

Lesson Plan – Healthy Relationships

TOPIC: Healthy Relationships	TARGET-AGE RANGE: 9–15	TIME: 45 minutes
SUBJECT: Life Skills		
IDEAL NUMBER OF LEARNERS: 40		
<p>WHAT ADVANCE PREPARATION, IF ANY, IS REQUIRED OF THE TEACHER FOR THIS LESSON?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make copies of materials needed • Make signs 		
<p>LEARNING OUTCOMES:</p> <p>By the end of this lesson learners will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identify at least four ways that he or she would like to be treated in a romantic relationship. [knowledge] 2) Identify at least three warning signs that a relationship is potentially unhealthy or abusive. [knowledge] 3) Identify at least two effective communication practices. [knowledge] 		
<p>LIFE SKILLS DEMONSTRATED IN THIS LESSON:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Critical thinking about qualities of healthy and unhealthy relationships. 2) Communication skills 		
<p>RESOURCE MATERIALS FOR TEACHER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 pieces of paper with one way to be treated taken from the How I Would Want to Be Treated by My Partner in a Relationship handout written on each piece of paper • Tape to hang signs 		
<p>MATERIALS FOR LEARNER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How I Would Want to be Treated by My Partner in a Relationship Handout—One copy per learner • Relationship Scenarios Handout—One copy per learner • Healthy, Unhealthy, and Warning Signs of Abuse Handout • Effective Communication Tips Handout—One copy per learner • Individual Homework – Thinking about Healthy Relationships—One copy per learner (if assigning the homework) • Family Homework – Talking about Healthy Relationships—One copy per learner (if assigning the homework activity) 		



Lesson Plan – Healthy Relationships

This lesson is enhanced when learners have the following background knowledge: Content from the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education—Key Concept 1 – Relationships; 1.2 – Friendship, Love, and Romantic Relationships

PROCEDURE:

Step 1)

Introduce the lesson by saying, “Today we are going to talk about relationships and how to have healthy and happy relationships. We will discuss how someone might recognize if they are in an unhealthy relationship and what kinds of communication skills can help us have the relationships we want.”

Step 2) 5 minutes for Steps 1 & 2

Distribute the handout “How I Would Want to be Treated by My Partner in a Relationship” to each learner. Explain to students, “This worksheet has a list of ways you perhaps would want to be treated by a romantic partner, whether now or in the future. Looking at this list, think about which ones are most important to you. Circle three that you think are most important. Then, choose your top item, and write a brief explanation about it on the bottom of your worksheet. Once you are finished, you will have a chance to share some of your thinking.” If a student asks if they can add any qualities to the list, you can let them know that they can add a quality, but for the sake of this activity, they cannot choose it as their “#1 Quality.”

Step 3) 15 minutes

While students are working, hang the 12 previously made signs around the classroom. Once learners are done instruct them to find the three qualities that they chose on their worksheet and put their initials on each of those pieces of paper with that quality hanging around the room. Then, have students stand by the quality they rated at #1.

Once the learners have initialed the three signs and are standing next to their #1 quality, debrief several of the top-scoring items, including why people chose them and what that quality would look like in a relationship.

Sample discussion questions (these assume that “respect” had been a popular choice among learners but it would be whatever learners chose most) might include:

- Why did you all choose respect? Direct the question to the group standing by the sign.
- Did anyone else choose respect for a different reason? Directed to the rest of the class.
- How could someone show their romantic partner that they respect them?
- What are some disrespectful things a romantic partner might do?



Lesson Plan – Healthy Relationships

PROCEDURE (CONTINUED):

Step 4)

Pass out the Healthy, Unhealthy, and Warning Signs of Abuse Handout.

Tell learners, “It sounds like you all know how you would like to be treated in your relationships, which is so important. In fact, sometimes people don’t actually know what they want in a partner and that makes it hard to have a happy and healthy relationship. I am really glad to see that so many of you are already thinking about what would be important to you. I have just handed out a sheet that lists many of the qualities we have just been discussing, as well as some qualities of an unhealthy relationship because while it’s important to know what you would be looking for in a relationship, it’s also important to be able to recognize when a relationship is unhealthy. Let’s take a look at a couple of real-life scenarios. We can use the qualities on this sheet to help us examine their relationships.”

Step 5) 15 minutes for Steps 4 & 5

Pass out the Relationship Scenarios Handout. Have a volunteer from the class read Scenario 1, Marcus and Lillian, first. Debrief with questions listed below. Repeat with Scenario 2, Tasneem and Kato.

- Do you think this is a healthy or unhealthy relationship? Why?
- What characteristics **from your handout** do you see in their relationship? (If they simply list a quality from the handout, prompt them to describe the specific behavior from the scenario that illustrates that quality.)

