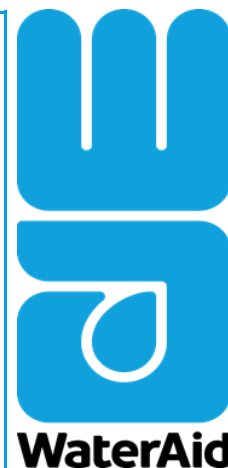


Guess what it is: What do we call periods?

Background:

WaterAid is an international not-for-profit organisation, determined to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. Every month, 1.8 billion people across the world have a period – but millions have to manage theirs without essential clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene knowledge. Not having access to these can be both embarrassing and unsafe – and can have far-reaching impacts for women and girls, acting as a disadvantage in their lives as they are forced to stay home every month, missing vital chances to go to school, earn a living, and to take control of their futures.



Time needed:

15 minutes

Aim:

Discover how the language and words used to talk about periods make it a taboo subject.

To pledge to tackle the stigma surrounding periods.

Materials:

Large sheet of paper stuck to the wall or a whiteboard.

Pens - one for each student

Learning Objective:

To think about how people talk about periods and whether this is helpful in making it an easy topic to talk about.

What to do:

1. Explain that periods are often seen as a 'taboo' subject. When people consider something to be taboo or private, they often call it by different names to avoid mentioning the topic or word directly.
2. In groups of 4-5, ask students to take 2 minutes to think of names they have heard of, or have used for periods (e.g. Aunty Flo, red lights, menstruation, time of the month, rag week etc.)
3. Ask someone from each group to write the words and phrases from their group on the paper/board at the front of the room. Ask students to read out some of the words. Ask if they seem serious? Funny? Is it clear what is being referred to?
4. Explain that by having different names for periods, it makes them seem like something that should be secret, hidden away and never mentioned. For example shops selling products don't use the word 'period' instead they use sanitary or hygiene. It can also be very confusing to know which word to use when you need to talk about periods.
5. Ask how using words such as 'sanitary or hygiene' might make it difficult to find period products or talk about them? Can they think of different phrases that could be used to help find the products they need and help them talk about periods?
6. Explain that because language around periods is important in making them less taboo, we want there to be a change in the way we talk about periods! Such as calling for the language to change from hygiene or sanitary products, to period or menstrual products. This will help stop embarrassment about periods as the words are being used openly.
7. Tell students that together you will be working to help make periods more of an open topic - to encourage period pride and to tackle some of the issues surrounding periods.
8. If they want to take this further, they could think of ways that they could encourage others. Who could they tell? How could they do it?