

Healthy Relationships

Grades 9-12, Lesson 6

Summary

The lesson begins with students identifying how they want to be treated by a girlfriend or boyfriend. They then review the signs of healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships, and practice identifying these signs in two relationship vignettes. The lesson concludes with student volunteers acting out a communication skills demonstration, while the rest of the class offers advice to the actors, applying the skills learned in the lesson.

Student Learning Objectives

The student will be able to ...

1. Summarize the qualities of a healthy dating relationship.
2. Demonstrate effective strategies to avoid or end an unhealthy relationship.
3. Demonstrate effective communication strategies to prevent, manage or resolve interpersonal conflicts.

Lesson Timing

Warm up	Bell work + 2 minutes
Introduce lesson	2 minutes
Lead group activity	12 minutes
Analyze scenarios	12 minutes
Communication skills demonstration	20 minutes
Assign homework	
Exit ticket	2 minutes
Total	50 minutes

FLASH Key Concepts

Everyone has the right to say who touches their body and how.

It is never okay to touch someone else if they don't want you to, or to make them touch you.

There are laws about sex that everyone must follow.

Permission or agreement is required to engage in all sexual activity.

Rigid ideas about how men and women should act are harmful and limit how people can express themselves.

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Materials Needed

Student Materials

- *How I Want to Be Treated by My Boyfriend or Girlfriend* (2 copies per student)
- *Real-Life Couples*
- *Healthy, Unhealthy and Warning Signs of Abuse*
(Note: Do NOT copy the *Real-Life Couples* and *Healthy, Unhealthy and Warning Signs of Abuse* handouts back to back.)
- *Effective Communication Tips*
- *Individual Homework: Thinking About Healthy Relationships*
- *Family Homework: Talking About Healthy Relationships*, available in multiple languages on the FLASH website
- *Lesson 6 Exit Ticket*

Classroom Materials

- *Lesson 6 Warm Up*
- 12 signs on 8 ½ x 11" paper to hang around the classroom, each with one of the qualities from the *How I Want to Be Treated by My Boyfriend or Girlfriend* handout
- *Volunteer Instructions: Communication Skills Demonstration* – 3 copies

Teacher Preparation

Write each of the qualities from the *How I Want to Be Treated by My Boyfriend or Girlfriend* worksheet on an 8-1/2 x 11" piece of paper and post around the classroom.

Activities

1. Warm up

Display warm up as bell work.

Prompt: List 3 characteristics of a healthy relationship.

2. Introduce the lesson

Remind students of the previous lesson and introduce today's topic.

Yesterday we learned about gender stereotypes – the kinds of expectations people have about how men and women act. Those stereotypes definitely influence the choices we make in relationships and about our sexual health. Today we are going to talk more about relationships: how to have healthy and happy relationships, 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.

3. Conduct group activity

Have students complete the *How I Want To Be Treated by my Boyfriend or Girlfriend* worksheet by circling the 5 most important words that represent how they would like to be treated by a partner, and writing why their number 1 quality is most important to them.

If students ask if they can add things to the list, let them know they can add a quality, but, for the sake of this activity, they cannot choose it as their number 1 quality.

This worksheet has a list of ways you may want to be treated by a dating partner, whether current or future partner. Looking at this list, think about which ones are most important to you. Circle the five that are most important to you.

You may want to wait a couple minutes to allow students time to circle their top 5 before moving onto the next instruction.

Then, choose your top item, the one you think is the most important quality or attribute of a boyfriend or girlfriend. Write a brief explanation about it on the bottom of your worksheet. Try to be specific about why that is the most important way that you want to be treated.

Ask students to circulate around the room and write their initials on each piece of paper that has one of the top-5 qualities they selected on the worksheet, and then go stand by the paper with their number 1 quality.

You'll notice that there is a sign for each of the qualities listed on the worksheet. I'd like you to go sign your name on each of the 5 signs for the qualities you selected, and then go stand by your number 1 quality.