Marcus and Lillian debrief:

The class should identify this scenario as having several qualities of an unhealthy or abusive relationship, including:

- Trying to limit or control what the other person does
- Is often jealous
- Throws or breaks things during a fight

However, they may also see some qualities from the healthy relationship list, such as that Marcus states he trusts Lillian and that he loves her.

It is important to emphasize that while Marcus may love and trust Lillian, **his actions are unacceptable** and make for an unhealthy relationship. If he can learn to control his anger, perhaps they could have a healthy relationship. However, Lillian does not deserve to be treated in this way and it would be **unsafe for her to stay in the relationship** at this point.



Lesson Plan – Healthy Relationships

PROCEDURE (CONTINUED):

Tasneem and Kato debrief:

The class should identify this scenario as having several qualities from the healthy relationship list, including:

- Being supported and encouraged
- Being treated as an equal
- Being honest

Tasneem and Kato have different interests, but still support one another in the things that are important to them. Neither of them feels the need to give up their individual interest or feels forced to join the interest of the other person. They are honest with each other and were able to negotiate a compromise that they were both happy with.

[Teacher’s Note: If you are able to explore same-sex relationships, it can be a great teaching opportunity to make the names of the two characters in either scenario the same gender.] This can normalize relationships between gay, lesbian and bisexual people and reinforce that everyone, no matter their sexual orientation, deserves to be in a healthy relationship. If your learners express the opinion that two people of the same gender being in a romantic relationship with each other is never a healthy choice, it’s important to point out that, although people have differing beliefs about the rightness or wrongness of gay and lesbian relationships, any two people’s relationship can have healthy or unhealthy characteristics, such as those listed on the handout. Some gay and lesbian relationships are healthy and some are not, just like some heterosexual relationships are healthy and some are not. Redirect the conversation by explaining that the point of the lesson is to give learners tools to evaluate the health of their own relationships.

Step 6) 10 minutes

Explain to students, “I want to thank you for really taking the time to think about what would be important to you in a relationship, and what might be some signs that a relationship is unhealthy. Now let’s think about how communication fits into a healthy relationship, as good communication is fundamental to a healthy relationship.” Hand out Effective Communication Tips Handout to each learner and review together with the group by asking any of the following questions:

- What do you think about the communication tips on this handout?
- Which ones do you already use?
- Which ones do you think are more difficult to use and why?
- Why do you think these tips lead to more effective communication?

Close the lesson by saying, “Relationships are at the heart of being human and everyone deserves happy and healthy relationships. Hopefully some of the information we discussed today will help you have healthy relationships in the future.”



Lesson Plan – Healthy Relationships

KEY MESSAGES OF LESSON:

- 1) Healthy relationships are very important and take work.
- 2) It's important to know the warning signs of unhealthy relationships and how to get help.
- 3) Knowing the qualities you would like in a partner is important to being safe and healthy.
- 4) Communication is a key part of a healthy relationship and practicing these skills can help you build and keep a healthy relationship.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

- Teachers can collect the How I Would Want to be Treated by My Partner in a Relationship Handout for assessment of the learning objectives. Additionally, assigning either the individual or family homework activity could be another way to assess learning.

HOMEWORK WITH FOCUS ON FAMILY INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES:

- Use the Talking about Healthy Relationships worksheet and a clean copy of the How I Would Want to be Treated by My Partner in a Relationship Handout. See each worksheet for detailed directions.

POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS:

- 1) Large class size—None
- 2) Limited materials/technology—None

Adapted from: *Family Life and Sexual Health – High School Lesson 5: Healthy Relationships* Seattle-King County Department of Public Health
www.kingcounty.gov/health/flash



How I Would Want to Be Treated by My Partner in a Relationship Handout

Directions: Please review the following list and circle 3 ways you would want to be treated in a relationship that are most important to you. You may see many qualities here that you like, but try to pick your top three. Follow the directions at the bottom of the page after you have picked your top three.

I want my partner to...

Treat me with respect

Be trustworthy

Need me

Treat me fairly

Support me

Be honest with me

Treat me as an equal

Make me laugh

Encourage me

Protect me

Trust me

Love me

Looking at the three you chose, please list the number one most important way you would like to be treated by a romantic partner and write a brief explanation of why that quality is so important.

#1 Quality: _____

Explanation: _____



Relationship Scenarios Handout

1. Marcus and Lillian

Marcus really likes Lillian – she is pretty and smart. Marcus often feels nervous that he might lose her to another boy. He doesn't think she would ever cheat on him, but he does see her talking with other boys sometimes. It makes him feel so jealous he doesn't know what to do. He told her that she needed to stop talking with those other boys, especially right in front of him! Lillian got upset with him, and they had a huge fight. As they were arguing, Marcus felt so mad that he grabbed her by the arms to get her to listen to him and then threw his book bag across the room. Marcus promised Lillian it would never happen again. He says it was an accident, and he didn't mean to hurt anyone. He just couldn't control himself when he was feeling so angry.

