

Relationships and friendships across cultures: Using 'story telling' to engage new international students in conversations about friendships, relationships and sexuality

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Talking about sexuality, relationships and friendships may be perceived as a 'taboo' topic of conversation in many cultures. This poses a challenge for engaging international students and in providing education on sexual health and the negotiation of healthy relationships. As part of their orientation activities, commencing international students at UniSA were invited to attend a forum on relationships and friendships across cultures on 14 February 2007. The forum was held as part of Valentine's Day celebrations and Sexual Health Awareness Week and was followed by a morning tea where SHine SA provided information about sexual health and relationships.

This paper describes an educative model that utilises 'story telling' to engage international students in discussion about relationships and friendships in their new University and cultural environment. It offers a format by which students can seek information in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner. It also explores the possibilities for student engagement and the shared moments that occur outside the formal classroom environment.