

FGM and PSHE education

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What is the challenge?

- The problem for us as PSHE education specialists is finding a way to do this work that is genuinely protective for young people whilst remaining appropriate for their age and readiness – to ensure we ‘do no harm’ in our teaching.

Or put simply –

- It seems that children who are at risk are too young for us to teach them what they need to know to stay safe!

What are we trying to achieve?

- To enable children and young people to protect themselves from FGM?
- To enable children and young people to tell us when they may be vulnerable or at risk of FGM so that as adults we can protect them?

A way of thinking about PSHE education

- We don't encounter life in 'topics' – we encounter life in 'moments'.
 - 'Mundane moments' – 'What shall we do tonight?'
 - 'Critical moments' – 'Fancy coming out to a party tonight?'
 - 'Crunch moments' – 'No one's looking, fancy coming upstairs to one of the bedrooms with me?'
- We need to teach young people how to spot when the 'mundane moment' is turning into a 'critical moment' or worse a 'crunch moment'.

Two levels

- **Protective learning** – everything we teach in a school and especially in PSHE education that explores rights; responsibilities; consent; respect; communication; self worth etc
- **Specific learning** – when we focus our attention on a specific topic or issue.

You need both!

PSHE education – moving from ‘Learning About’ to ‘Learning how to manage’?

- Teaching *‘about’* - the ‘facts or knowledge’ which need to be accurate, realistic and relevant to age and readiness.
- Teaching how to *‘manage’* – the vocabulary, language, strategies and skills they will need to manage ‘critical and crunch moments’.
- You can teach *‘about’* in a single lesson – it increases knowledge and raises awareness but if it is not immediately relevant it may quickly fade from memory – it becomes *‘something I remember doing something about’*.
- Teaching how to *‘manage’* has to be built through a planned progressive PSHE education programme and then ‘connected’ to the specific issue.

One way of 'breaking it down' – managing a critical moment needs....

- **Knowledge** (*I know the facts*) and **understanding** (*I have processed these facts – I 'get' how they relate to 'me in my world'*) with regard to FGM
- **Skills** – *I recognise how my skills can help me avoid FGM (for example I can assess the risk of FGM; I can assert my point of view, I can identify and evaluate who can help me, I can communicate my fears clearly to them etc.)*
- **Language** – *I have a relevant 'vocabulary' and I can use it to communicate to others – I have 'words that fit in my mouth' and that I feel confident I can share with others.*
- **Strategies** – *I know the options I have if I or someone else is at risk of FGM*
- **Attitudes, values and beliefs** – *I am clear about my feelings concerning FGM. (I recognise when they are conflicting) - I have considered where following these feelings could take me - now, tomorrow, next year, for the rest of my life.*
- **Rights** – *I know my own and others' legal rights with regard to FGM.*
- **Responsibilities** - *I recognise the responsibilities I have to myself and to others to be able exercise our rights.*
- **'Self esteem'** (self confidence? self advocacy?) – *I can draw on the 'inner energy' I may need to actually put all of the above into action – if I can't do this I usually just feel guilty or blame myself.*

Who are the 'audiences'?

- Young people at immediate or future risk of FGM
- Young people who have experienced FGM and either are (or are not) aware of what has happened to them
- Young people who believe their younger sister is at future risk of FGM
- Young people who believe someone they care about (perhaps a friend) is at risk of FGM – 'the bystanders'
- Every young person as a citizen in a diverse society (Citizenship)

Two golden rules

- Imagine the world through the eyes of the young people you are teaching. How would they recognise that they or someone they care about is at risk of FGM?
- Find out what they
 - already know and understand that is correct – we can build on this;
 - almost know – we can ‘nudge this’;
 - misunderstand or have completely wrong – we can challenge this
 - know nothing about – we can teach this (according to readiness)before you start teaching.

So what do young people need to know about the process of FGM?

- That people within some cultures believe it is necessary to cut away part of a woman's genitalia.
- That this process is often done in unhygienic ways and without anesthetic. This can lead to infections (many serious) and will be very (very) painful.
- That many women who have undergone FGM have serious long lasting health problems.
- It is completely unnecessary and is taken so seriously that children and young women are protected by law from having this done to them – to carry out FGM on a child or young woman is wrong – it is a serious crime in this country and in many others.
- That every child and young woman has a right to be protected from FGM and that there are a number of adults who will protect you if they know you are at risk.

So what do young people *not* need to know about FGM?

- Graphic stories of being held down and cut.
- Graphic descriptions or accounts of the process and the aftermath.
- Graphic images of the ‘tools’ used to perform FGM.
- These scare (or worse trigger denial) they do not empower!
- It is like road safety – seeing graphic images of road accidents does not help you develop the skills to cross the road safely
- It is like personal safety – graphic descriptions of muggings or rape do not help you develop the habits and skills you need to protect yourself.

So....

- Have a look at each of the ‘audiences’ on the sheet – think about the young people you teach. How would they recognise the risk of FGM – what would they see, hear, notice, be told if there was a risk to them or someone they care about?
- What knowledge, understanding, language, strategies and skills do we need to have in place for them to recognise the risk and get help?
- What might *push* them into getting help – what might *pull* them back from getting help?
- How can we encourage the factors that might push them forward and reduce the issues that might hold them back?

Where can we go for lesson material?

- <http://forwarduk.org.uk/what-we-do/uk-programmes/schools-programme/>
- <https://www.freedomcharity.org.uk/>
- <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/programme-study-pshe-education-key-stages-1-5>
- <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-teaching-about-consent-pshe-education-key>