

>> THE MAKING OF A VIDEO MOVIE BASED TEACHING STRATEGY ABOUT AIDS PREVENTION FOR PUPILS IN BELARUS AND THE REACTIONS OF THEIR TEACHERS

## Teenage Sex in Belarus: What Should Schools Teach Children?

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### Introduction

The increase of HIV/AIDS infections in the Ukrainian, Russian and Belarussian regions around Tsjernobyl is now faster than even in Africa. These regions in Eastern Europe are among the poorest of their countries, suffering an economic and social breakdown for many years since the nuclear disaster in 1986.

The origin of the explosion of HIV/AIDS in Belarus is found among the heroine addicts in the South-Eastern region *Gomel*, spreading infections via the repeated use of non sterilized needles by many different persons. In addition to this, the increase of infections of HIV was and is accelerated by unsafe sexual behavior.

Prevention is paramount to securing a healthy future. In the past students and teachers from INHOLLAND university have been engaged in several healthy-way-of-life studies in schools in Belarus. These studies concentrated on the investigation of student's ideas prior to teaching about issues such as food, drugs, alcohol and AIDS. Outcomes were used for the development of lesson materials which took the ideas found into account, thus drawing students via their own perceptions into a communicative discourse about the decisions they can take about their own health (Brinkman, 1998).

In the Netherlands, preventive schoolprograms about HIV/AIDS are embedded into general lessonseries about STD's (sexual transmissible diseases) and are part of the national curriculum. The general message here communicated is that you at the personal level have to decide upon having sexual contact or not. If you decide to do so, you have to use a condom for a healthy lifestyle. A religious minority like the Roman Catholic church in the Netherlands is officially against this approach but the majority of the population, including most of the church members do not share this objection.

In Belarus the approach is different. HIV/AIDS is not a topic in the school curriculum. Instead, each school has received one leaflet about HIV/AIDS its origins and dangers, some years ago.

Teachers are free how and to what extent they lecture about this issue. Moreover, in this spring the president of Belarus has sent a direct order to all school directors to forbid the use of the words like 'sex' and 'condoms' in schoolclasses. The very dominant Russian Orthodox church holds a comparative opinion and orders for sexual abstinence up until one is legally married.

We decided to develop a videomovie about a healthy way of communication in relations for 14-16 year old students that should include valid ideas of these students about sex and preservatives and that should evoke discussions about personal decisions about their (non)sexual behaviour.

### Methods

We took shootings for a videomovie containing ideas registered during interviews of Belarussian secondary school students about relations, health, sex and HIV/AIDS.

Interviews with experts and an HIV infected patient in Belarus have been registered too.

In the Netherlands a scenario has been developed into which these shootings had a place together with filmed information about sexual transmissible diseases and role plays about relations between boys and girls, played by Russian speaking actors.

In the movie composed via this scenario questions are inserted between scenes to evoke discussions about these topics in Belarussian classes.

The first version of the video has been made in Amsterdam and was tried out in Minsk. the reactions of teachers during an inservice course in Minsk have been registerd after viewing.

Language and some technical adoptions have been taken over resulting in the final cut.

## Script of the movie 'LOVE IS.....'

### Part 1

#### Leader

We hear the voices of children talking about being in love.  
 'Head over heels....'  
 'I can't eat anymore when it happens'  
 'Usually you know if the other one is in love with you'  
 'Love is taking care for each other, it's just like sport'  
 'Being in love is the best feeling there is'

### Part 1: Being in love

#### Voice-over

Trembling hands, shining eyes, not eating, butterflies in your stomach, who doesn't recognise the feeling?  
 Being in love is one the most wonderful things in life. When you're in love you live in a kind of dream and the only thing you can think about is him or her. You feel fantastic, the world is yours and you have a lot of energy. But where does this feeling come from?

#### Voice-over while showing animation of the brain

When you're in love there is a chemical reaction in the brains which produces f.i. dopamine and adrenalin in much more quantity than normal. This disbalances your body. They take away your sleep and your appetite. They also make you feel excited, energetic and happy.  
 Adrenalin makes your heart beat faster and makes your digestion slow down. ....And that's why you feel the butterflies in your stomach. So actually being love is just a chemical process which is hard to stop!

