

## Constructs/Predictors of Abstinence from Sexual Activity

The following are constructs identified by Stan Weed, PhD, of the Institute for Research and Evaluation (IRE), Salt Lake City, Utah, as predictors of sexual behavior among adolescents. These constructs have been developed by Dr. Weed by surveying and analyzing data from hundreds of thousands of adolescents across the USA, as well as in Russia and Central America. The Heritage Keepers® program curricula have been developed to affect all of these predictors of sexual activity and training for program implementation includes strong emphasis on these predictors.

### Predictors identified by Stan Weed, PhD, include:

#### Core Predictors

**Abstinence Intentions** – What is the likelihood the student will have sex in the next year? What is the likelihood that the student will have sex before he/she marries?

**Behavioral Commitment** – Has the student made a commitment to be abstinent outside of marriage?

**Abstinence Values** – What are the student's sexual values? To what degree do they value abstinence?

**Affirmation of Abstinence** – What is the extent to which students define sexual activity for unmarried adolescents as good or bad, right or wrong, important or not important?

**Rejection of Permissiveness** – Does the student reject a permissive attitude regarding sex outside of marriage? To what extent has the student rejected language and activities related to sexual permissiveness?

**Justification of Sex** – What is the degree to which students rationalize or justify their actual or expected behavior using such reasons as being in love, money spent, taking precautions (safe sex), etc.?

**Contraception Justifies Sex** – Does the student believe that using contraception justifies having sex with someone?

**Depth of Relationship** – Does the student believe that as a relationship progresses, sex becomes more justifiable?

**Sex Proves** – Does the student believe that having sex with someone proves love, popularity, desirability, maturity, etc.?

**Love Justifies Sex** – Does the student believe that he/she is justified in having sex because he/she loves the person?

**Abstinence Efficacy** – If a student values abstinence and wants to live accordingly, how confident is the student that he or she could do what is necessary to successfully abstain? Can the student successfully engage in the "instrumental" behaviors that will lead to abstinent behavior?

**Sexual Independence from Peers/Susceptibility to Peers** – How likely is the student to resist pressure from their peers to go against their own standards and beliefs in order to be accepted by their peers? How susceptible is the student to their peers (negative peer pressure)?

**Sexual Climate / Individual Opportunity** – Is it cool to be abstinent or sexually active? Is sexual activity common in the school or community? How much opportunity is there for sexual activity?

**Future Impacts of Sex** – Does the student believe that he or she has viable and attractive options and opportunities in the future and that sexual activity and its consequences could be a barrier to those future opportunities?

#### Other Predictors

**Beliefs about Risks of Sex** – Does the student value abstinence as a way to avoid risks?

**Peer Group** – Does the student associate with peers who engage in sexual activity and other risky behaviors?

**My Worth** – Does the student believe that he or she has value and worth as a unique person? Does the student believe that he or she should be treated with dignity and respect, rather than treated poorly or being pressured to jeopardize personal values and goals? Does the student demand recognition of his or her own value and worth, rather than allowing it to be compromised?

**Sex is more than Physical** – Does the student see sex as more than just a physical experience?

**Love/Lust** – Does the student know the differences between love/lust/infatuation (that love gives, lust takes, & infatuation is only temporary)?

**Related Risk** – Is the student involved in related risky activities (drinking, using drugs, or violence)?

**Prior Experience** – Has the student had sex before? Does the student desire to recommit to abstinence?

It is Dr. Weed's assertion that the deeper the level of intervention (awareness, knowledge, understanding, attitude, belief, value, personal efficacy, and commitment), the more likely program participants are to reach the critical threshold on a Likert scale (5 being the best) measurement of the identified constructs/predictors. The closer the participant is to the critical threshold of 4 or better on a Likert scale, the more likely a positive short-term and long-term behavioral result.

Behavioral goal: As a result of the Heritage Keepers® curriculum, a statistically significant higher percentage of program participants, as compared with similar non-program students, will intend to abstain, and will actually abstain, from sexual activity outside of marriage

- as a result of an increase in these predictors: abstinence intentions, behavioral commitment, abstinence values, sexual independence from peers, abstinence efficacy, future impacts of sex, and
- as a result of a decrease in this predictor: justification of sex.