
Sexuality Education Program
for ages 12 to 17

A dark, textured silhouette of two people in a dynamic, possibly dancing or embracing pose. The person on the left is leaning back with one arm raised, while the person on the right is leaning forward towards them.

BETRUE

TO YOU

Duquet, F. and al., 2023
Projet Outiller les jeunes face à l'hypersexualisation
Project: (Giving youth tools to deal with hypersexualization)

UQÀM

Sexuality Education Program
for ages 12 to 17



BETRUE

TO YOU

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Note that inclusive writing was used for this program in order to reflect the diversity of gender identities.

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Awards and honors

We are proud to announce that we are winners of the Thérèse-Casgrain Equality Award in the “Allied” category (2023) from the Secretariat for the Female Condition.



Reference of the “Be True to You” sexuality education program

Suggested reference for this program:

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PREFACE

Preface

History of the “Giving youth tools to deal with hypersexualization” project

The *Giving youth tools to deal with hypersexualization* project was first launched in 2005, in partnership with the Service aux collectivités de l'Université du Québec à Montréal (Protocole UQAM/Relais-femmes), following a request from the YWCA to develop an educational tool on the prevention of early sexualization. The project was initially divided into three phases: researching the subject, designing training for people working with youth and creating pedagogical tools.

With time, the *Giving youth tools to deal with hypersexualization* project became a key reference in sexuality education and training and was used to develop educational tools to address issues related to social hypersexualization and early sexualization.

Achievements

The project began with the production of the documentary film *Sexy Inc.: Our Children Under Influence*, available in French and English (Bissonnette, 2007). This was followed by the creation of the *Be True to You* program (Duquet, Gagnon and Faucher, 2010), comprising 19 sex education sessions for youth ages 12 to 17. Lastly, a one-day training day was organized for teachers and other youth workers to address the phenomenon of social hypersexualization and early sexualization.

Since then, the *Giving youth tools to deal with hypersexualization* project has been updated with new and innovative trainings, programs and educational tools. Recent achievements include the sexuality education and early sexualization prevention program *On est encore des enfants! [We're still kids!]* for elementary students in Cycle 3 (Grade 5 and 6) (Duquet, 2017) and the educational tool *Séduction, Sentiment amoureux et Intimité: quand ça nous transporte ou quand ça dérape [Dating, romantic feelings and intimacy: the good and the bad]* (Duquet & al., 2020) for youth ages 12 to 17, which was developed in collaboration with the Regroupement des maisons des jeunes du Québec (RMJQ). These are only available in French.