#### Drama

Marina: *When I look at him I see a very special person, he is so sweet...*

Alex: *From the first moment I saw her I was sold....*

Marina: *We have so much fun together!*

Alex: *First time we met we were at a birthday party of a friend...*

Marina: *There were sparks immediately*

Alex: *From that moment we were inseparable*

Marina: *This is forever, I thought...*

#### Interviews

The question 'What do you feel when you're in love?' shows on the screen. Then we see three short interviews with students telling what they feel when they are in love.  
 After the interviews the question 'What do you feel when you're in love?' shows on the screen again. The tape has to be stopped by the teachers and a discussion in the class follows.

### Part 2

#### Leader

We hear the voices of children talking about sex.  
 'The first time has to be special'  
 'You can do it your whole life'  
 'I only sleep with someone if I'm sure it's serious'  
 'Sex is for two persons who are very special for each other'

### Part 2: Relationships

#### Voice-over (happy couple)

If you're in love and you get a relationship with this person the only thing you want to do is be with him or her. You forget the whole world around you and you only have eye for this special person. You can express your love for this person by hugging, kissing or even by making love. But how can you be sure that you are ready to have sex? Besides, making love to somebody is not something that you do with everybody.....

#### Drama

Marina: *It took us three months to sleep together. Alex wanted to have sex after the second week, but I was not ready yet.*

#### Flashback

Alex: *Don't you want to?*

Marina: *I've only known you for two weeks!*

Alex: *But don't you know that I love you?*

Marina: *It's too early for me! I don't sleep with just anyone!*

Alex: *Am I just somebody?*

Marina: *You are not listening to me!*

Question: *"Alex wants to go on with Marina. How does he try to get Marina that far?"*

Question 2: *"What reasons does Marina tell not to go that far?"*

Marina: *You are not listening to me!*

Alex: *Don't you love me?*

Marina: *Look, when I say I don't want to I mean it!*

Alex: *I've heard you.*

Marina: *Well, if it has to be like this then I don't want it at all.*

Alex: *I didn't mean it like that.....*

Marina: *It is my first time, Alex!*

Alex: *It's mine too.....*

Marina: *Really? Well, it will happen when I am ready, understood?*

Alex: *Oke.*

Marina is full on screen again and continues with her story

Marina: *After three months, I was ready so we did it.*

Marina: *I was afraid it would be painful but he was very gentle. He was so sweet...*

Marina: *Still it was scary, that's why it is good to know each other.*

#### Interviews

The question 'When do you make love to somebody?' shows on the screen. Then we see three short interviews with students

giving answers on this question.

After the interviews de question 'When do you make love to somebody?' shows on the screen again. The tape has to be stopped by the teachers and a discussing in the class follows.

### Part 3

#### Leader

We hear the voices of children talking about sex and safe sex.  
'I don't want to have children yet'  
'Do you think I want a sexual transmitted disease?'  
'I always make sure I have one with me'  
'I have save sex or no sex at all'

### Part 3: Intimacy

#### Drama

Alex: *It took us three months to sleep together....*

Alex: *I wanted to have sex earlier, but after all I'm glad that we waited.*

Alex: *Now I'm at least sure that I'm special to her and that she won't just sleep with everybody.*

Alex: *We are dating 1.5 year and we always have safe sex.*

Alex: *No condom means no sex by Marina and trust me, sometimes that can be very difficult.*

Flashback

Marina: *Hold on! Shit! I don't have condoms! Do you have any?*

Alex: *Shit, I left them at home! Didn't I left some here?*

Marina: *No....*

Alex: *But let's just do it! I don't want to stop now! And besides, you're taking the pill!*

Question: *What do you think that Alex and Marina are going to do? What would you suggest them?*

Alex: *What?*

Marina: *You'll never know! I don't want to get a sexually transmitted disease....*

Alex: *You're right. Let's not take any risk*

Alex: *So what now?*

Marina: *I don't know.... I thought I saw one in my brother's room the other day.. Let me check!*

Marina walks out of the room. Shortly after that she is standing at the door with a package of condoms in her hand. She jumps at the bed and Alex and Marina continue with kissing.