2. Tasneem and Kato

Tasneem and Kato really like each other. Kato loves to play soccer and has hopes of joining a league someday. He has just started to play with a group after many hours of practice over the past few months. He excitedly calls Tasneem to tell her about the first game that he will be playing in. Tasneem is not so sure that she can go but still talks and listens throughout the entire conversation, showing Kato how excited she is for him. Tasneem knows how much the team means to Kato, and wants to support him but Tasneem tells him that she can't come because she has a meeting that night. Kato is disappointed, and wishes that Tasneem would just forget about her meeting and come to the game anyway. But, he knows that the meeting is as important to Tasneem as soccer is to him. Kato tells Tasneem that it would really mean a lot to him if she came to the game, and Tasneem agrees to come to the second half, after her meeting is over. Kato is happy that she can come to the 2nd half and understand that Tasneem also has an important commitment on that same day.



Healthy, Unhealthy, and Warning Signs of Abuse Handout

In a healthy relationship people...

- Treat their partner with respect and fairness
- Support and encourage each other
- Treat each other as equals
- Are honest
- Earn their partner's trust
- Have shared interests
- Also have separate interests and identities
- Try hard to have honest and clear communication
- Enjoy being with each other
- Never hurt their partner physically or sexually

In an unhealthy relationship people...

- Treat their partner disrespectfully and unfairly
- Frequently argue or fight
- Have no shared interests
- Or they do things ONLY with each other – they have no separate friends or interests
- Cheat on their partner
- Don't care about their partner's feelings
- Don't enjoy spending time together

Warning signs of an abusive relationship include...

- One person throws or breaks things during an argument
- One person tries to control what the other person does, who they see, what they wear, or what they say
- One person is often jealous or is overly jealous
- One person hurts the other person physically or sexually
- One person puts the other person down, calls them names or humiliates them
- “Crazy-Making” behavior—this is when one person lies or changes their story, or when they deny or minimize the other person's experience. This behavior often makes the other person feel like they are “going crazy.”



Effective Communication Tips Handout

Voice

Make sure the tone of your voice and the volume of your voice are right for what you are saying.

Intent

Know what you want if you are asking for something. What outcomes would be okay with you?

Body Language

Think about what you are saying with your body. Are your arms folded? Are you looking somewhere else? Are you turned towards the person or away from them? It is best when your body language is saying the same thing your words are saying.

Timing

Think about when you are going to ask for something or bring up a difficult topic. Does the other person have the time and energy to devote at that moment?

Approach

Think about how you bring something up. Are you defensive, attacking or angry? Or are you calm and open to hearing the other person's thoughts?

Being Clear

Know what it is you want to say or bring up. Pay attention to word choice, tone of voice, and body language

Effective communication often includes:

- “I” statements (“I think ...”, “I want ...”)
- Expressing opinions (“I believe ...”)
- Saying “No” firmly but respectfully
- Asking for what you want
- Initiating conversations
- Expressing positive feelings
- Expressing appreciation
- Stating your strengths and abilities (“I can ...”)



Individual Homework – Thinking about Healthy Relationships

1. List 3 things you might say or do if a friend told you that they were feeling scared of their partner.

A) _____

B) _____

C) _____

2. Briefly describe why you chose one of the three qualities from the How I Would Want to be Treated by My Partner in a Relationship worksheet.

3. Describe how you would use one of the Effective Communication Tips listed on your worksheet to bring up a difficult topic with your parents.



Family Homework – Talking about Healthy Relationships (Optional)

PURPOSE: This is a chance to ask someone in your family about relationships and to share beliefs related to sexuality and relationships with each other. It will also give you a chance to get to know one another a little better.

DIRECTIONS: Find a place where you and a trusted adult (parent, guardian, grandmother, aunt or uncle, or adult friend of the family, etc.)—can talk. Set aside about 10 minutes. You will be sharing some questions with the trusted adult that you will both discuss together. During this time, please give full attention to one another.

Before starting the discussion, explain that:

- Both of you are each welcome to say, “That question is too private. Let’s skip it.”
- What you discuss will not be shared with anyone else, even within the family, unless you give one another permission to share it.
- It’s okay to feel silly or awkward and it’s important to try to do the homework together anyway.

SHARE AND EXPLAIN the handout “How I Would Want to be Treated by My Partner in a Relationship.”

DISCUSS the following questions, by taking turns asking each other the questions. When it is your turn to listen, really try to understand the other person’s response.

- Which qualities listed on the worksheet are most important to you in your relationships?
- Which qualities listed do you hope that I would have in a romantic relationship?
- Are there other qualities you think are important that are not listed here? What are they?
- What is one piece of advice you would give someone about how to have a happy and healthy relationship?