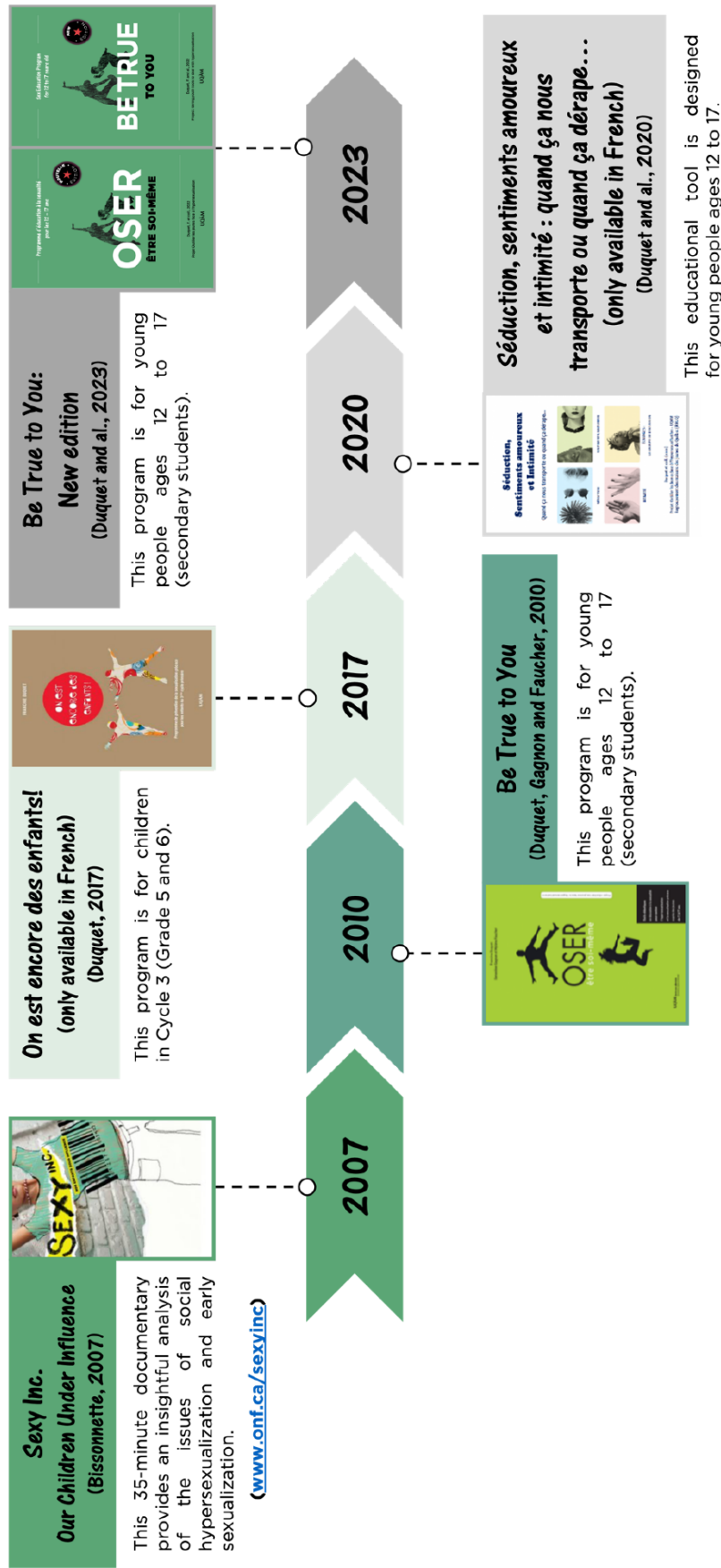
The current *Be True to You* program (Duquet & al., 2023) is in its second edition and has been extensively updated to reflect the new socio-sexual realities of youth. The program is also available in French, under the title *Oser être soi-même* (Duquet & al., 2023).

For more information on the *Giving youth tools to deal with hypersexualization* project and the related trainings, educational tools and research, please visit the project website:

www.hypersexualisation.uqam.ca



Sexuality education programs and educational tools for the Giving youth tools to deal with hypersexualization project



Trainings and conferences offered to school personnel, youth workers and parents

Trainings for SCHOOL PERSONNEL and YOUTH WORKERS

PRIMARY

1 Training 1 - Primary

Prevention and intervention related to early sexualization in primary school.



2 Training 2 - Primary

Intervention options and application of the early sexualization prevention program for children in Cycle 3 of primary school. On est encore des enfants! (Duquet, 2017).



SECONDARY

1 Training 1-A Secondary

Lines of thought and intervention options related to social hypersexualization and early sexualization.



2 Training 1-B Secondary

The “new” socio-sexual realities of youth: what seems new and what isn't.



3 Training 2 - Secondary

Intervention options in sexuality education and application of the *Be True to You* (2010) program.



Conferences for PARENTS (only available in French)

1 « Prévenir la sexualisation précoce de mon enfant : j'y veille ! » (Primary)

2 « Hypersexualisation sociale et sexualisation précoce : comprendre pour mieux intervenir comme parents » (Secondary)



Issues surrounding social hypersexualization and early sexualization

In recent years, we have seen a ramping up of sexual content in entertainment media along with easier access to sexually explicit material. This bombardment of “sensationalistic and superficial sexual images and dialogue” [Translation] (Conrad and Milburn, 2002) has been described as “social hypersexualization” (Destal, 2010; Robert, 2005) and “the sexualization of the public space” [Translation] (Destal, 2010; Gouvernement du Québec, 2022a). This phenomenon, which is now well established in our society, has had the effect of trivializing sexuality and reinforcing sexual stereotypes (Gouvernement du Québec, 2022a).

Moreover, through information and communication technologies (ICT), we are now connected to the social and media universe any time, any place. This affects our relationships with others (Blaya, 2015) and creates an environment where young people are almost never “offline” (ATN, 2022; Lykens & al., 2017; Vogels & al., 2022) and are exposed to endless content.

The invasion of the media space by sexualized images (in advertising, reality shows, video games, music videos, on social media, from influencers and celebrities, pornography, etc.) is disconcerting to parents, teachers and youth workers. They find it regrettable that young people are discovering sexuality in this way (Baker, 2016; Chaumeron, 2003; Folscheid, 2002; Marzano, 2002) and being exposed to highly sexualized images along with products and services related to adult sexuality (Hamel and Naves, 2012).

