

TEACHING GUIDE

It's Up to You II

This guide is intended to assist the facilitator in leading a discussion with a group. Please read it with your group in mind and then adapt it to your needs and/or limitations.

This interactive story about relationships between young teenagers is written in a “choose your own adventure” format to facilitate discussion around decision making. In particular, it focuses on communication as well as dealing with anger as a couple. It is especially intended for use with students in grades 9 – 11; or young people ages 14 – 16 who are out of school.

Rationale and teaching objectives

Public Health staff working with teenagers this age, especially in clinic settings, had noticed the frequency with which teenage women in particular seemed unhappy in their relationships. Sometimes, what they were describing could be construed as abuse.

For teachers and other professionals working with these young people, we hope this booklet will serve to open up the discussion of what constitutes a healthy relationship, how to recognize an abusive one and how to deal with it. At the end of this guide, you will find some additional resources, which you may need for follow-up. These materials will not be appropriate for everyone reading the booklet.

(One might offer the booklet to an individual to instigate a discussion. Copies could be made available in the classroom/guidance office/physical education office/agency/clinic).

The characters

The booklet tells the story of two young people, Dan and Tina. They attend high school together and have been a couple for a while. Dan lives with his father, mother, siblings and grandfather. Tina lives with her mother and stepfather. Tina sees her father very seldom. Her mother divorced several years ago. Marcus is Dan's friend.

The Process

Both Tina and Dan face choices about their relationship and behaviour. Teenagers reading or hearing the story are to decide what course of action they feel the character should choose, and why.

The story is told in two voices and was written with the intention that it would be used by a group.

- ◆ If an *individual* is reading the story, he or she will decide which choice to make

in each situation. Towards the end, they will decide whose story to follow to complete the booklet.

- ◆ If it is being used by a group:
 - Two people can read the story to the whole group, stopping at each choice point for discussion. The facilitator is invited to add the discussion points listed below.
 - Small groups can be formed from a larger group. Each small group can appoint readers and a recorder to make notes about the discussion to share later with the whole group.
 - If there are enough copies for a class set, the facilitator may wish to direct the group to read the story in groups of two or three, with the third person making the decision.

Reading the full story out loud should take no more than half an hour. If time is limited, the group can stop reading on page 33, 34 or 35 (the point at which the reader decides whose story to follow from then on).

How to begin

You may wish to have a discussion about relationships even before reading the booklet. Ask the group to put up hands if they:

- know anyone who is/was in a really good relationship
- know anyone who is/was in a really bad relationship

Have the group brainstorm what they consider to be good/healthy or bad/unhealthy relationships. Some ideas might include issues around:

- respect
- trust/jealousy
- how one feels when they are with that person
- how one feels when they are away from that person
- how they argue
- how they treat each other
- how they treat each others' friends
- whether they enjoy their time spent apart, on their own or with friends/family
- how they would feel if they broke up
- if each person feels safe with the other
- whether one person tries to control the other
- if both are comfortable with how far they go sexually

Post this list in the room to refer to later on in the discussion.

Start Reading

Here are some questions you may want to ask as you go through the booklet. Some of these questions may be more suitable than others for your particular group. When you come to a choice point, have some discussion and then vote.

p. 3 How do your friends feel about making out in front of other people?

If Dan confides in Tina...

Is there a gender issue here? Is it more common for females to confide in someone close to them? What could be in it for Dan if he confided in Tina?

p. 7 How might Tina's family life affect her relationship with Dan?

If Dan keeps things to himself...

p. 5 What do you think of this sex role stereotyping: "Girls. They always want you to talk about stuff." "Guys. It's so hard to get them to talk about anything personal."? What effect might Dan's decision not to talk about his problems have on their relationship?

p. 9 How important is Tina's basketball practice to Dan? What does it mean when someone says a person is "controlling"?

If Tina decides to skip practice...

p. 10 Can anyone explain what it's like to be on a team/part of a group of musicians etc. and missing practice? What do you think of Tina's explanation for why Dan insists she give up practice?

Going back to the discussion on good/bad relationships, point to the issue that reflects the problem they are discussing. Does this sound familiar to anyone?

If Tina decides to go to practice...

p. 11 What are Dan's choices at this point?

If Tina sticks to her decision...

What are the potential consequences to the relationship – both positive and negative?

p. 13 Why doesn't Dan tell her about his financial situation?

If Tina changes her mind...

p. 10 Can anyone explain what it means to be on a team/part of a group of musicians etc. and missing practice? What do you think of her explanation for why Dan insists she give up practice?

If Dan says he's sorry...

Why is it hard for some people to say they're sorry? What's the point in apologizing anyway?

If Dan stays mad...

- p. 16** Go back to the list on relationships. How does Dan's walking away rank in terms of settling an argument? How likely is it that Tina will get over his walking away from her?
- p. 17** How does Dan feel about Tina's playing now?
- p. 19** Have you ever tried to study with a girlfriend/boyfriend? Could you keep your mind on your work?

