

Resolving teenage sexuality through family dialogue: a short role play

SALESI F. KATOANGA*

Narrator

Openness among the family members will lead to better understanding and closeness to each other. Hence, frequent dialogue among all members of the family must be encouraged within the boundaries of accepted values and cultures.

The characters

Sione	: Father
Mele	: Mother
Tevita	: Grandfather
'Ana	: Eldest daughter (17 years)
Lose	: Daughter (15 years)
Pita	: Son, youngest (13 years)

The story

Sione (father) and Mele (mother) had three children, 'Ana the eldest is 17 years old. Lose is 15 years and the youngest Pita is 13 years old. They lived together with their grandfather, Tevita (John's father) at Matu. Sione is a carpenter and he is a well respected member of the community. He is also a lay preacher in the local church.

Mele is a schoolteacher in the local primary school and she is also the chairperson of the village women's (development) committee. Tevita (grandfather) is a retired policeman. 'Ana, the eldest daughter is a Form V student at the Sangato High School. Lose is also attending the same school and is only one grade behind her sister 'Ana. Pita is attending the village primary school as a Grade VIII student.

The family is a very 'close knit one', they are very happy and seem to have no problems at all as far as their socio-

economic needs are concerned. The family is a very strong supporter of community activities and development and they are well respected by the villagers for that particular reason.

'Ana, the eldest daughter, is very active in the village 'church youth club' and is currently the club's secretary. 'Ana had been dating Tom from the same village, without the knowledge of her family, for over four months. Pita is a 19 year old 'high school dropout'. Pita is unemployed but he is a very good fisherman and often joined his father (who is known as the best fisherman in the village) on various fishing trips. In one of 'Ana and Pita's meetings, they had sexual intercourse. Most of the community in Motu, except 'Ana's family, knew that these young people (Pita and 'Ana) had been meeting secretly.

As a result of these secret meetings between these two young people, a rumour was spreading amongst the villagers that, not only Pita and 'Ana are lovers, but also, Ann is pregnant. 'Ana's schoolmates also heard and spread the rumour. Finally the rumour reached 'Ana's mother. Mele then confronted her daughter ('Ana) and asked her whether the rumour was true or not. 'Ana, first of all, denied that she had been secretly meeting Pita. However upon further questioning, 'Ana finally admitted that she had been meeting Pita on numerous occasions but had sex with him only once. She denied being pregnant. Mele (mother) informed her husband (Sione) about her discussion with 'Ana and that she ('Ana) admitted 'having sex with Pita'. Sione is well known for his patience and understanding so, instead of confronting 'Ana, he decided to call a family meeting to discuss what he called an unexpected 'tornado' that had landed in the family's home. The family had always solved all their problems through family dialogue and this particular issue calls for a 'close family dialogue'.

Sione, as the 'head of the family', conducted the meeting.

Sione's part

Sione opened the family meeting by outlining its objective (see story). He then invited the family members to voice their view on this important issue, in the following order:

1. Tevita : grandfather
2. Lose : second daughter

* UNFPA Country Support Team, WHO, Private Mail Bag, Suva, Fiji.

3. Pita : youngest son
4. Mele : mother
5. 'Ana : daughter
6. Sione : father

Sione will speak last and sum up the discussion and offer a solution

Format

A group of six or six persons will be selected to act as one of the family members. The story will be given to each group or person. However, only the 'part' to be played by a particular actor (role player) will be given to him or her so that each role player or actor will not know beforehand what the other is going to say. Each actor could change a few words here and there but main theme of his/her part should not be changed. (If there are six groups, then each group could study together in private the 'part' (role) that is being allocated to them before they selected someone to represent them in the play.

Tevita (the grandfather)

'Ana, you have already admitted your mistake, yet we do not know whether you are pregnant or not, therefore there is nothing else here to discuss, or do, but to approach Pila's family and arrange for a wedding immediately. If Pila and his family decide to refuse our proposal for a marriage, then the police should be notified because 'Ana has just turned 17 years old two days ago. In this respect, Pila had sex with her when she was still 16 years old and that is having sex with a 'minor'. Failing that, I am prepared to go to Pila's family and beat this young man up.

The whole of Motu is gossiping about this affair and is causing us great embarrassment, besides being hurtful. The best solution, here, is marriage and that means right now without any further delay.

Rose (second daughter)

I do not agree with grandfather that marriage is the answer as the whole population of our island will interpret it as a 'forced marriage'. Besides, Pila probably does not want to get married with 'Ana; all he wanted was a good time and 'Ana gave it to him willingly.

I do not blame Pila at all. 'Ana should be blamed for everything, including the dragging of our family's good name into the mud. I know 'Ana is my sister and I love her very much, but what she did is unforgivable. Who knows, 'Ana could be pregnant and she is lying to us. To tell you all the truth, I am ashamed to go to school any more or even

walk along the streets because of the people's gossips and making remarked that they made towards us.

