

Making Choices in Healthy Relationships

Lesson Plan

Resource: H&PE Elementary Resources

Unit: Human Development and Sexual Health

Grade(s): 6

Lesson: 4 of 5

H&PE Curriculum Expectations

2019 H&PE Curriculum Expectations: A1.1, A1.4, A1.5, A1.6, D2.6

Materials

- Access to a shared document (chart paper and markers or online interactive tool)
- **Teacher Resource: Anecdotal Recording Chart**

Learning Goals

- We are learning to use our self-awareness and critical thinking skills to make informed decisions that demonstrate respect for ourselves and others.
- We are learning to apply our relationship and self-awareness skills and our understanding of consent to build healthier relationships.

Overall Assessment

Using the Teacher Resource: Anecdotal Recording Chart, observe and provide written and verbal feedback on students' understanding of consent and ability to make informed decisions that demonstrate respect for themselves and others.

Minds-On

Share the learning goals with the class and co-construct success criteria with students. Consider posting the success criteria in the learning space for reference throughout the lesson.

Review the ground rules/agreements established in Lesson 1. Have students identify why each ground rule/agreement is important and how it creates an emotionally safe and inclusive learning environment.

Create a Venn diagram for students to view. Using a [Popcorn](#) strategy, have students share ideas about how intimate and dating relationships (“going out”) share similar and different qualities of other relationships (e.g., friends, siblings, parents, teammates). Encourage students to think about the social emotional skills required to build and maintain healthy relationships, common interests, goals and other characteristics that are the foundation of a healthy relationship.

Action

Divide students into groups of 4-5 and provide access to a shared document for students to create a [Mind Map](#). Have students write the words, “Relationships” and “Consent” in the middle of their Mind Map. Use the following teacher prompts to facilitate small group discussions about consent and behaviours and characteristics of a healthy relationship.

- **Teacher prompt:** “In many ways, dating or intimate relationships can be similar to other relationships, such as those with friends or family. Relationships we see online or in the media are not always accurate and can send false messages. What are some of the signs of a healthy relationship?”

Student responses:

- - “In a healthy relationship, people show respect and care for each other. They try to communicate well and are honest with each other.”
 - “People listen to each other and respect each other’s perspective even when it might differ from their own.”
 - “People understand that each person has relationships and friendships outside of the dating partnership.”

- “Supporting each other's interests and activities is a sign of a healthy relationship.”
- “A healthy relationship includes each person taking responsibility for their words and actions when there is conflict or misunderstanding.”

- **Teacher prompt:** “What social attitudes and behaviours are important in building a healthy relationship?”

Student response: “It is important to have respect for others, show that you value differences, and be cooperative.”

- **Teacher prompt:** “What should you consider when making any decision regarding a relationship?”

Student response: “My comfort level, my personal and family values, my personal limits, and the limits and comfort of others are some of the things I should consider.”

- **Teacher prompt:** “What are some of the signs of unhealthy behaviors in a relationship, and what are some signs of potential trouble?”

Student responses:

- ○ “When someone in a relationship is jealous or abusive, that is a sign of trouble.”
- “Sometimes a relationship can start out as healthy but then become unhealthy.”
- “When someone becomes controlling by checking messages, who they are friends with or what they do, that is a sign of an unhealthy relationship behaviour.”
- “When someone does anything that makes you feel uncomfortable and they don't stop when you ask them to, that is a sign of a lack of respect for you.”
- “When someone in a relationship has a violent outburst, that can also be a sign.”

- **Teacher prompt:** “How can you help a friend who may be in an unhealthy relationship?”

Student response: “If I saw this happening to a friend of mine, I would talk to them about what I'm noticing, listen to their response without judgement, and encourage them to seek help when needed. I would also try to get help for them from a trusted adult, or through a help line.”

After posing each question, provide groups with sufficient time to discuss and record their answers before posing the next question. Have groups post their completed Mind Maps for other groups to view and for reference during the next activity.

Display the word consent for groups to view. Have groups reflect and record what they know about consent on their Mind Map.

Write the following definition of consent and acronym for students to view:

- Definition: “Consent is defined in Canada’s Criminal Code in s. 273.1(1), as the voluntary agreement to engage in the sexual activity in question. The law focuses on what the person was actually thinking and feeling at the time of the sexual activity. Sexual touching is only lawful if the person affirmatively communicated their consent, whether through words or conduct. Silence or passivity does not equal consent.”. (*Extracted from: Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund. (2020). [The Law of Consent in Sexual Assault.](#)*)
- Acronym:
 - **F**reely Given - all partners have the freedom to say yes or no without pressure, force or manipulation.
 - **R**eversible - anyone can change their mind and ask to stop, even in the middle of a sexual act.
 - **I**nformed - all partners need to know exactly what they are consenting to, every time.
 - **E**nthusiastic - all partners should be engaged and excited; if not STOP immediately.
 - **S**pecific - each act requires consent, even if it was done before.

