

Grades 7 and Up

Toronto Public Health

Growth & Development/Sexual Health

Curriculum Support Document

Relationships

Suggested Materials:

- Intimacy Cards* (Appendix)
 - flip chart paper
 - markers
 - chalk board/white board
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Discuss Group Agreements

Work with students to construct a list of group agreements that will increase their feelings of safety and comfort during sexual health classes.

It is essential that the following be included:

- No personal questions or sharing of private information.*
- You have the right to pass on a question.
- Use dictionary words whenever possible.
- Emphasize respect.

Post the list in the classroom and refer to it as needed.

**There is a balance between encouraging students to talk about real life and over-disclosure of private information. Encourage students to use the phrase "Someone I know..." instead of the person's name if sharing information of a personal nature.*

Activity 1: Introduction to the Intimacy Continuum

Introduce the idea of an intimacy continuum: an imaginary line of behaviour that involves increasingly close emotional and/or physical contact.

Draw a horizontal line on the board. On the far left side of the line, write the word "stranger", and on the far right side of the line write "best friend or closest family member".

Teacher prompt:

- "What kinds of things might you say to a person on the left side of this continuum (i.e., a stranger)."
(possible answers: "Hi/Hello", "Do you know what time it is?", etc.)
- "What kinds of things might you share with someone on the right side of the continuum (i.e., a best friend or close family member)?"
(possible answers: feelings, private information about who they have a crush on, etc.)
- "Who in your life would be in the middle of this continuum? What sorts of things would you share with them?"
(possible answers: classmates, team mates, neighbours, etc.)
- "How would it feel if a stranger shared something really private with you? Like if a stranger told you that they had wet their bed last night."

Describe this intuition feeling as an 'uh oh feeling' – a feeling of discomfort when the level of intimacy doesn't match the relationship you have with the person.

Teacher prompts:

- "When people speak or act beyond your expected intimacy level, this can cause discomfort – a kind of 'uh oh feeling'."
- "It is important to trust those 'uh oh feelings'. You may feel a feeling of discomfort from words or physical contact, and you may need to take action to keep yourself safe."
(Note: Exceptions may occur when sharing really private information with someone you go to for help, like a counsellor or a doctor.)

Activity 2: Intimacy Continuum Cards

Draw another horizontal line on the board; on the left hand side of the line write 'beginning relationship'. On the right hand side is where the class will be building the intimacy continuum with the cards.

Introduce the Intimacy Continuum cards (see Appendix) and advise the class that he cards will be used to talk about intimacy and sexuality.

Distribute the Intimacy Continuum cards among the students.

Have the students hold up the cards and line up in the order they think sexual intimacy might take place – from the time people first notice each other.

Alternatively, especially in a large class, the cards can be discussed by displaying them at the front of the audience by placing them on the blackboard ledge.

Some facilitators prefer to discuss this activity by using a fictional couple to tell the story. Be sure to give the couple names like Pat and Chris, which are gender neutral. Some students may notice that on some drawings it is difficult to distinguish gender.

Teacher prompt:

- "Would the intimacy continuum be any different if the people involved were of the same gender?"

Discuss safety in terms of being open about sexual orientation at school, in terms of sexual risks (refer to the birth control lesson plan for pregnancy risks as they relate to 2SLGBTQ+ students), and in terms of who someone might go to for help (i.e., many 2SLGBTQ+ students may worry about homo/bi/transphobia from service providers or family members).

If homo/bi/transphobic statements come up, reinforce that this is a form of discrimination, similar to racism. Reinforce that anti-discrimination policies exist at schools and most workplaces to protect against discrimination.

Remind students that part of a respectful relationship would include using the pronouns and words for body parts that someone is comfortable with. Abuse could include homo/bi/trans phobic slurs or comments or threatening to 'out' someone.

Discuss the continuum steps (see below). The order may vary depending on the class discussions. Emphasize to students that people have the right to stop anywhere along the continuum if/when they begin to feel uncomfortable.

Discuss the 'uh-oh feeling' that someone might get if it felt that things were moving too quickly, or if the level of emotional intimacy did not match the physical/sexual intimacy. Everyone has the right to decide what feels comfortable for them. No one should ever feel pressured or coerced into doing something that they feel is uncomfortable. Coercion is a type of bullying.

Distribute the Consent Cards (see Appendix).

Ask students to place Consent Cards in areas where a check-in to ask for consent might be necessary: either verbally or through body language.

Lead a discussion about consent and how it feels when a partner asks or checks-in during the different levels of intimacy.