According to Levin and Kilbourne (2009), it takes young people so much time to make sense of these sexual messages that they have less of it left for actual developmental tasks. This is why some authors characterize early sexualization as a “developmental lag” (Destal, 2010), while others believe it involves imposing adult sexuality on children, who are not yet ready to come to grips with sexuality on a psychological, emotional and physical level (Levin and Kilbourne, 2009; Papadopoulos, 2010).

Exposure to such media content appears to play a role in certain issues affecting youth, including the blurring of the public and private spheres (Duquet & al., 2018; Duquet and Quéniart, 2009; Gouvernement du Québec, 2022b); cyberbullying risks (Brisson-Boivin, 2019; RSPH, 2017); slut shaming (Goblet and Glowacz, 2021); the risk of sextortion and the non-consensual publication of intimate images (CCPE, 2022; Johnson & al., 2018; Karasavva & al., 2022; Ringrose, 2020); internet addiction (Doornwaard & al., 2016; Dufour & al., 2016); sexual solicitation (Wolak & al., 2009); and unrealistic expectations toward sexuality and romantic relationships (Peter and Valkenburg, 2016). Moreover, as Kotiuga and his colleagues point out (2022), “technology-dependent sexual practices [(e.g., voluntarily viewing pornographic material, sexting, photographing or filming a partner, etc.)] have become a part of young people’s sexual repertoire” [Translation].

Although parents are concerned about their teenagers’ exposure to pornography, they say that they feel uncomfortable discussing the subject and are poorly equipped to do so, partly because they are unfamiliar with the technologies being used (Zurcher, 2017). In addition, when facing these issues, those who work with young people are often surprised, shocked or even unsettled by the questions, attitudes and sexualized behaviours of some teenagers. In many cases, they do not know what to think, what to say or how to respond (Duquet and Quéniart, 2009; Mazzocchetti, 2017). Others may tend to trivialize situations that may in fact be concerning or inappropriate. Many are reluctant to offer guidance about sexuality out of fear of criticism, discomfort or a lack of confidence.

The Secrétariat à la jeunesse mentions that certain objectives such as “promoting healthy and safe behaviour” and “fostering equal treatment in relationships” are essential to the health and well-being of young people [Translation] (2021). The Secrétariat à la condition féminine (2022), for its part, mentions that, in order to promote egalitarian relationships, it is important to “raise awareness among the public, particularly young people, of

issues related to equality” and to “counter sexism in stereotypes, particularly in the media, advertising and communication” [Translation]. We believe that it is important for all sexuality education to move in this direction.

Though the *Be True to You* program cannot solve all the issues surrounding social hypersexualization and early sexualization, it can give young people tools for thinking about and reacting to these problems more critically. We also hope that the program, through its pedagogical approach and the topics it covers, will help young people gain a better understanding of sexuality in general but also their own (Desaulniers, 1997; MEES, 2023a), as they learn to analyze the environmental influences that affect their perceptions of sexuality (Desaulniers, 1997).