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Lead a discussion about why students chose their number 1 quality and how that quality looks in a relationship. Conclude by discussing which quality they think is most important for them to show to a person they are dating.

It's always interesting for me to see all the different opinions and values in the room. Obviously this is about personal preferences and there are no right or wrong answers here. I would love to hear from some of you why you picked your number 1 quality.

- *Why did you choose respect? (or whatever a popular quality was)*
- *Did anyone else choose respect for a different reason?*
- *How can people show their dating partners that they respect them?*
- *What are some disrespectful things a boyfriend or girlfriend might do?*

Continue in this manner until all groups have shared.

Give a follow-up instruction: *Now out of all the qualities we just discussed, think about which one is most important for the way you would treat a boyfriend or girlfriend. Would that number 1 quality be the same or different? Go to that sign now, or stay put if it's the same.*

Once all students are in place, ask volunteers to share why they moved or why they stayed with the same quality.

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 know what they want, which makes it harder to have a happy and healthy relationship. People have choices about who they choose to date and it's good to know what's important to you. People also have choices about how they treat the person they are dating. I am really glad to see that so many of you are already thinking about what's important to you in that area too.

4. Students analyze scenarios

Explain that now students are going to analyze some scenarios about couples to determine if the relationships depicted have characteristics of healthy or unhealthy relationships. Distribute the *Healthy, Unhealthy and Warning Signs of Abuse* and *Real Life Couples* handouts. Make sure these handouts are NOT copied back to back. Students need to see them side by side to do the activity.

The Healthy, Unhealthy and Warning Signs of Abuse sheet describes different kinds of relationships. It has many of the qualities we have just been discussing, as well as some qualities of an unhealthy relationship. Please read it to yourself.

Allow time for students to read *Healthy, Unhealthy and Warning Signs of Abuse* to themselves.

Then invite a volunteer to read the Marcus and Lillian scenario aloud. Have students identify whether the relationship is healthy or unhealthy using the *Healthy, Unhealthy and Warning Signs of Abuse* handout. Prompt them to defend their point with examples of specific behaviors.

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Now we're going to look at a couple of real-life scenarios. We can use the qualities on the *Healthy, Unhealthy and Warning Signs of Abuse* sheet to help us examine these relationships. The first scenario is about Marcus and Lillian.

Marcus and Lillian scenario is read aloud.

- Do you think this is a healthy or unhealthy relationship? Why?
- What characteristics from your handout do you see in this relationship?

If students simply list a quality from the handout, prompt them to describe the specific behavior from the scenario that illustrates that quality.

Cover these points for the 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
 - often being jealous
 - throwing or breaking things during a fight
- They may also see some qualities from the healthy relationship list, such as Marcus stating that he trusts Lillian and that he loves her. However, it's important to emphasize that, while Marcus may love and trust Lillian, his actions are unacceptable and are warning signs of abuse. Lillian does not deserve to be treated in this way and it may be unsafe for her to stay in the relationship at this point.

Invite a volunteer to read the Tony and Andre scenario aloud. Have students identify whether the relationship is healthy or unhealthy using the *Healthy, Unhealthy and Warning Signs of Abuse*. Prompt them to defend their point with examples of specific behaviors.

Now let's look at another relationship, between Tony and Andre.

Tony and Andre scenario is read aloud.

- Do you think this is a healthy or unhealthy relationship? Why?
- What characteristics from your handout do you see in this relationship?

If students simply list a quality from the handout, prompt them to describe the specific behavior from the scenario that illustrates that quality.

Cover these points for the Tony and Andre 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
- Tony and Andre 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 interests or feels forced to join the interest of the other person. They are honest with each other and were able to negotiate a compromise they were both happy with.

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- If students express the opinion that two men dating 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 students tools to evaluate the health of their *own* relationships, regardless of the genders of the people they may date or fall in love with.

Praise students again for their good work analyzing the *Real-Life Couples* scenarios. Transition into the final component of the lesson on communication skills.

5. Conduct communication skills demonstration

Distribute *How to Help a Friend* and *Effective Communication Tips* handouts.

