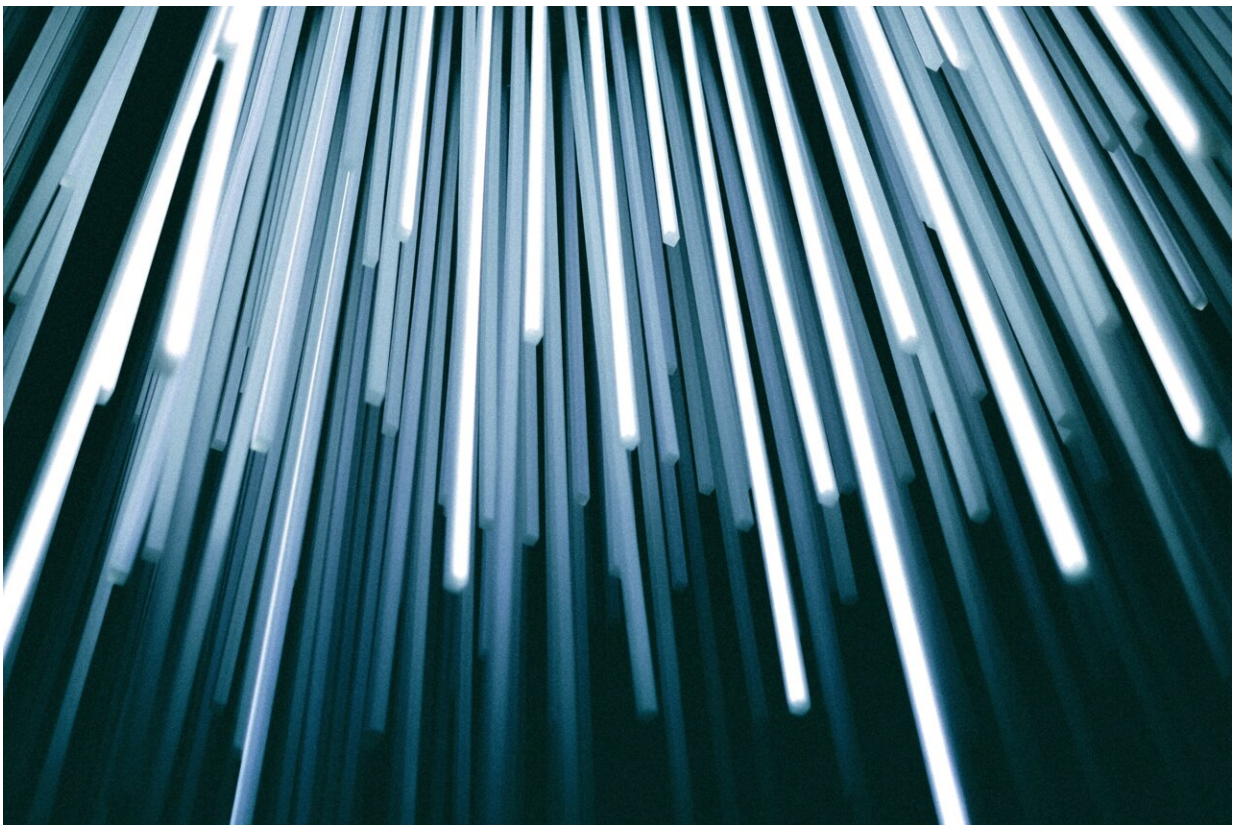


Teaching young people about sex is too important to get wrong: These 5 videos hit the mark

April 22 2021, by Louise Moana Kolff



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Two videos were removed this week from the Australian government's [recently released](#) sexuality education resource for schools.

The government [released the Good Society resource](#) in mid April, which consists of more than 350 materials including videos, digital stories and podcasts to teach respectful relationships in schools. The two videos that were removed had been [widely criticized](#) by politicians, sexuality educators, and [sexual assault support groups](#) for missing the mark on [sex education](#).

One clip, showing a couple on a film set that looks like a retro diner, aims to teach about consent through the metaphor of a milkshake. After a young man rejects a young woman's milkshake, she smears milkshake in his face, saying sentence "Drink it all!".

The scene is followed by somewhat confusing diagrams of a football field with a voiceover explaining ideas about shared decision making.

This is the government's new video to educate teenagers on consent... and honestly, I think I actually know less about the issue after watching this. What's going on?

Originally reported by [@samanthamaiden](#)

Full video here -<https://t.co/hzxSFGWvKq>
pic.twitter.com/MflbzhDPZP

— Matilda Boseley (@MatildaBoseley) [April 19, 2021](#)

I'm a visual culture researcher interested in how information about sexuality and relationships can effectively be communicated to young people. I have compiled several examples of sexual education videos that better meet the needs of young people.

What works in sexual education?