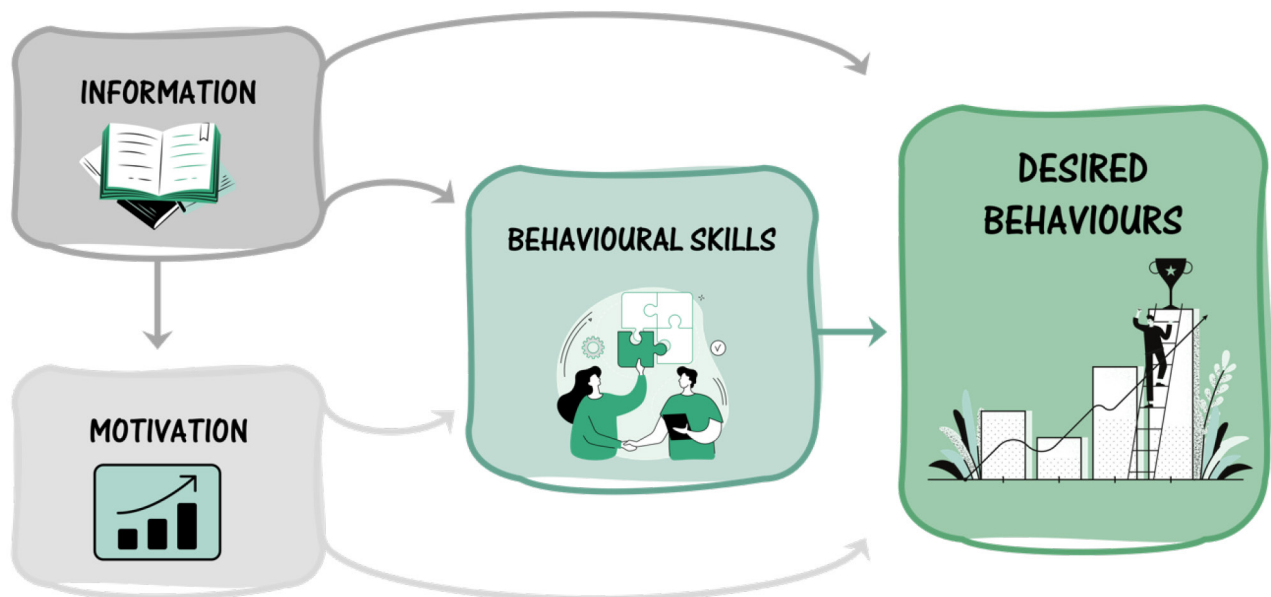
Developing the “Be True to You” program

The second edition of the *Be True to You* program was developed based on a review of the scientific literature and various educational tools and videos as well as the survey results on the first edition of *Be True to You* (Duquet, Gagnon and Faucher, 2010), taught to 374 young people in Secondary 4 and 5 (Lefort, 2022), and the results of our anonymous *Be True to You* online survey, which was established in 2011 to collect the opinions of youth workers who use the program.

Moreover, the program session were developed based on the Information, Motivation, Behavioral skills Model (IMD) (Fisher, Fisher and Shuper, 2014; Fisher, 1992), recommended by the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN, 2019), and frameworks that underpin our intervention philosophy. These elements are outlined in greater detail below.

Theoretical model used

The diagram below illustrates the theoretical model on which the different components of the *Be True to You* program are based (Duquet & al., 2023)—namely, the Information, Motivation and Behavioural Skills (IMB) Model (SIECCAN, 2019, adapted from Fisher and Fisher, 1998).