Facilitator's Notes – Intimacy Continuum Card Discussion

1. Eye contact (pupils dilate when we see someone we are attracted to)
2. Talking (we find excuses to talk to each other, like or comment on each other's social media posts)
3. Calling (we text message, DM or talk on the phone)
4. Messages (on the computer, notes, sexting)
5. Holding hands (can feel close, special)
6. Hugs or slow dancing
7. Quick kiss (same as with a relative or friend)
8. Longer kiss (more intimate, close)
9. French kiss/wet kiss (some like this, some do not)
10. Touching over clothes (at a party, at home, at a movie...)
11. Touching under clothes (where or when)
12. Using your hands (for your own pleasure or with someone else)
13. Oral sex (on any gender, some love it and some don't. Discuss safety re: STIs)
14. Sexual intercourse (sex, "doing it")

Extra cards on Consent

15. Street Light (Red)
16. Street Light (Yellow)
17. Street Light (Green)
18. Thumbs Up
19. Thumbs middle
20. Thumbs down
21. Consent
22. Time to Talk
23. Check-In

Activity 3: Intimacy and Consent

Once the Intimacy Continuum cards have been put in order, lead a discussion that explores the themes of communication, risks, responsibilities and benefits. This can be done in small groups then shared as a whole.

Possible teacher prompt:

- "Let's say two people in grade 8 have all been part of the same group of friends, and one Friday one of them texts the other to ask what they're up to on the weekend. When the second says "Not much", the first person says, "Want to come over to my place?"

**Indicate the card of sitting on the couch with touching over the clothes and the kissing*

- "If they are touching over the clothes, what might they be thinking they will do, sexually? What might the other person be thinking? How would they know what the other one thinks? Is this easy? Why or why not?"
- "If they kiss or touch in a sexual way, is consent needed? Are there risks to this over-the-clothes touch or kissing? What are risks and benefits of being alone?"
- "Would anything be different if they were the same gender?"
- "If they were drinking or high, would it change anything?"
- "In the picture the person being touched looks like they are smiling. Just because someone is smiling or laughing, does that mean they are consenting? Sometimes people smile, giggle or laugh when they are nervous."

Discuss things that you might say to someone to ensure that the person is consenting to the activity.

Examples:

- "You seem nervous, are you okay with me touching you like this?"
- "Hey! Are you into this? Are you okay with what we are doing?"

Use these types of questions with the oral sex and sexual intercourse cards.

Additional Discussion Notes:

Alcohol/ drugs – what if alcohol or drugs were in the picture? What effect do they have? Is consent present? Does checking in with the person after they are intoxicated count as consent?

Condom – when would condoms be used? Do you think there needs to be a conversation about this before sexual activity? Would alcohol affect someone's ability to set boundaries with regards to intimacy? Would someone not use a condom or use it incorrectly when they were using alcohol or street drugs?

Sexting Laws:

Child pornography: it is illegal to send sexual photos/videos of anyone who is, or appears to be, under 18. This includes taking and sending sexual photos/videos of yourself if you're under 18.

Possession: it is illegal to save child pornography on a phone, computer, cloud storage or any other kind of device

Distribution: it is illegal to sell or share child pornography. This includes:

- showing it to people on your phone or computer
- forwarding it through text or email
- posting it on the Internet

Activity 4: Relationships

Discuss the characteristics and traits/qualities of relationships.

Teacher prompts:

- "What are some traits/qualities in a partner that you would want in a relationship?"
- "What are some traits/qualities in a partner that you would not want?"

Ensure the following are discussed:

- **Respect** –using respectful language and not acting in ways that demean your partner; understanding your partner's wishes and feelings; being ready to compromise and to meet your partner halfway
- **Communication** – being honest with each other and listening to each other
- **Trust** –trusting your partner; sharing feelings; supporting your partner during difficult times
- **Consent** – consent has to be asked for every time any new form of sexual activity that takes place, even if it is with an existing or previous sexual partner
- **Abuse** – physical, verbal, sexual, emotional, psychological, financial, etc.

Relationships are an important part of being human. Some aspects of our relationships are more healthy and rewarding than others. We'd like them to be enjoyable and respectful and provide opportunities for many positive experiences that affect self-esteem. We can develop these healthy aspects with anyone, including family, friends, and dating partners. It takes time, energy, and care to develop positive relationships. Relationships made during the teenage years can become very special and may form an important part of life. There are also many lessons to be learned from the relationships we have.

The healthy parts of relationships between partners are characterized by communication, respect, caring, and trust. They are based on the belief that partners are equal and that decision-making in the relationship is shared equally.

In our relationships, we must maintain the freedom to be ourselves. It is important to maintain an individual identity, regardless of the type of relationship being pursued.

Maintaining our identity in a romantic relationship also means nurturing the other relationships we already have with family and friends. At first, dating partners may want to spend all their time with each other, but it is equally important for couples to spend time apart so that they can maintain relationships with other people. These relationships provide perspective, and can be a valuable source of support when a couple experiences difficult or stressful times in a romantic relationship or when the relationship ends.

A relationship can be satisfying and promote individual growth and health. Establishing mutually acceptable boundaries based on personal values is important in any relationship. Romantic partners shouldn't pressure each other to do things they have agreed not to do. Mutual respect means not only giving respect to a partner, but also showing respect for oneself.

