

Is It Abuse If...?

A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum

Fostering responsibility by respecting young people's rights to honest sexuality education.

NSES ALIGNMENT:

By the end of 12th grade, students will be able to:

CHR.10.INF.1 – Evaluate strategies to end an unhealthy relationship, including when situations may require adult and/or professional support

IV.10.CC.2 – Describe the types of abuse (e.g., physical, emotional, psychological, financial, and sexual) and the cycle of violence as it relates to sexual abuse, domestic violence, dating violence, and gender-based violence*

IV.10.CC.3 – Explain why a victim/survivor of interpersonal violence, including sexual violence, is never to blame for the actions of the perpetrator

IV.10.IC.1 – Demonstrate ways to support a fellow student who is being sexually harassed or abused, or is perpetuating unhealthy or coercive behavior

TARGET GRADE: Grade 11 Lesson 3

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- White board and markers
- Laptop or desktop computer and internet connection
- LCD projector and screen
- Speakers to project sound from video
- Five sheets of newsprint paper
- Five markers
- Extra pencils in case students don't have their own
- Masking tape
- Worksheet: "Is It Abuse If...?" – one per student

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

- Either download the video, "The Signs," from Vimeo <https://vimeo.com/85676862>, or ask your IT person to make sure that URL is unblocked for use in class.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe at least two characteristics of five different types of relationship abuse. [Knowledge]
2. Explain what, in their own opinion, does and does not constitute relationship abuse. [Knowledge, Affect]
3. Name one online and one hotline resource teens can use to get help if they or someone they know is in an abusive relationship. [Knowledge]

A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE:

Language is really important and we've intentionally been very careful about our language throughout this curriculum. You may notice language throughout the curriculum that seems less familiar - using the pronoun "they" instead of "her" or "him" and using gender neutral labels such as person and partners rather than boyfriend or girlfriend. This is intended to make the curriculum inclusive of all genders and gender identities and to recognize that a person of any gender can be in an unhealthy relationship.

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1: Say, "There are a lot of myths out there about sexuality and relationships – particularly as they relate to teens. One myth is that relationship abuse doesn't happen in teen relationships. That's what we're going to talk about today. Actually, statistics show that relationship abuse of all kinds is as prevalent in teen relationships as it is in adult relationships. Often, people can't always tell whether their relationship is abusive or whether they're just going through a rough time with a partner. We're going to figure that out today, along with what to do when you realize you're in an unhealthy or abusive relationship."

Say, "There are a number of different categories of relationship abuse: Physical, Emotional, Psychological, Sexual and Financial." As you name these, write them on the board. "Physical abuse is exactly what it sounds like – hurting someone physically in some way. Emotional abuse is making someone feel bad about themselves by taking away

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their sense of self or self-esteem. Psychological abuse is using threats or intimidation to frighten someone or make them feel like they're losing touch with reality. Sexual abuse is similar to physical abuse, although the abuse is sexual in nature. Finally, financial abuse is when the finances in a relationship – or a person's potential to earn or have money – are controlled by one person. Let's explore what each of these mean." (5 minutes)

STEP 2: Count the class off by fives and assign each group one type of abuse. Give each group a blank sheet of flipchart paper and a marker. Say, "Given the definitions I just shared, please work in your groups to come up with some specific behaviors that would occur under your category. For example, under the physical abuse category would be 'hitting.' Each group will come up with their own unique lists, but there may be some overlap from time to time." Answer any questions and tell the class they have about five minutes in which to complete their brainstorming. (8 minutes)

STEP 3: Stop the groups after about 5 minutes. Ask each group to present what they came up with. Do this by asking one group to contribute one or two of their answers, then go to the next group and ask them to do the same. Continue around the room until all ideas are shared.

Sample responses should include:

PHYSICAL

- Hitting
- Kicking
- Slapping
- Punching
- Pinching
- Restraining
- Choking
- Blocking their way

EMOTIONAL

- Criticizing the person's appearance or intelligence
- Telling the person that no one else would ever want to be with them
- Flirting with other people in front of the person
- Using what they know makes the other person feel vulnerable in an attempt to make them feel worse
- Sharing sexy photos of the other person without their consent

PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Threatening to hurt the other person
- Threatening to hurt people they know or care about (or pets)
- Texting nonstop and expecting the other person to text back by a certain time
- Threatening to hurt yourself if the other person doesn't do what you want
- Spreading rumors about the person

