

ADDRESSING VIOLENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS

Lesson 5

GRADE
CALM

LEARNER OUTCOME¹ P10:

Describe the skills, attitudes and behaviours for building, maintaining and enhancing healthy, positive relationships.

Develop strategies for identifying unhealthy relationships.

Generate a list of ways to provide support to others.

Identify strategies for dealing with significant change and loss in a relationship and for ending a relationship.

LEARNER OUTCOME¹ P11

Identify expectations and commitments in various relationships.

Explain the role of trust and ways to establish trust in a relationship.

Develop strategies for dealing with jealousy.



MATERIALS:

1. **HANDOUT:** Jen and Mark: A Case Study Part II
2. **SLIDE:** If you think your friend is being abused
3. **SLIDE:** If you think your friend is being abusive
4. **SLIDE:** Safety Planning for Teens



INTRODUCTION:

Dating can be fun and exciting, but sometimes your relationship can turn into something you aren't comfortable with. Abuse **can** happen between people who are dating². Teens are vulnerable to abuse in their relationships due in part to inexperience and also myths that include viewing violence as an act of love. In this session students will identify warning signs of being a victim of violence and strategies to deal with abusive relationships. Students will also practice ways to support a friend who is involved in a violent relationship.



Addressing the topic of relationship violence may cause some students to be distressed or show other signs they are, or have somehow been involved in an abusive situation. Dealing with controversial issues encourages students to examine their own beliefs and experiences. Teachers need to act with sensitivity and discretion when handling individual student information that is sensitive or could cause embarrassment or distress to the student or family. Respect confidentiality in the classroom and anticipate where discussions will lead in order to protect students from revealing inappropriate personal information³.

- Before starting these lessons, it is recommended to talk to the school counsellors so they are aware there may be disclosures. Refer to your school division's guidelines about disclosures and reporting.
- Reinforce confidentiality and sensitivity when discussing this topic.



APPROACHES/STRATEGIES:

A. GROUND RULES (5-10 min)

Ensure ground rules are established before beginning this lesson. For classes that have already established ground rules, quickly reviewing them can promote a successful lesson.

B. VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS – KNOWING THE SIGNS DISCUSSION⁴ (15-20 min)

Students clarify the definition of the term 'relationship violence.'

1. **Ask students to define the term "relationship violence".**
 - *Relationship (dating) violence is the emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse of one partner by another in a dating relationship where the couple is not living together⁵.*
2. **Ask students to brainstorm the various forms of abuse under the following headings⁶:**

Physical abuse: The intentional use of any action that could cause pain or injury. Shoving, pushing, slapping, kicking, biting, punching, pinching, hair-pulling, throwing things, threatening to cause harm with a weapon.

Emotional abuse: Name-calling, insulting, blaming, humiliating, swearing or yelling, being disrespectful, causing embarrassment, being explosive, extreme mood swings, manipulating, being possessive, and isolation.



To supplement these discussion points and for more information download the [Government of Alberta's Dating Abuse booklet](#).



Some people experience abuse, violence, assault or exploitation that takes the decision to be abstinent away from them. In these cases abstinence is not a choice e.g., a teen that is forced to have a sexual relationship with someone for a couch to sleep on that evening. Students who go through these types of experiences will need extra support to understand that what happened to them is never their fault. They will also need encouragement to understand that they can have healthy relationships where they do have the right to choose sexual activity.

For more information about the age of consent go to MyHealth.Alberta.ca:
<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/understanding-consent-for-sex.aspx>

Psychological abuse (intimidation): Throwing or breaking things, destroying possessions, threatening to cause personal harm or harm to friends, family or pets, threatening to commit suicide to get their way, threatening gestures or facial expressions, stalking, contact by phone text or email that causes fear or discomfort, guilt tripping, mind games.

Sexual Abuse: Any unwanted sexual touching, sexual acts without consent, making fun for not wanting to do certain sexual things, unsafe sexual practices, forcing a person into degrading, humiliating or painful sexual acts, making rude comments or gestures.

3. Ask students how common they think these types of violence are in teen relationships.

- It is important to emphasize that relationship violence is not confined to males being violent to females as the stereotype suggests. Any couple, whether male/female, male/male or female/female can experience violence.
- Most studies of self-reported dating violence shows young people between the ages of 15-24 have the highest risk of dating violence. Females in their teens experience dating violence at a higher rate than young males. Young adolescents between the ages of 12-14 accounted for less than 2% of victims' of dating violence⁶.

4. Ask students to brainstorm the warning signs that someone may be experiencing relationship violence⁶:

A person who is experiencing an abusive situation may show the following signs or changes in behaviour:

- Physical injuries like bruises, sores, scratches or broken bones- especially if the injuries do not match the story they tell you.
- Sudden changes in clothes or makeup.
- Failing grades or dropping out of school activities.
- Emotional outbursts or over-reacting to things that seem small or unimportant
- Withdrawing from friends or family.