(*The acronym FRIES was extracted from: Stop Abuse in Families Society. (2021). [We’re Talking Consent Because...](#)*)

Using the following teacher prompts to lead a whole group discussion about the importance of understanding the concept of consent and respectful behaviour and learning relationship skills.

- **Teacher prompt:** “What does it mean to be assertive when communicating with others? What does a person’s body language look like when practicing assertive behaviour?”

Student responses:

- ○ “Assertive behaviour includes acting in my best interest and expressing my wishes while respecting the rights of others.”
- “Making eye contact and standing upright is assertive body language.”
- **Teacher prompt:** “Why is using “I” statements and/or the “broken record technique” helpful?”

Student responses:

- ○ “An “I” statement like “I feel when you [blank] because [blank]” can be used to convey my feelings and promote understanding. When communicating this way, it may help to defuse conflict and prevent violence.”
- “Repeating “No” will emphasize your position on the situation. Walk away if the person will not listen to your wishes.”
- **Teacher prompt:** “Changing or ending relationships can be difficult. What are some ways to deal positively with changing or ending relationships?”

Student responses:

- ○ “Talk about how you feel with someone you trust. Learn coping strategies to take responsibility for dealing with your disappointment and feeling rejected.”
- “Write about your feelings in a private journal.”
- “Think about what you can learn from the situation that you can apply in the future.”
- “Remember that although the hurt feelings can be very intense at the beginning, you will start feeling a little better over time.”
- “If you are the one ending the relationship, treat the other person with respect and empathy and consider how they may be feeling. Try to explain how you feel.”
- “Ending a relationship over the phone or online may not be a sensitive approach.”

Consolidate the discussion by explaining to students that any relationship can be healthy or unhealthy whether they are dating relationships, friendships, familial relationships or employer-employee relationships. Even within healthy relationships, at times, partners may engage in unhealthy relationship behaviors. In a healthy relationship, people should feel safe, secure, cared about, and know that they and the choices they make are respected. They recognize and respect each other's boundaries and take responsibility for their own feelings when dealing with a "No" response. Unhealthy relationships will lead people to feel confused, anxious and unsure.

Consolidation

Have students remain in their groups and provide each group with one of the following scenarios:

- Caden and Aaliyah have been friends since grade one, but all of a sudden, Caden is all about hanging with their other friends. Aaliyah is feeling left out and is missing their friend. Aaliyah wants to talk to Caden but doesn't know what to say.
- Fatima and Olivia consider themselves best friends. Recently, Fatima has noticed that the person Olivia is dating is becoming very controlling in their relationship. Olivia rarely hangs out after school with Fatima and sometimes can't even talk on the phone. Fatima is now very concerned for Olivia and is worried for their safety.
- Josh has noticed many changes happening to their body over the past 6 months and has lots of questions but feels weird talking to their caregiver. Josh searched for some information online, but everything just seems so scary. They need to talk to their caregiver, but what could Josh say?
- Cheng and Zeinab have been dating for almost 4 months. Cheng is finding it challenging balancing the relationship, school, and sport life. Although it will be upsetting, Cheng has decided to break up with Zeinab.
- Juan has developed strong emotional feelings for their friend Arash. Juan is scared of telling Arash because they don't want to feel rejected and lose their friendship if they feel differently. Juan is afraid to tell anyone else at school because they believe they will be bullied for being gay.

Have groups apply their understanding of healthy relationship behaviours, consent, and relationships skills to make informed decisions that demonstrate respect for themselves and others. Invite groups to share their responses to the scenario. Alternatively, have students create a role play to illustrate their decisions and perform it for the class.

At the end of each role play, have the audience reflect and share their responses to these questions.

- How might the characters have handled the situation differently?
- Who else could the characters have talked to about their relationships/feelings?
- If after discussing a difficult topic, one person gets angry, what skills could be used to handle the situation?

Notes to Teachers

Before starting a classroom conversation, be aware that some students may have experienced situations related to the topics, either directly or indirectly, in the past or present. Therefore, it is important to identify resources for support (e.g., trusted adult, educator, guidance counsellor, social worker, social services, health nurse, and/or school liaison officer) that you can share discreetly or generally with students.

Know who to go to for help if you need it. Be familiar with internal board support as well as community agencies or organizations that provide contact information for resource people within the school and the community to whom you can refer students.

For additional background information about healthy relationships and consent, visit these sites:

- [**Sex Information and Education Council of Canada: Sexual Health Issue Brief**](#)
- [**Saskatchewan Prevention Institute: Building Healthy Relationships: Yes, that includes dating relationship!**](#)

Duty to Report Children in Need of Protection

If any person, including “a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children,” has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, the act requires that the person report their suspicions “immediately” to a children’s aid society and provide the information on which the suspicions are based. Therefore teachers, principals, and other professionals who, in the course of performing their professional or official duties, suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, must report this information without delay to a children’s aid society. (*Extracted from: Government of Ontario. (2021). **Program Policy Memorandum 9: Duty to Report Children in Need of Protection**.*)