTH 1: YOU CAN'T GET PREGNANT IF YOU HAVE SEX WHILE ON YOUR PERIOD.

This is FALSE - Sperm can live inside you for 2, 3 and up to 5 days. You could have sex towards the end of your bleeding and then actually conceive 4 or 5 days later with an early ovulation. The probabilities of getting pregnant while on your period are low, but the possibilities are there.

MYTH 2: YOU CAN USE A CONDOM MORE THAN ONCE IF YOU WASH IT WELL.

This is FALSE - Please don't do it! Reusing a condom or using more than one time diminishes the protective effect of condoms by leading to condom breakage, slippage, or leakage. Additionally, a male and female condom should not be used at the same time because they could rub against each other and break. Condoms should only be used once and one at a time.

MYTH 3: BOYS DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT CONTRACEPTION AS IT IS A GIRL'S RESPONSIBILITY.

This is FALSE - It is BOTH partners' responsibility to ensure that you have safer sex, and use contraception to prevent both unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). An unplanned pregnancy or an STI can dramatically change the lives of both partners.

MYTH 4: IF HE 'PULLS OUT' WHEN HE EJACULATES, A WOMAN CAN'T GET PREGNANT.

This is FALSE - Before a boy ejaculates, there's sperm in the pre-ejaculatory fluid (sometimes called pre-come), which leaks out when he gets an erection. It only takes one sperm to get a girl pregnant. If you have unprotected sex, you're at risk of pregnancy and of catching an STI.

⚡ Myth Busting, cont. ⚡

MYTH 5: IF A GIRL IS DRUNK WHEN SHE IS RAPED, IT IS HER OWN FAULT.

This is FALSE - Rape is sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal or oral) without the consent of the victim. Any rape, regardless of context, time, or situation, is **ONLY** the fault of rapist. If a woman or a man is intoxicated at the time of sex, and cannot consent, this is rape. Consent is an active process, not just the default because they haven't said no.

Sexual consent has 5 main aspects:

- 1 FREELY GIVEN**
 Consenting is a choice you make without pressure, manipulation, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- 2 REVERSIBLE**
 Anyone can change their mind about what they feel like doing, anytime. Even if you've done it before and even if you're both naked in bed.
- 3 INFORMED**
 You can only consent to something if you have the full story. For example, if someone says they'll use a condom and then they don't, there isn't full consent.
- 4 ENTHUSIASTIC**
 When it comes to sex, you should only do stuff you **WANT** to do, not things you feel you're expected to do.
- 5 SPECIFIC**
 Saying yes to one thing (like going to the bedroom to kiss) doesn't mean you've said yes to others (like having sex).



Demetria Bonaventure Kimario



My name is Demetria Bonaventure Kimario. I am a teacher at Kiwanja primary school teaching English in Standard 5, science in Standard 3 and civics in Standard 4. I am also a counselling teacher.

I would like to thank Empower Tanzania for this Reproductive Health and Relationship Program. In fact, since this program has started, a lot of things changed. I would like to talk about many things that have changed as a result of the implementation of this program in one year's time. Firstly, the problem of school pregnancy. I can say it has decreased and it is likely to end completely with schools undergoing this program. Secondly, cases of pupils being sodomized were being kept a secret, but now some of the pupils have been

open when they see their fellow peers are being abused so they are free to report. This is after teaching them about the effects of abusive practises. Thirdly, when victims are interrogated, they are free to express themselves and they are open to referring to the perpetrators of these acts of cruelty. Fourth, the pupils' proximity to the teachers has been more positive. Now the child has become a teacher's friend and is open to express her concerns. For example, when she feels the signs of menstruation or starts her period in the school environment, they always go to teachers for help and more advise. All this is because we have been providing education and they have understood and we told them teachers are like parents and friends so they have to be open for the things they don't know so they can be helped and they do that. The problem of sodomy still exists, although it has somewhat diminished.

Pupils use various self-defence techniques they have been taught and it helps them. For example, they have learned to show a clear and bold refusal such as, "*Back off, back offff, back offffffff!*" or "*No, nooo, noooooooo!*"

In fact, the work is progressing well and we are continuing with providing education every Thursday to my school.



SPOTLIGHT:

We want to know about you! We would like to include a spotlight section on someone new each month. Send us your stories of teaching the sessions and a little bit about you ... you could see yourself here next issue!



CONTACT US:

If you have a comment or suggestion about the newsletter, please email Jessica at jhaw1@gmail.com with the subject title "Newsletter."

If you need any help with a teaching issue, please contact Catherine at catherinewales17@gmail.com or Yoeza at yoeza1mzava@gmail.com



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