- Difficulty making decisions.
- Sudden changes in mood or personality (e.g. becoming anxious or depressed, acting out, and being secretive).
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits, avoiding eye contact.
- Constantly thinking about dating partner.
- Using alcohol or drugs or increased use of drugs or alcohol.

5. Brainstorm some warning signs a person is abusive and could be violent:

- S/he pressures to make the relationship very serious or to have sex.
- S/he becomes extremely jealous and possessive and thinks these destructive displays of emotion are signs of love.
- S/he is controlling and bossy (e.g. makes all the decisions, does not take your opinions seriously, or uses put-downs when alone or with friends).
- S/he uses guilt trips (e.g. “If you really loved me, you would...”).
- Blames you for relationships problems (e.g. “It’s because of you I get so mad.”).
- S/he may apologize for violent behaviours promising to never act violent again and to change.
- S/he keeps you from spending time with close friends or family.
- S/he is verbally and emotionally abusive.

6. Ask students to discuss reasons why teens don’t tell parents or friends about violence. They may feel:

- Embarrassed, ashamed, stupid, worthless
- Alone and afraid of getting hurt
- Convinced it’s their fault
- Scared of getting in trouble
- Parents or friends will blame them or will be disappointed.
- Confused- they may think this is how people show love.

C. Jen and Mark – Role Play Activity: Part II

Students identify ways that they can support a friend who is being abused or give advice to an abuser.

1. Explain that the following role play activity will help students identify ways that they could support a friend who is being abused or give advice to an abuser.
2. Form groups of 3-4 students.
3. Give each group a copy of the **Jen and Mark – a Case Study: Part II** handout.
4. Explain that groups must plan and present a role-play as outlined in the handout. The role-play should provide appropriate examples of how they would support either Jen or Mark.
5. Role-plays should range from 1-3 minutes in length. No inappropriate language is allowed.



Reinforce the **Ground Rules** for this activity. Students may have different comfort levels in participating in roles plays. Remind students it is an activity to learn from and to be sensitive to one another’s

6. Give groups 5-10 minutes to plan and practice their role-play.
7. Instruct the audience to listen carefully to each presentation, and inform them that there will be a discussion after each presentation.
8. Have each group begin by telling the audience who they have chosen to support and then introduce the actors and their roles. Groups then act out the role-play.
9. After each presentation, use the following questions to lead a discussion:
 - What support skills were used to help Jen/Mark?
 - Can you suggest other ways the characters may have handled this situation?
 - What were your feelings as you watched this role-play?
10. Discuss the slide: **Safety Planning for Teens**⁷:
 - Stay in touch with friends and involved in activities.
 - Keep important phone numbers with you at all times.
 - Consider telling your parents or teachers.
 - Set up a code word with friends or parents for danger.
 - Talk to police and/or a shelter about your situation.
 - Try not to be alone with your partner.
 - When with your partner, keep in mind warning signs that things will become abusive.
 - If you think you are in danger, LEAVE!
 - Make sure someone knows where you are and when you'll be home.
 - Always have your cell phone close by or know where the nearest phone is.
 - If you decide to break up, do it in a public place. Have friends or parents wait for you nearby. Take your cell phone with you if possible.
11. Debrief the activity using the slides: **If you think your friend is being abused and If you think your friend is being abusive**
 - Note that while it may be healthier and safer for Jen to leave the relationship, she may choose to stay. For the friends and family this is difficult, but ultimately her choice.

D. SUMMARY

Students review the concept of relationship violence.

- Nobody deserves to be abused. Abuse is not a sign of love or affection and builds fear, not love.
- If you are being abused find someone you trust to talk to. Talk to your partner and explain that you are going to leave if the abuse does not stop. Trust your instincts.
- If your friend is being abused, talk it out by being a good listener and offering your support. Tell your friend that nobody deserves to be abused. Be patient; it can take time for your friend to make changes.
- If you are being abusive talk it out with a friend or counsellor. Abuse is a learned behaviour and **you can change it!**

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger call 911.

If you or someone you know needs support please refer to the following for help:

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868

Connect: 1-877-237-5888

Healthlink: 1-866-408-5465

Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services: <http://www.aasas.ca/>



QUESTION BOX (10 min)

Have students fill out questions and address them next class.



SELF REFLECTION

During the lesson, were:

- Ground rules being followed?
- Good practices established regarding group work and discussion?

What will you change for future classes with this group?

What will you change for future use of this lesson?



STUDENT ASSESSMENT

During the lesson, did students:

Knowledge:

- Describe how relationships can become violent?
- Identify warning signs of a violent relationship?

Skills:

- Develop strategies for supporting a friend?
- Identify support services in the community?