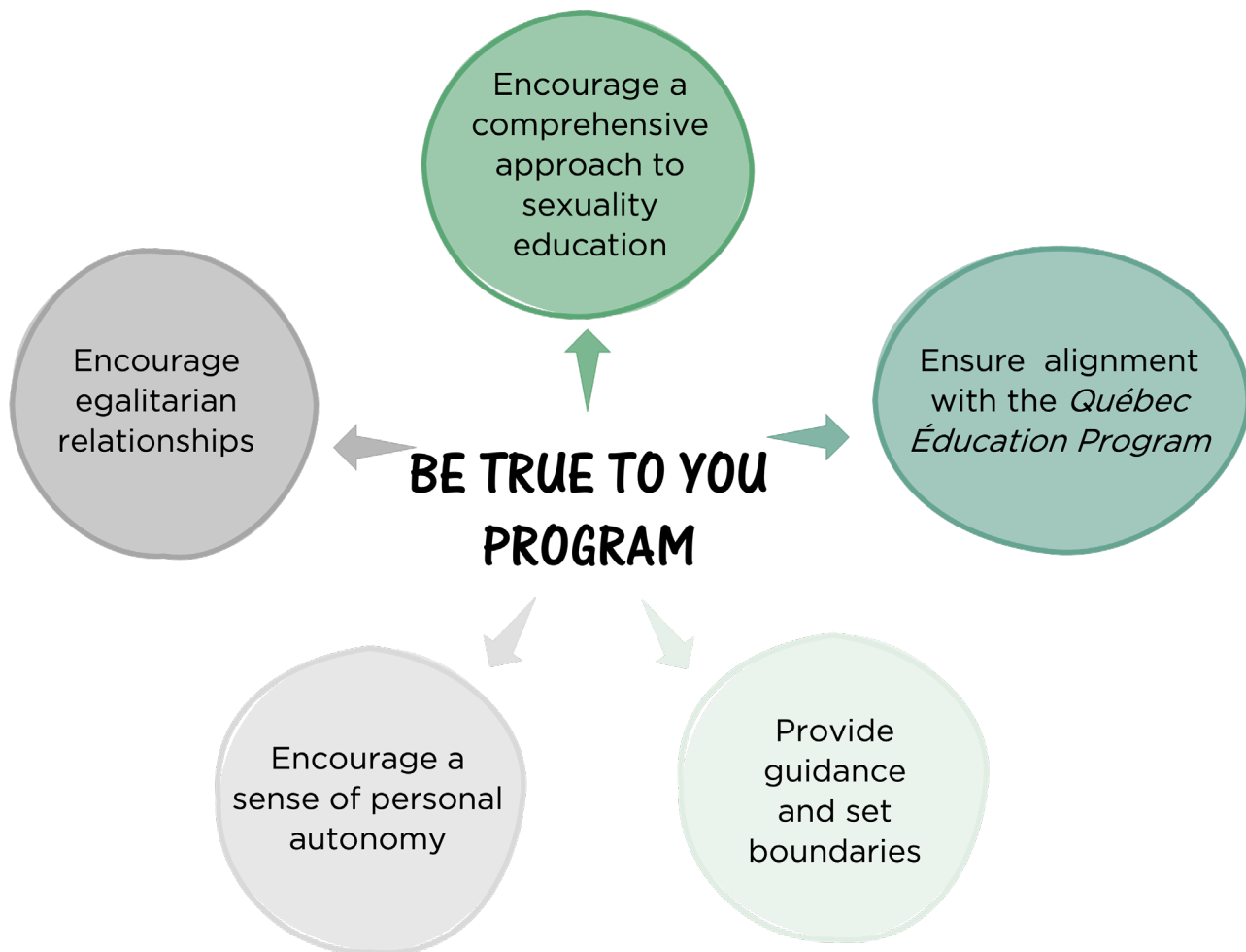


According to the theoretical model, these three key strategies enable participants to apply what they have learned in the *Be True to You* program to their daily lives (SIECCAN, 2019):

- › Provide relevant information about sexual health and wellness.
- › Develop motivational factors (e.g., individual attitudes, social norms) that encourage the adoption of healthy and positive behaviours in connection with human sexuality.
- › Teach specific behavioural skills that are essential to improving sexual health and well-being.

Intervention philosophy

The diagram below shows the elements that make up the intervention philosophy of the *Be True to You* program.



Encourage a comprehensive approach to sexuality education

Comprehensive approach to sexuality education

To counter social hypersexualization and early sexualization, the approach to sexuality education must:

- › Consider sexuality as a whole, which means covering the emotional, relational, social, moral, ethical and biological aspects.
- › Demystify certain concepts related to sexuality so that young people can place them in a more realistic context (e.g., advantages and disadvantages, challenges, their age and reality).
- › Deal with sexuality in an open and straightforward manner.
- › Encourage young people to develop their critical thinking, judgement, discernment and assertiveness.

Ensure alignment with the *Québec Éducation Program*

Québec Education Program (MEES, 2023b) Culture and Citizenship in Québec Program (MEQ, 2022) Content in sexuality education (MEES, 2018)

For each of the sessions, the relevant broad areas of learning, cross-curricular competencies and subject-specific competencies in the Québec Education Program are indicated.

The proposed activities have been developed to directly align with the educational intentions in sexuality education or to provide a context for learning.

For educational interventions in schools that refer to the official programs of the Ministère and for each of the 20 sessions of the *Be True to You* program, have also been presented:

- › the links with the educational goals and topics in sexuality education, which are associated with the competencies (Studies a cultural reality; Reflects on an ethical question) of the *Culture and Citizenship in Québec Program* (MEQ, 2022).
- › links to the detailed content in sexuality education proposed in 2018 (MEES).

Although the *Be True to You* program does not cover all of the Ministère de l'Éducation's sexuality education topics (e.g. puberty), the 20 sessions offered here cover a wide range of prescribed themes, in addition to consider the issues with regard to the phenomena of social hypersexualization and early sexualization.

Providing guidance and setting boundaries

Provide
guidance
and set
boundaries

Young people need boundaries and guidance, especially when it comes to sexuality. Yet some adults can find it difficult to speak to young people about sexuality in an explicit and straightforward manner and discuss how emotions, relationships and ethics fit in with sexuality. This is why the *Be True to You* program teaches sexuality through a range of educational activities, discussion questions and informative content that provide a frame of reference for teachers and, in turn, students. Moreover, an analysis framework concerning kindness, dignity and safety is provided for some of the topics.