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SEXUAL

Rape

Forcing the other person to do anything sexual they don't want to do

Making the other person watch porn

Sharing sexy photos of the other person without their consent

Refusing to practice safer sex

FINANCIAL

Controlling the money in the relationship

Stealing from the other person

Telling the other person they need to spend time with you instead of going to work

Keeping the other person from going to or finishing school, which limits their ability to earn money

As you go through the lists, ask other groups if they have anything they would add. Ask students what they notice about the lists. Say, "It can be relatively easy to come up with a list of behaviors – especially when we're not in the relationship in the moment. However, sometimes abusive situations aren't so clear." (14 minutes)

STEP 4: Ask students to return to their original seats. Distribute the worksheet, "Is It Abuse If...?" Tell students to read each statement and decide whether they think what is described is abusive, and to indicate their decision by circling the response on the sheet. Tell them they have about 5 minutes in which to do this.

Once everyone has finished, divide the class into groups of four. Instruct students to go through each scenario and discuss their answers. Tell them they can change their answers if they wish. Allow for about 10 minutes for their small group discussions.

Start processing the activity by asking, "What was it like to do that? What was [fill in students' responses] about it?"

Ask students whether they found any of the statements particularly easy to discuss and/or agreed on and why. Then ask them to talk about some that were more challenging to discuss and/or disagreed on and why.

Point out that the gender(s) of the partners were not revealed in the examples. What did you picture in these relationships? Who was an abuser? Who was being abused? Would your responses have changed based on whether the characters were one gender or another? (17 minutes)

STEP 5: Show the video, "The Signs," from <https://vimeo.com/85676862>, stopping it at 3:17 so the students can read the list of signs. Let them know that this number is specific to NY State but the National Domestic Violence Hotline is 1.800.799.SAFE (7233) and the local Dating Violence organization is (get handouts or print local organization's website if possible)

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Say, "If you or someone you know were in a relationship like any of these, what would you do or advise them to do?" In most cases, students will say, "Dump the other person," or "ask someone for help." Ask students for examples of people to whom a young person in an unhealthy or abusive relationship can go for help, probing for parent(s)/caregiver(s), teachers, coaches, friend's parent/caregiver, etc.

Say, "Sometimes, people don't feel they can talk with someone face-to-face. They may feel ashamed of having been in an abusive relationship. They may blame themselves or feel responsible to fix it. A person who has been victimized should be reminded that it's not their fault and that all abuse and violence are the responsibility of the abuser. Depending on the gender or genders of the people involved in the relationship, the person being abused may be even less likely to disclose that they had been abused and to seek help. So, an anonymous website or hotline can encourage people to be more honest and get the help they need."

(Write on the board - include any local dating violence prevention resources)

- The National Domestic Violence Hotline is 1.800.799.SAFE (7233)
- Text Love Is to 22522 - LovelsRespect.org - Teen relationship information
- Text Home 741741 - CrisisTextLine.org - Any kind of crisis

Answer any questions. Let students know that you and the school counselor are available to talk if they have any questions they'd prefer to ask one-on-one. (6 minutes)

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

Defining and categorizing the types of relationship abuse will achieve the first learning objective. The "Is It Abuse If...?" activity will accomplish the second learning objective. The teacher sharing the "Love is Respect" contact information at the end will accomplish the third objective.

HOMEWORK:

None.

Note: The activity, "Is It Abuse If...?" was created by Elizabeth Schroeder, EdD, MSW, and then subsequently published in the American Journal of Sexuality Education in 2005. This is an adaptation of that activity.

Worksheet: Is It Abuse If...?

1. ... a couple is arguing and when one partner begins to freak out the other gives them a light slap to calm them down?

YES

NO

Comments:

2. ... a person walks their partner to school every morning, meets them for lunch every day, and picks them up at the end of each afternoon?

YES

NO

Comments:

3. ... every time a same-sex couple argues, one of the partners threatens to “out” the other to their family?

YES

NO

Comments:

4. ... an 18-year-old has sex with a 14-year-old?

YES

NO

Comments:

5. ... a couple starts “play-fighting” and they wrestle around on the floor resulting in bruises on one of their arms?

YES

NO

Comments:

6. ... one partner says they want to have sex. Their partner says they’re not ready, but after talking about it, gives in and has sex anyway, even though they really don’t want to?

YES

NO

Comments:

7. ... someone expects to be able to check their partner’s cell phone/texts anytime they wish?

YES

NO

Comments: