

# Power & Privilege

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.12.INF.3** - Describe the potential impacts of power and privilege within romantic or sexual relationships (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socio-economic status, immigration status, ability)

**CHR.12.INF.4** - Analyze the personal and societal factors that could keep someone from leaving an unhealthy relationship

**TARGET GRADE:** High School

**TIME:** 50 Minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

- White board
- Dry erase marker
- Case Studies (multiple copies of each case study so that groups of 3-4 each receive one)
- Power & Privilege card deck (one deck of cards per group of 3-4 students)

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Describe the potential impacts of power and privilege within romantic or sexual relationships [Knowledge]
2. Analyze the personal and societal factors that could keep someone from leaving an unhealthy relationship [Skill]

## LESSON RATIONALE:

All romantic or sexual relationships are impacted by the varying power and privilege each person in the relationship has vs what the other person does not have. This lesson aims to identify how power and privilege can impact a relationship. Additionally, this lesson will cover how these same factors, as well as personal and societal factors, could keep someone from leaving an unhealthy relationship. The ability to understand the various impacts this could have on a relationship will provide the learners with the opportunity to seek out and maintain healthy relationships now and in their future.

## ADVANCED PREPARATION:

Prior to the lesson print out multiple copies of the Power & Privilege case studies. There are four different case studies and there should be enough copies so that each group of 3-4 students has a copy. Also, please print a Power & Privilege card deck so that each group of 3-4 students has a deck of cards. If possible, print, cut, and laminate multiple card decks to reuse with subsequent classes.

## PROCEDURE:

### STEP 1

Say, **“To begin today’s class I am going to invite all of you to get into groups of 3-4 students. This will be your team today and as a team I am going to ask you to complete an analysis of power and privilege.”** Allow the class time to break into groups and move their belongings as they will complete the entire class in their small groups. After the groups have been created, write the following questions on the board, ‘How does one have power? How does one have privilege?’ Allow the groups about 5 minutes to work independently to determine their answers. Once completed, ask for a couple of volunteers to share their responses. Then say and write on the board, **“Power is the ability to direct others. Privilege is an advantage that can be used**

## Power & Privilege

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to help oneself and/or other people without that privilege. Great work. Now that we have a shared idea of what power and privilege are, we are going to take a look at how they can impact someone's romantic or sexual relationship." (15 minutes)

### STEP 2

Distribute a case study and Power & Privilege card deck to each group while saying, "I am sharing different case studies with each group to review. Please read the study carefully as a group. Then you each should shuffle your Power & Privilege card decks and pull five cards from the deck. Use the cards that you pull to analyze if and how it could impact the relationship. You will have about 15 minutes to complete the activity with your group members. What kind of questions do you have?" After the groups have completed their analysis, ask a couple of volunteers to share a brief synopsis of their case study and the impact of the power and privilege introduced via their cards. (20 minutes)

### STEP 3

After the students have completed their first analysis and shared it with the larger group, say, "Now take a look at your case study again and discuss with your group members how the impacts you selected from the Power & Privilege card deck could create or amplify an unhealthy relationship." After 2-3 minutes ask for new volunteers to share how it could impact an unhealthy relationship with the larger group. After the volunteers share, say, "Now please turn over all the cards in your deck and review how these different sources of power and privilege could impact a person's ability to leave an unhealthy relationship. As a group, select the top three cards that you believe would most likely keep someone from leaving an unhealthy relationship." After approximately five minutes, ask for volunteers to share with the larger group the cards they selected and why. Process the activity by saying, "What was it like to do this activity? What has your analysis made you consider for a person who wants to leave an unhealthy or unsafe relationship? Why do you think society asks 'Why didn't they just leave?' when talking about a person who finds it difficult to leave an unhealthy or unsafe relationship? How could we change this as a community?" (14 minutes)

### STEP 4

*"Relationships are complex. Sexual or romantic relationships are incredibly complex. There are so many factors that influence the power dynamics and access to privilege that can impact a relationship. Analyzing these factors, and discussing how to shift to a healthier approach is how we make change as a community and society. Thank you for your hard work."* (1 minute)

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### **RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:**

Objective 1 was completed in Steps 1 and 2. Objective 2 was completed in Steps 3 and 4.

### **HOMEWORK:**

Identify one way that you could use the power and privilege you hold in your relationships (romantic or friendship) to support a person with less power and privilege than yourself.  
Identify an example of power and privilege that you have witnessed in a relationship (real or fake) that was negative.

# Power & Privilege Case Studies

## CASE STUDY A

Person A and Person B have been dating for 3 years. Both partners have sex with other people even though their relationship is not open. Each time one partner cheats, the other person does it too in order to keep things even. Both partners say they will get married eventually and that they love each other. Person A is an undocumented honor student that comes from a large family. Person B is an only child who lives with their grandparents who are wealthy.

## CASE STUDY B

Leslie is a transgender woman who is dating a cis-gendered man named Eli. They have been dating for 3 months and really like each other. Recently an unarmed black person was gravely injured by the police resulting in riots in the streets for weeks. Leslie has been devastated by the recent actions and wants to be active in creating change. Eli thinks it is unsafe to get involved.

## CASE STUDY C

Mark and Cole met a week ago and have gone out twice in that week. There is interest in each other. Mark has paid both times they have gone out, and money does not seem to be an issue. They went to an expensive restaurant for their first date and then to a concert on their second date. Cole really likes Mark but feels bad that they aren't able to pay for such expensive dates.

## CASE STUDY D

Person A started working at the grocery store about four months ago. It's hard work but person A feels good they are able to help out their family with paying the bills. Person B has been a manager at the grocery store for two years. Person B is attracted to Person A and asked them to go out on a date. Person A is unsure whether they want to go on the date.

# Power & Privilege Card Deck

**AGE**

**RACE**

**ETHNICITY**

**SEXUAL  
ORIENTATION**

**GENDER**

**GENDERY  
IDENTITY**

**SOCIO-  
ECONOMIC  
STATUS**

**IMMIGRATION  
STATUS**

**ABILITY**