More and more, young people are finding that the adults around them are reluctant to take a stance when it comes to sexuality. Yet, it is possible to give an opinion without being moralistic. It comes down to our approach and to having an open, welcoming, thoughtful attitude. It is important to ask questions, give clarifications, propose various lines of thought, have discussions and sometimes say what is and is not acceptable. In this way, we can support young people as they think about these matters and develop their assertiveness. This is what we mean by “providing guidance and setting boundaries.”

Encouraging a sense of personal autonomy

Encourage a
sense of personal
autonomy

Young people need a forum to discuss issues such as the commercialization of sexuality and social hypersexualization and to consider what “healthy” sexuality looks like—one that reflects their reality as teenagers and their needs.

“Encouraging a sense of personal autonomy” means helping young people develop critical thinking skills through pointers and guidelines that allow them to reflect, take a step back, make up their own minds and assert themselves in real-life situations.

During the sessions of the *Be True to You* program, students will be regularly encouraged to be proactive in their lives. So in addition to being a forum for them to learn, think and talk about sexuality, the program can also serve as a model of communication and self-affirmation.

Focusing on the development of egalitarian relationships

Encourage
egalitarian
relationships

Our conception of gender equality is in line with that of the Conseil du statut de la femme (2008; p.7), which defines egalitarian sexuality based on three categories.

1. **Biological:** valuing knowledge about the body, respect for the body, safe sexual practices, access to and sharing of contraception.
2. **Psychological:** seeing people as owners of their sexuality rather than sexual objects, and being committed to zero violence, domination or coercion.
3. **Social:** promoting sexuality that is less constrained by sexual stereotypes.

It is essential that we develop egalitarian relationships within the younger generation since it is an issue that affects society at large. In the sessions of the *Be True to You* program, this requirement is reflected in questions and discussions on how we relate to gender. Each group gets the opportunity to present their viewpoints and is given tools for responding critically to stereotypes and narrow viewpoints about either gender.

“Be True to You” program

Target audience

Secondary students

The educational activities in the *Be True to You* program are geared to secondary students (ages 12 to 17). This program is tailored to the age and development level of the students at each grade level:

- **Secondary 1** (11-12 years old)
- **Secondary 2** (12-13 years old)
- **Secondary 3** (13-14 years old)
- **Secondary 4** (14-15 years old)
- **Secondary 5** (15-16 years old)



Objectives

The objectives of the *Be True to You* program are:

- › **To encourage** students to think about, friendship, love and sexual awakening, dating, romantic relationships, emotional and sexual intimacy and egalitarian relationships and consider what these concepts mean and imply, in a manner appropriate for their age and development level.
- › **To foster** critical thinking about the commercialization of sexuality and its impact on their identity formation, perceptions of relationships and understanding of emotional and sexual intimacy.
- › **To encourage** the development of skills that allow students to be more self-assertive and to handle sexual activity in a way that respects their and their partner's sense of privacy and boundaries.

Choice of topics

To achieve the objectives of *Be True to You* program, while taking into account priorities established for sexuality education, the sessions cover a range of topics based on the developmental level of the students, their age, their school level and a review of relevant literature.

- › Secondary 1 and 2 students are particularly susceptible to peer pressure and the desire to fit in, which is why, for this age group, the focus is on preventive and educational interventions aimed at developing critical thinking skills.
- › Secondary 3 students are at an age where they begin to experience pressure to become sexually active, so it is important to get them to think more deeply about this question.
- › Secondary 4 and 5 students are at an age where they have a clearer idea of what they want from their love and sex lives and better understand their role in countering the issues of social hypersexualization and early sexualization.

Fourteen topics are covered in the 20 sessions:

- › Some sessions deal with a specific topic and are intended for certain grade levels (e.g., Secondary 1: *Friendship and peer pressure*; Secondary 5: *Sexual diversity and gender pluralism*, etc.). Other sessions touch on topics that span multiple sessions. For example, the topic of *Body Image* will be covered in Secondary 1 and 3; the topic of *Romantic relationships* in Secondary 2, 3 and 5; the topic of *Consent* in Secondary 2, 3 and 4, but always in a different way according to the age of the students.
- › For each session, a slideshow accompanying the animation (Powerpoint) is available to facilitate the animation. You must download them from our website: www.hypersexualisation.uqam.ca
- › Among the 20 sessions of the *Be True to You* program, some include a part A and a part B which can represent two sessions of 75 minutes.