The milkshake metaphor in the Good Society [video](#) is confusing because it is meant to teach about sexual consent, but doesn't ever mention sex. Nor does it explain what the metaphor stands for.

Young people already see an explicit and distorted representation of sex in pornography. [Generally, boys start watching](#) around the age of 13 and girls around 16. So, it seems antiquated to produce sexuality education resources that don't speak directly about sex.

Research shows straightforward language is best when teaching young people about sexuality and relationships.

Just watched the milkshake video and first impression is that if you're going to explain consent you should probably use the word sex... and, also not compare it to a milkshake or getting pizza

— Tali Aualiitia (@talialiauliitia) [April 19, 2021](#)

The Good Society resource attempts to use humor to engage the audience. [Research shows](#) humor can be an effective strategy in public health campaigns. However, [sustained behavior change](#) relies on easily understood messages, a feeling the information is personally relevant to the targeted audience, and a sense of self-efficacy (the individual knowing how to act on the information they see).

Because the Good Society resource was confusing, the humor was confusing as well. And the video failed to create a clear sense of personal relevance and self-efficacy.

Here are videos that work better.

Australia—rhinos and astronauts

The Practical Guide to Love, Sex and Relationships was developed by expert sexuality education researchers at the Australian Research Center in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) at La Trobe University.

[The resource](#) includes a series of humorous but straightforward animated videos dealing with sex, pornography, relationships, consent and gender.

One video for students in years 9 and 10, illustrates sexual desire and consent by using a couple of astronauts and then a couple of pirates.

Though these depictions may sound as confusing as the milkshake metaphor, the metaphors in these videos are clearly explained. And the use of colloquial language provides a sense of relevance. The narrators of the videos talk directly to young people:

"You're 14, 15, 16 ... there's a lot of shit going on," says a female narrator.

"That looks like electricity", a male narrator says when lightning bolts are drawn coming towards the head of a boy.

"It's a metaphor for all the shit going on," the female narrator responds.

The drawings are informal and engaging, as opposed to the football field diagrams used in The Good Society resource.

The video ends with a set of questions teenagers can ask themselves to gauge whether they feel comfortable in a situation. Clear advice helps create a sense of self-efficacy.

Another video, with the same two narrators discusses the stereotypes women and men have to grapple with. It uses a rhinoceros as a metaphor for sexual desire, with a man and woman on top.

The male voice says: "I'm the guy, I'm supposed to be 'oh yeah, can't wait to get in her pants.'"

Then the female voice says: "And I'm the girl, I'm supposed to be 'umm, I don't know, ummm, I'm not sure umm ...'"

Sweden's explicit cartoon

Scandinavia is known for leading the way in progressive sexuality education. The [low teenage pregnancy rates](#) in Scandinavian countries (Norway and the Netherlands have some of the lowest teen rates in the world and Sweden's is roughly one-fourth of Great Britain's) are regularly touted as proof of its effectiveness.

In Sweden, an [animated video](#) produced by The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education follows four teenagers receiving an unexpected lesson from a substitute teacher.

As they ask the teacher questions, many topics are discussed from the appearance of genitalia, to respect in relationships and STDs.

The animation includes a scene where two of the students try to have sex, but fumble with condoms and nerves. The scene seems very real, and would be relevant to the lived experience of many teens.

Incorporated into the narrative are gay and lesbian storylines, making it relevant to a diverse audience. The fact the story is animated allows for more explicitness, without moving into the realm of pornography.

The video has an age restriction but can be [viewed on YouTube](#).

New Zealand's porn stars

Although not part of a school education program, the New Zealand government campaign, [Keep it Real Online](#), aims to help parents navigate digital safety. A video shown on television is a good example of how humor can be used effectively to approach sensitive topics.

In the clip two porn stars visit a mother, saying her son has been watching them on every device possible. What makes the video great is its ability to be funny and engaging. And the same time, it allows the viewer to identify with the shocked boy, who is told the porn stars would never act like that in real life, and with the mother, who realizes it is time to have frank conversation with her son about sex.

The humor is disarming, but the lesson is clear: Porn is scripted and performed by actors, and should not be perceived as real life.

And then there's the cup of tea

And finally, there's the very well-known video which explains consent through the metaphor of offering someone a cup of tea. Again, it clearly identifies the metaphor in the beginning, and goes through the idea of asking someone for sex, but instead replacing sex with tea. If you ask someone if they want a cup of tea and they're not sure if they do, then the video advises: "You can make them a cup of tea or not, but be aware they might not drink it, and if they don't drink it then—and this is the important part—don't make them drink it."

It is crucial we get sexuality education right for teenagers who need to not only navigate sexuality and relationships, but also deal with the proliferation of pornography and technology.

If we want to teach teenagers about sexual consent, we will need to talk about sex not milkshakes.

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