Sexuality Education Resource Centre Manitoba, 2003

Activity 5: How does it End?

Distribute the scenes (below, see Appendix for handout) to groups of students and have them discuss the scenarios and give possible endings to the scenes.

Scene One

A girl and her boyfriend have been dating for a couple of months now. She wants to have sex, but he doesn't. What could he do?

Scene Two

You are on a date with someone you had just met, the date went very well and during the end of the date, your date leans over for a kiss. You feel a little uncomfortable. What would you do?

Scene Three

You've just been asked to go to a dance with someone you like at school! Your parents/caregivers won't allow you to date until you're older, but you really want to go. What would you do?

Scene Four

A friend recently shared with you a picture of their partner and you felt that it was a little private. What would you do?

Scene Five

You are 12-years-old and your younger sibling has a hot babysitter that is 16-years-old. One day the babysitter asks you for a kiss. It made you feel very special because someone older found you attractive, what would you do?

**Note to Teacher – Discuss legal age of consent and close-in-age provisions according to Criminal Code of Canada (refer to link on page 2).*

Scene Six

You really like this one person and you really want to go on a date, but you know that your parents would not accept dating at a young age? What would you do?

Scene Seven

You are in a relationship and your partner has been asking you to send them nude pictures of yourself to them. You are feeling uncomfortable with that, but your partner keeps asking. What would you do?

Scene Eight

Your friend's girlfriend just broke up with her. Now she wants to 'make her pay'. How can you support your friend with the hurt of the break-up and deal with rejection?

Activity 6: Dealing with Break Ups

When introducing this topic, it is important to review group agreements and review confidentiality.

Teacher prompt:

- "When a relationship fails, people may experience profound disappointment, stress, and grief. Break ups can be extremely painful because they represent the loss of not just partnership, but of the hopes and memories shared."

**Note to Teacher – if you feel that your students are not yet in romantic/intimate relationships, you may also use this activity to deal with breakups in friendships*

A. Breaking Up and Emotional Health

Teacher prompts:

- "Has anyone ever witnessed one of their friends go through a break up?" *(Remind students not to use names or identifying information.)*
- "A break up is a type of loss. People can experience all sorts of feelings when they breakup with someone or if someone breaks up with them. What sorts of feelings might they have?"
(Possible answers: anger, jealousy, sadness, shock, relief, ambivalence, etc.)
- "Depending on the intensity of the relationship, break ups can bring intense emotions as well. It can be difficult to have opened up and become vulnerable to someone else, and then experience a loss of that intimacy."
- "Sometimes break ups can cause distorted thoughts of ourselves to seem validated and can put people at risk of self-esteem loss (i.e., I am not smart enough or good-looking enough.)"

Remind students of supports available, such as Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868 or www.kidshelpphone.ca).

B. Being the Person Who Wants the Break Up

Teacher prompts:

- "It is hard to be broken up with, but it is also difficult for the person that ends the relationship."
- "Has anyone ever had to help a friend to break up with someone? What might be the concerns of the person that wanted the break up?"
- "Often, when a break up happens, most people try to make the person who was broken up with feel better – the person who initiated the break up doesn't always get the same care and concern."

C. How to Break Up

Teacher prompts:

- "What do you think the worst way to break up would be? Why?"
- "Can you be too nice when breaking up? What might happen?"

Additional Information:

- General recommendations on how to break up:
 - be honest
 - be quick
 - be respectful
 - be decisive
 - be safe

D. Safety

Teacher prompt:

- "Sometimes people will react to a break up in ways we cannot predict. Or maybe they are breaking up with the person to protect themselves. In those situations, one needs to think about safety. What are some ways people can protect themselves and others?"

Additional Information:

- General recommendations on how to break up safely:
 - if someone is violent or has a bad temper, it may be wiser to break up remotely
 - have a trusted friend or parent close by
 - consider breaking up in a public place

E. Remind students of Breakup Self-Care Tips

- be compassionate to yourself
- look for the silver lining
- do things you enjoy
- hang out with friends and family – people who care about you
- understand that you may have many relationships in your lifetime and this was just one of them
- recognize that some relationships have a place and a time

F. Discuss Perks of Being Single

Brainstorm all the wonderful things about being single/ or make a top ten list of the best things about being single

- learn about you
 - take care of you
 - do what you want
 - make out with who you want; your time is your own
 - make your own rules
 - love yourself
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Conclusion

- Summarize what was discussed in this session and ask for any questions.
 - Encourage students to share what they have learned with a trusted adult.
 - Write the *Kids Help Phone* contact information on the board (1-800-668-6868, www.kidshelpphone.ca) and remind students that contacting *Kids Help Phone* is free, confidential, anonymous, and that it can be a safe place to discuss concerns.
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