Attitudes:

- Discuss the reasons teens may stay in violent relationships and accept that violent relationships can be damaging?
 - Accept that nobody deserves to be abused?
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CALM RELATIONSHIPS LESSON 5

1. Alberta Education. (2002). *Career and Life Management Guide to Implementation*. Retrieved from: http://education.alberta.ca/media/313521/calm_pos.pdf
2. Government of Alberta. (2015). *Dating Violence*. Retrieved from <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/abuse-bullying/15695.html>
3. Alberta Education. (2002). *Health and life skills guide to implementation: Kindergarten to grade 9*. Retrieved from <http://education.alberta.ca/media/353029/epc.pdf>
4. Canadian Red Cross. (2015). Types of violence in youth relationships. Retrieved from: <http://www.redcross.ca/what-we-do/violence-bullying-and-abuse-prevention/educators/healthy-youth-dating-relationships/types-of-violence-in-youth-relationships> Government of Alberta. (2008). *Dating abuse*. [Booklet]. Retrieved from <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/PFVB0377-dating-abuse-booklet.pdf>
5. Hotton Mahony, T. (2010). Police-reported dating violence in Canada, 2008. *Juristat*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2010002/article/11242-eng.htm>
6. Adapted from: National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline. (2013) *Love is respect*. Retrieved from <http://www.loveisrespect.org>

JEN & MARK: A CASE STUDY PART II

Jen and Mark met in Art class. Working on projects, they got to know each other better. As they became friends, they realized they were attracted to each other. They started to go on dates and spend more and more time together.

Several months later, their friends noticed that the relationship was changing. They noticed that he put her down often and was demanding and aggressive with her. They also noticed that Jen and Mark were rarely apart and when Jen was away from Mark, he would constantly call her cell phone. Jen seemed anxious when she was with Mark, and often worried about making him angry. Jen's friends began to talk to her about her relationship.

After talking to her friends, Jen decided to give Mark a while longer to change and told him how she felt. Mark said that he was sorry and began telling her that he could not imagine life without her. He promised to change and said that he did not mean to do hurtful things.

Things did not change, and in fact, their friends worried that Mark was becoming increasingly more controlling. Mark was also pressuring Jen to have sex. Jen often called friends to cancel plans. Mark also became closed and didn't spend time with friends. He would become angry with male friends if they spoke to Jen.

Jen's best friend, Ann, and Mark's best friend, George, are very worried about the situation. They have decided that it's time to talk to Jen and Mark about the relationship. Ann will talk to Jen and George will talk to Mark.

You are either Ann or George. You are preparing to talk about Mark and Jen's relationship. Answer the questions below to prepare for your conversation, based on how you think your character would answer.

- 1. What are the main concerns about the relationship?**
- 2. How do you feel about the relationship?**
- 3. What needs to change in the relationship?**
- 4. Should the relationship continue?**
- 5. Mark is pressuring Jen to have sex. What decision do you think she should make? How would this decision affect the relationship?**
- 6. How would you express your opinion about the relationship in your conversation?**

IF YOU THINK YOUR FRIEND IS BEING ABUSED

- **Listen to what your friend has to say and believe them.**
- **Let your friend know why you are concerned.** Be specific. Refer to incidents you have personally witnessed instead of what you have heard from others.¹ Remind your friend that jealousy and possessiveness do not equal love.
- **Tell your friend, “You are not to blame.”** Remind your friend that it is the partner who is choosing this behaviour.
- **Don’t tell your friend that it is wrong** if the choice is made to stay in the relationship. Keep listening, talking and challenging your friend to think about what to do.
- **If your friend chooses not to leave,** help create a safety plan.
- **Continue to be a friend** even in the times when you feel frustrated by decisions or actions. Your friend needs you!
- **Mention other people your friend might talk to: a counsellor, a teacher, another adult they trust or a community agency.**
- **Let them know that you are available to talk more if they need.**

IF YOU THINK YOUR FRIEND IS BEING ABUSIVE

- **Be specific about what you saw** and how it made you feel. Take a stand. Remember early signs of abuse may include jealousy and possessiveness.
- **Challenge your friend's stereotyping** and putdowns of people. Don't laugh at jokes or comments that make fun of people.
- **Talk about the consequences of violence.** Abusive behaviour builds fear, not love. Physical and sexual assault are against the law.
- **Encourage your friend to get help.** Let your friend know it will probably happen again and may be worse next time. Phone a crisis line or shelter to find out about resources in your community.
- **Be there for your friend** when your friend accepts responsibility and gets help.

SAFETY PLANNING FOR TEENS

If you are in an abusive relationship, or trying to get out of one, here are some tips you should consider to increase your safety:

- Stay in touch with friends and involved in activities.
- Keep important phone numbers with you at all times.
- Consider telling your parents or teachers.
- Set up a code word with friends or parents for danger.
- Talk to police and/or a shelter about your situation.
- Try not to be alone with your partner.
- When with your partner, keep in mind warning signs that things will become abusive.
- If you think you are in danger, LEAVE!
- Make sure someone knows where you are and when you'll be home.
- Always have your cell phone close by or know where the nearest phone is.
- If you decide to break up, do it in a public place. Have friends or parents wait for you near by. Take your cell phone with you if possible.