Alex is full on screen again and continues with his story

Alex: *At moments like these the temptation is very big to have sex without a condom.*

Alex: *After all I'm glad Marina was smart enough to say no.*

Alex: *Maybe that one decision saved us a lot of trouble. Even when you know each other that well, a sexual transmitted disease is easy to get!*

#### Doctor

STD is a short for sexual transmitted disease.

Sexual transmitted diseases are contagious diseases and you get them in several ways. You can get them by having unsafe sex, which means having sex without a condom.

Another way to get infected is by using dirty needles or shots when you use drugs.

You also can get a sexual transmitted disease as a result of unhygienic tattoos or piercings.

During pregnancy a baby can get a sexual transmitted disease in the whom.

The nasty thing about transmitted sexual diseases is that you can have them for a long time while you're not aware of it. There is a big change that if you're going to bed with somebody that has a transmitted disease you will not notice.

It's possible that you get complaints after weeks, months or even years.

There are a lot of different kind of sexual transmitted diseases and they all can have serious consequences.

De most familiar are Chlamydia, Genital warts, Herpes, Gonorrhoe, Hepatitis B and Syphilis.

You can prevent getting these diseases by always using a condom.

You will notice the consequences of these diseases. Among other things females can get infertile.

As a matter of fact most sexual transmitted diseases can be cured if you go to the doctor for help.

However, AIDS can not be cured and in the end you will die.

#### Animation aids

AIDS is a short for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It's a disease that damages the body immune system.

Your Immune system is your bodies way of fighting off sickness and infection.

T-cells are a part of the immune system. They stand guard over your body.

A virus called HIV or human immunodeficiency virus can cause particularly trouble for your immune system.

In stead of trying to get into your body it attacks the T cells directly.

When enough T-cells are destroyed the immune system is weakened.

Illnesses that your body can normally fight off like the cold or the flu can get in and cause serious health problems.

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS.

A person is set to have AIDS when the immune system reaches a very low number of T-cells and it gets to the point when the body can't fight off infections.

You don't catch HIV like you get a cold. You can't get it from hugging, holding hands sharing a sandwich or sitting next to someone who has the virus and it is not spread by mosquitoes or swimming pools.

HIV is only spread when the bodily fluids of one person comes in contact with the inside of another person's body.

Most people can drag HIV through unprotected sex and intravenous drug abuse. And the disease can pass from the mother to a fetus in the womb.

There is no cure yet but progress has been made with treatment. People with HIV are living much longer lives now than they did 15 years ago.

Sometimes treatment will work for a while and then the virus will mutate or change so that the medicine doesn't recognize it.

Doctors and scientists are working hard on a vaccine to prevent AIDS just like the ones we used to get to prevent measles and mumps.

But there is still a lot of work to be done before a vaccine or a cure can be found.

#### **Voice-over (numbers on screen)**

All over the world 40,000,000 people have been infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Every minute 10 people are being infected, which means 600 an hour, 14,000 a day, 420,000 a month and 5 million a year.

20 million people have died on AIDS in each day 8000 die. Also in our country the number of infected increases.

#### **Voice-over (Intro to the interview with Tatsiana)**

Tatsiana is 28 years old and has been infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. In spite of that fact she lives a happy life. She has a child, a steady job and she enjoys life. But how does she live with her disease and how is she being treated by the people around her?

#### **Interview Tatsiana**

How did you get infected with the HIV virus?

*I'm seropositive. I'm not sure how I was infected, probably by having unsafe sex but I also used drugs. You are making this movie for children, so I won't explain in detail.*

What were your feelings when you heard that you were infected?  
*I just couldn't believe it. Every human being has an instinct of surviving and the first thing that crossed my mind was that a mistake was made. I wanted to redo the test immediately because I couldn't accept it.*

*The moment I truly realised that I was infected made me feel empty inside. It's just like dropping in a ravine and nobody understands what you really feel because it's your problem.*

How did the people in your direct environment respond to your illness? Did you lose any friends?

*The people that I'm involved with right now accept me. My family has to accept, it's just the way it is. A lot of people turned away hearing I was infected. You get to know your real friends in difficult situations and this was a good way to find out.*

How far has your life changed since you got infected?