I think the best solution here, is to stop her from going to school and send her to Niva to stay with our mum's parents. This will give her a chance to start a new live and save our family from further embarrassment. Furthermore, 'Ana could look after mum's parents for they are now old and have no one to take care of them.

Pita (youngest son)

I do not fully understand what this discussion is all about, but I think that grandfather's suggestion is the best. 'Ana should marry Pila; he is a good boy and everyone in the village likes him. He is a good fisherman and he should make a good husband for my sister.

On the other hand, is 'Ana does not want to get married, then forget about it. Let 'Ana do what she wants to do. In regards to what you all called as rumours and gossips, why should we care about them? We kids hear all these funny stories every day. Today the rumours are about 'Ana; tomorrow it will be someone else.

Pila probably does not want to get married with 'Ana; all he wanted was a good time and 'Ana gave it to him willingly.

I love my sister and I do not want 'Ana to be sent away to mum's parents. I want her to remain here with us as a family. 'Ana is helping me a lot with my school work, besides being

so kind and looks after me everywhere we go. I do not want her to go away anywhere.

Mele (mother)

'Ana, I do not know what came over you. Your father and I had brought you up in the best possible Christian advice and teaching. You even hold a very responsible position in our village as a secretary of the Christian Youth Club. All our friends had remarked repeatedly in the past about how lucky we are to have a daughter like you. Most of the youths in the village including your own kid brother and sister are looking up to you for advice and help. You are even classed as a model of good behaviour for all of them. What you have done is beyond my comprehension.

I think the best thing to do, is to take you to see a doctor, to check whether you are pregnant or not. If you are pregnant, then we should do what grandfather has proposed and that is for you to marry Pila. If Pila's family refused, then you will have to stay home and face the shame that you have brought upon yourself and us. Even if you are not pregnant, you are not going to school any more, you will stay at home. I will have to consider also the suggestion by Lose to send you to live with my parents.

My fellow teachers in school and the members of the Village Women's Committee are talking about you behind my back. I think I will have to resign my post as a teacher, as well as from my post as the chairperson of the Village Women's Committee. At this stage I cannot think straight as I am still shocked from all this unexpected hurtful event that landed like a tornado in the middle of our home.

'Ana (eldest daughter and the focus of attention)

Mum, dad, grandfather, Lose and Pita, I am sincerely sorry for what I have done. I have made a mistake that brought shame to our family. For that, I beg you all to forgive me, but you are the only ones I have at this stage of my life.

Mum, I am definitely not pregnant for I just had my monthly period last week. Besides, Pila and I are not seeing or meeting each other any more. It is all over between us.

Mum and Dad, I still want to continue with my study. I know that it is going to be very difficult for me and for all of us for that matter for the people and the students will continue to talk. However, I am prepared to face all the talks, if you, my only loved ones are going to help me overcome this difficult period of my life. I need your understanding and love. Lose, I am very sorry that I caused you too much pain, hurt and shame in school and even when you are amongst your friends, but I promise you it will never happen again. I have learnt my lesson through my mistake and in the hard way.

Grandfather, I do not want to get married as yet and I want to remain here with you all. This is my home. I have gone through the hardest time of my young life during these past few weeks. I was confused, ashamed and very hurt not only for what I have done but for what I have brought upon you all and especially defaming the good name of our family. Taking my own life had crossed my mind a couple of times; running away from home was a constant thought; crying myself to sleep was a constant act of pain and even loneliness was also a close companion.

Mum and dad, I thank you for calling this meeting. It makes me realise and understand how much pain I have caused to each and every one of you. At the same time, it gives me the opportunity to seek your forgiveness and that I am still part of this wonderful family in spite of my wrong doing.

My future will depend on your decision today, but please give me one more chance to make something useful out of my life by allowing me to continue with my education.

Sione (the last to speak)

Thank you very much for your contribution and the frankness of your opinions. I realised that we have all been hurt by this unfortunate occasion. 'Ana, when your mother first informed me about your 'misbehaviour', I was angry, hurt, confused, ashamed and embarrassed all at the same time, but perhaps at this point in time, 'Ana is probably hurt the most.

While you all voice your opinions, it dawned on me that if we had to turn our back on 'Ana, especially when she needed us the most, who else in this world would accept and love her.

'Ana had admitted her mistake and she has been punished enough, through humiliation from the community, therefore, I would like to ask you all to forgive her. The damage has been done and I am certain that 'Ana will never forget this experience for the rest of her life. It is now our duty to give her all the assistance, love and understanding that she needs to restore herself-confidence and go on with her young life.

Mum (Mele), please forgive your daughter as she needs us all now more than at any other time of her young life - help her as a mother.

I have also decided after listening to your contributions that 'Ana will continue on with her school as usual. We would ignore all gossips and do not let any of these false rumours to interfere with our lives. Lose, your sister is not pregnant and she needs a friend in school and you are her best friend.

'Ana, our decision today does not mean that we approve what you have done, far from it. Our decision is based on our love for you and hopefully you have learned your lesson and as from now try and make use of the opportunity given to you.

Malo. The meeting is over.