Walk students through the steps on *How to Help a Friend*, and inform them of resources available to teens who are in a relationship that feels bad. Point out the hotline and website as a resource they can use for themselves or to help a friend.

Request 3 volunteers for a communication skills demonstration. Instruct the rest of the class to read *Effective Communication Tips* to themselves, while the 3 volunteers receive instructions from the teacher.

- Take the volunteers out to the hallway or another space where the rest of the class cannot hear or see you. Give them each a copy of *Volunteer Instructions: Communication Skills Demonstration*.
- Explain to the volunteers that they will do 3 demonstrations of asking someone out on a date. Each scenario will start the same, but the asker will be using different communication skills for each one.
- Go over the *Volunteer Instructions* with the volunteers to make sure they understand their roles and instructions for each of the demonstrations before they present them to the class. Give volunteers about a minute to discuss how they want to perform the demonstrations.
- Remind volunteers that gender is not important for this activity. Sometimes students think it's funny to change their voice or mannerisms, but other students may find it offensive. Encourage them to act like themselves, in their normal voices.

Important Notes:

- The gender of the volunteers is not important – it's fine to have all girls, all boys, or any mix of genders. If two students of the same gender will be asking each other out, stress that they should not be mocking of gay relationships. If someone is uncomfortable or unwilling to do this, they can opt out of being a volunteer and you can choose a new volunteer. Similarly, no one should act out the "girl role" or "boy role." Have the students act as themselves. These stereotypes are not helpful to this lesson and could be experienced by some classmates as harassment. If volunteers act as they genuinely would in the role of asker, the one being asked out, and the friend, the scenario will unfold as it should.
- If audience members make comments that are rooted in gender stereotypes or homophobia, refer to material covered in the previous *Gender Stereotypes* lesson and

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- redirect back to the communication content of this lesson.
- Your composure and matter-of-fact attitude are key to the success of this activity. Feel free to have fun and laugh with the students, as the skits will often be humorous. However, it is very important that you not collude in any way with homophobic representations during the skit.

Return to the classroom with the volunteers and explain to the rest of the class that they are about to see their classmates (use the actual names of the volunteers) perform 3 scenarios.

Have the volunteers act out “The First Attempt” (shy asker) and “The Second Attempt” (pushy asker). Instruct students to use the *Effective Communication Tips* handout to answer the following questions after they have seen both scenarios.

- What didn’t go so well in these scenarios?
- Did Person A do any of the things from your handout?
- Let’s say Person A is your friend, and you really want to help out. What advice would you give?

Then have the volunteers act out the final scenario, “The Third Attempt” (respectful asker). Instruct students to use the *Effective Communication Tips* handout to answer the following questions.

- What did Person A do well?
- Did Person A do any of the things from your handout?
- Did Person A respectfully ask a question and genuinely wait for the answer?

Close by summarizing the concepts covered.

You all did a great job today of identifying characteristics that are important to you in a relationship and thinking about what makes a relationship healthy or not. I especially appreciate everyone’s attention and enthusiasm during our last activity about communication skills, and of course a big thank you to our volunteers. You analyzed the impacts of different communication styles and you had some great suggestions for how our volunteer could have been a more effective communicator.

Having good communication skills and really knowing what you want out of a relationship will go a long way toward helping you have the healthy relationships you want in the future.

6. Assign homework

Allow students to choose between the individual or family homework and explain the assignments as needed. Hand out homework and a clean copy of the *How I Want to Be Treated by my Boyfriend or Girlfriend*.

Individual Homework: Thinking About Healthy Relationships

Family Homework: Talking About Healthy Relationships, available in multiple languages on the FLASH website

7. Exit ticket

Hand out the *Lesson 6 Exit Ticket*.

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Prompt: Using one or more of these tips from your *Effective Communication Tips* handout, write 1 or 2 sentences telling someone you don't want to go on a date with them. Imagine this person is someone you like as a friend, but don't want to date.

- 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 ...")

Answer: Any statements following these guidelines are acceptable