*It's hard to say. I don't know whether I have changed because of my illness or simply because I grew older. I have found a job that I like very much and I enjoy the things I do.*

What would you want to say to adolescents that are having unsafe sex?

*Always use protection and make sure you won't get pregnant or get sexually transmitted diseases. Before you start with sex or drugs you have to be aware of the consequences, even when it's your first love. Besides HIV there are a lot of other diseases and bad things which have consequences. You can get infertile or get pregnant. A lot of pregnant young girls are having an abortion, but also an abortion has consequences. If you are having a child as a young girl, how responsible can you be? You have to take care of that child, raise him or her and give a lot of time. How on earth can someone of 16 years be a good parent? It's so stupid to have unsafe sex, it's like walking on a speedway.*

The question 'What do you think about Tatsiana?' shows on screen. The tape has to be stopped by the teachers and a discussion in the class follows.

#### **Interviews**

The question 'What do you think about having unsafe sex?' shows on the screen. Then we see three short interviews with students giving answers on this question.

After the interviews the question 'What do you think about having unsafe sex?' shows on the screen again. The tape has to be stopped by the teachers and a discussion in the class follows.

#### **Part 4**

##### **Leader**

We hear the voices of children talking about love.

'Love is the desire to share everything'

'Love is always being there'

'Love is without limits'

'Love is the most beautiful thing there is'

#### **Part 4: Love is.....**

##### **Drama**

Marina: *When I look at him I see a very special person, he is so sweet...*

Alex: *From the first moment I saw her I was sold....*

Marina: *He really understands me. He respects me and that is very important to me.*

Alex: *I really love Marina, I don't think I can live without her.*

Marina: *I really love Marina, I don't think I can live without her.*

Alex: *This is real love! I know for sure! I think this will last forever!*

Marina: *Just don't forget one thing! Whatever you do, do it safe!*

Alex: *If you are old enough to have sex, you're also old enough to buy condoms!*

Marina: *What is the difficulty? You can buy them at the kiosk and for that kind of money you don't take any risk, do you?*

Alex: *And trust me, it is much nicer to make love when you don't have to worry about anything!*

**Voice-over**

Make sure you won't get a transmitted sexual diseases! It's better to start having sex when you're old enough. After all it's something special that you don't share with just anyone. Your body is your most precious possession. Do you want to have more information about transmitted sexual diseases or do you have any questions?

Feel free to contact the Belarusian Public Association Positive Movement. They will give answers to all your questions!

**Discussion**

The movie have been evaluated two times in Minsk Belarus. The first version in may with schoolteachers at an inservice course and with a group of youth counselors at an UNESCO meeting. The second version, with minor, technical adoptions , was commented upon at a summercamp of UNESC youth, by students (14 -16 years old ) and by staffmembers at the camping location just outside Minsk.

The students still some technical comments but accepted the message of the movie, not to go into a sexual relation unless condoms are used as preservatives.

Teachers, counselors and camp-staff, however, formulated quite equally tuned objections against the message of the movie. They saw an invitation to free sex coming out of the movie while their own educational policy was to plea for abstention of sexual intercourse before monogamous marriage.

Although medical data from schooldoctors in Mink indicate that 90% of 14 year old girls are no virgin anymore, as the medical doctor at the inservice couse mentioned, the teachers did not change their opinion on this subject.

The second line of comments from the adult groups was related to the interviewed HIV infected woman. Even after stressing that she was in reality a HIV patient, half of the camping staff believed still she was an actress. Teachers objected against the smile she sometimes showed during the interview, as if not accepting a HIV/AIDS patient to laugh.

The general conclusion we draw from these reactions is that elaborate inservice training of teachers is needed to let the movie been accepted as an appropriate teaching tool for school use. In collaboration with inservice istitutes , we plan to develop such courses in the future.

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Marcella Meijer and Wouter Blommenstein wrote the script, took the moviesthots and assembled the movie skillfully.

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**Reference**

Brinkman, F.G. (1998), *Living in Contaminated Areas- Summary of a multidisciplinary project in Belarus* (EC Report).