If Tina and Dan keep fooling around...

- p.21** How are sexual decisions usually made – or does stuff just happen? Do most people talk about how far they're going to go together? Is it likely that Dan would have a condom on him? What do most young teenagers do to prevent pregnancy when sex "just happens"? Is there usually any discussion about protection?

What does Dan mean when he says, "What kind of game is she playing?" Do girls (and guys) "tease" and why? How would someone know if the other person was teasing or just stopping for other reasons? If Ted had not walked in, what might have happened?

If Tina and Dan go back to studying...

- p. 22** What was Tina feeling when she thought Dan might push her back down onto the couch? What might have happened? If Dan had used some type of force or coercion and Tina ended up giving in, what would Tina likely do afterwards? What else could she do? [Facilitator – be sure to include discussion of Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECP).] How would she feel about being forced by her boyfriend? What could have been going through Dan's head if he'd pressured her into having sex?

Tina says, "Lucky we stopped when we did". Who stopped the action? With heterosexual couples, who usually stops the action? Why?

- p. 25** How might Dan's home life affect his relationship with Tina? How might Tina's home life affect her relationship with Dan?
- p. 27** Tina blames Marcus for Dan's decision to spend Friday night with him instead of her. Is this fair?

If Tina keeps her thoughts to herself...

p. 28 Dan says, “I can tell she’s gonna get on my case about Marcus and the game”. At home, his Mom is “on” his Dad “all the time” about getting a job. Do you think the two situations are related? How?

p. 29 If Tina puts Marcus down...

Go back to the list about relationships and see where this argument might fit in.

If Dan shoves Tina...

p. 31 What makes it difficult for Dan to control his anger? When a person is angry, what are the limits in terms of expressing anger? Who sets these limits? Would you label what Dan did as “abuse”?

If Dan doesn’t shove Tina...

p. 34 What does Dan mean when he talks about “being a man”? What does “being a man” mean to you?

If Tina makes excuses for Dan...

p. 37 Can you explain Tina’s motivation for apologizing? She says it’s her fault. What does it mean to be someone’s fault – that they are responsible and/or that they provoked what happened? When a parent hits a child and says, “You asked for it,” is it the child’s fault that the parent hits him/her? Sometimes children say, “I deserved it.” What is your feeling about that?

If Tina tells Dan to back off...

p. 35 Tina screams at Dan. Is it better to let it all out? Could she have expressed her anger in any other way? What words could she have used to let him know how serious she felt his actions were?

If Tina hits Dan back...

p. 33 What are the potential consequences for shoving him back? Dan says, “Now, she’s really asking for it”. In what situations have you heard this expression before? Are there situations where someone actually wants to be hurt?
[Facilitator, point out that some needy/neglected children may seek attention and touch this way.] What does Dan really mean?

Abusive relationships

At this point, you may want to have a fuller discussion on abusive relationships. There may be some young people in the group who will require follow-up. (See appendix for materials that may help, including referral numbers.)

What are the different kinds of abuse (verbal, emotional, physical, sexual)? Without mentioning names, does anyone know someone who was/is in what you would call an abusive relationship? What happened? How does a person know if there is danger? What can a person do to get out of a relationship where one is unhappy or in danger? Can their friends help?

Continuing to the end of the story

Do Tina and Dan have a future? What would have to happen for their relationship to succeed? If time permits, decide which character to follow to the end.

If you follow Tina's story...

p. 39 What is the best way to help a friend who is troubled?

If Tina talks to her mom...

p. 43 How do you feel about the way Tina's mom dealt with Tina's problem?

If Tina goes to bed...

p. 47 Rate Tina and Dan's relationship on a scale of one to ten with ten being the highest. Why did you give it that rating?

If Tina breaks off with Dan...

p. 49 When you say, "you need some space" from someone, does that mean you might get back together again? Under what circumstances could Tina consider getting back together with Dan?

If Tina gives Dan another chance...

p. 50 What do you think of Tina's idea that Dan could get some help?

If Tina sticks to her decision...

p. 51 How do you feel about her decision?

If Dan doesn't tell Tina he'll call the help line...

p. 53 How do you feel about Dan's decision to end the relationship?

If Dan tells Tina he'll call the help line...

p. 54 Is this a realistic scenario? Do you know anyone your age who has gotten help in this way? Do you know anyone older who has? How else do people work out personal problems?

Follow-up

Make additional information available (see appendix next page):

- from Education Wife Assault and METRAC
- Relationship quiz
- clinic information
- ECP information

Let the group know you are available to talk privately with anyone who needs/wants to.

Appendix

Here is some information that may be useful.

AIDS and Sexual Health Infoline – 416-392-2437

Teen Sex Infoline – 416- 961- 3200

Assaulted Women's Helpline – 416-863-0511

Metro Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC)
www.metrac@interlog.com

Education Wife Assault – 416 – 968-3422

For more information and additional resources, you can reach your local Sexual Health Educator by calling the Toronto Health Connection at 416-338 – 7600.