Be True to You

Grade	Session #	Session topic	Session title	Duration
Secondary 1	1	Friendship and peer pressure	“Avoiding The Need To Please”	75 min.
	2	Body image	“More Than One Type Of Beauty”	75 min.
	3	Preventing bullying	“A Dangerous Game”	75 min.
	4	Dating	“Expressing Your Feelings To Someone”	75 min.
Secondary 2	1	Romantic relationships	“I’m In Love. What Should I Do?”	75 min.
	2	Preventing risks related to sexual solicitation on social media	“Internet Investigation – Part A”	75 min.
	3	Preventing risks related to sexual solicitation on social media	“Internet Investigation – Part B”	75 min.
	4	Consent	“Learn What Consent Really Means!”	75 min.
	5	First times	“How Do You Know If You’re Ready?”	75 min.
Secondary 3	1	Body image	“Body Representation In The Entertainment Industry”	75 min.
	2	Romantic relationships	“Loving And Being Loved: Not Always Easy”	75 min.
	3	Sexual consent	“Consent: Facts And Acts” Parts A And B	130 min.
	4	Sexualized social behaviour and activities	“Sex At Parties: Embarrassing, Shocking And... Risky?”	75 min.
	5	Sexual behaviour	“Let’s Talk About It”	110 min.
Secondary 4	1	Intimacy and Values	“Putting Values Into Action”	75 min.
	2	Sexual consent	“Making Sure You Get Consent”	75 min.
	3	Sexual behaviour and the influence of sexualized media	“Romance, Eroticism Or Pornography?”	90 min.
Secondary 5	1	Sexual diversity and gender pluralism	“Define Yourself On Your Own Terms!”	105 min.
	2	Romantic relationships	“Let’s Talk About Love”	110 min.
	3	Desire and pleasure	“The Key Components Of Desire And Pleasure” Parts A and B	150 min.

Structure of the sessions

The program can be used in school or youth community settings.

Duration :

- › Most of the sessions are **75 minutes** in length.
- › However, some of them are **90 minutes to 150 minutes**, which you can present in the stages (Part A, Part B), if you wish.

Although there is a sequence to the sessions and the topics they cover, there is also the option of handpicking sessions based on what is deemed most relevant for the group. Each session is turnkey and includes all the elements described below:

Grade level, Topic, Title of the session
For each session, the school level, the topic and the title of the session are indicated.
Links to the programs of the Ministère
For educational interventions in school settings that refer to the official programs of the Ministère, links have been made with the Québec Education Program (MEES, 2023) (Broad areas of learning; Subject areas; Cross-curricular competencies), the recent Culture and Citizenship in Québec Program (MEQ, 2022) and the content in sexuality education proposed in 2018 (MEES).
Educational goals
The educational goals specify what the young people will learn in the various educational activities in the session.
Sequence
The sequence and instructions are clearly detailed for each session. Sessions are generally made up of various educational activities (e.g., situational exercises, quizzes, discussions, videos, etc.) and a conclusion. Activities may also include discussion questions and information for the students. In short, teachers and youth workers have everything they need to lead the session. This is a turnkey program. The entire process can be found in the slideshow accompanying the animation (Powerpoint).
Worksheets for the students Worksheets for the teachers
Worksheets for some of the educational activities are available as well as the answers sheets for the teacher's versions.
Links to educational videos
Educational videos are used in some of the sessions, with links to access them. It is possible that some of the videos will no longer be accessible online or be accessible through a new URL.

Slideshows (PowerPoint)

For each of the 20 sessions, the slideshows (PowerPoint) are available on our website www.hypersexualisation.uqam.ca. These slideshows make it much easier to lead the session (interesting visuals, educational activities and detailed content).

<https://hypersexualisation.uqam.ca/> - Volet outils pédagogiques en éducation à la sexualité - Be True to You.

Sexuality education sessions can also be led without using the PowerPoint.

We hope that our *Be True to You* program will allow teachers and youth workers to support young people in this essential process of developing self-understanding and self-assertiveness and encouraging relationships with others based on values of respect, equality and dignity.

Francine Duquet and the “Be True to You” project team.

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Preface

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*Sex Education Program
for 12 to 17 years old*



BE TRUE

TO YOU

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*Projet Outiller les jeunes face à l'hypersexualisation
Project: (Giving youth tools to deal with hypersexualization)*

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