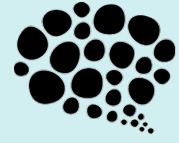


# Lesson 7:

## Healthy Dating Relationships



### Learner Outcomes

Students will:

- Identify the qualities to look for in a partner
- Practice what to say to ask someone on a date
- Describe what people can do on a date
- Identify what to do if a date is not healthy

These outcomes are related to Alberta curriculum sexuality outcomes and **require parental notification.**

This lesson is related to the Health and Life Skills Learning Outcome

***Grade 9: Develop strategies that address factors to prevent or reduce sexual risk; e.g., abstain from drugs and alcohol, date in groups, use assertive behaviour.***

and is related to the CALM Learning Outcome

***P11 Examine the relationship between commitment and intimacy in all its levels***

### How To Use

Teachers and staff know their students best: before teaching this lesson, consider each student's individual goals. The overall aim is for students to be healthy and safe while having the best personal and social experiences possible. Avoid assuming that a student doesn't need or want this information.

All the Differing Abilities (DA) lesson plans can be adapted to the needs of individual students and groups. The lessons are scripted, meaning there are answers and explanations for every question asked. The questions, answers and discussion points are prepared for you using plain and simple language at a level best suited to students with DA.

*Text in italics* is the script designed to be read directly to students. Possible answers to questions, activity instructions and other teacher information, are not in italics.

## Classroom Activities

- A. Group Agreements and Check-in
- B. Introduction to Healthy Dating
- C. Healthy or Unhealthy?
- D. From Friendship to Dating
- E. Safe and Fun Dating Checklist
- F. Ending Relationships
- G. Question Box
- H. Closure

## Required Materials

[So You Wanna Date](#) video

Getting Ready for Dating handout

## Background Information for Teachers

The [goal of sexuality education](#) is to support students to:

- build knowledge, skills, and attitudes to lead sexually healthy lives.
- explore values consistent with physical, social, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being.
- identify strategies to talk about sexuality and access natural supports (e.g., parents) and community supports (e.g., healthcare providers) as needed.

### Relationships

Healthy, fulfilling relationships are needed for all people's emotional and physical well-being. Understanding the differences between healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships helps students to identify healthy and unhealthy characteristics of a student's past, present and future relationships. All people need to learn to express their emotions in a healthy way, and this learning starts in infancy. Sharing feelings can build relationships between people, strengthen relationships between people, strengthen emotional bonds, and deal with conflicts. When sharing emotions, starting the conversation with "I feel..." and then naming the emotion, is more effective than saying "You make me feel..." or "I feel that you...".

Below are traits of healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships. Most of these traits can relate to any kind of relationship, but a few deal specifically with romantic or intimate relationships.

	Healthy	Unhealthy	Abusive
Sharing Feelings	Both people feel safe, comfortable and strong enough to tell each other how they really feel.	One person feels uncomfortable telling the other how they really feel.	One person feels afraid to tell the other how they really feel. They are scared of being rejected, abandoned, getting 'put down' or being threatened.
Communicating	Both partners listen to and respect each other's point of view. They make decisions together.	One person ignores the other and does not respect their opinions.	One person treats the other with disrespect. One person ignores the other's ideas and feelings or makes fun of them.
Disagreements	Both people have equal say in the relationship. They show respect to each other even when they have disagreements. They work things out together, so they both get what they need.	Disagreements often turn into fights that include yelling, criticism or harsh words.	One person is afraid to disagree because they don't want the other to get angry or violent. The disagreement is used as an excuse for abuse.
Intimacy and sex	Both partners are honest about how they feel about being physical and having sex. Neither person feels pressured to do anything they don't want to do.	One person is embarrassed to say how they feel or what they need. One person may go along with things they may not be comfortable with.	One person ignores the other's needs and wants. One person may be pushed into doing things that make them feel uncomfortable, afraid or ashamed.
Time alone	Both people can spend time alone and think of this as a healthy part of the relationship.	One person thinks there may be something wrong if the other wants to do things without them. One person tries to keep the other to themselves.	One person doesn't let the other spend time doing things because it's seen as a threat to the relationship. One person may monitor the other person's activities and isolate them from family and friends.

<b>Verbal</b>	<p>Both people value the differences between each other and work to be non-judgmental.</p> <p>Both partners try hard not to talk harshly to or about each other.</p>	<p>There have been a few times when harsh words were used, and one person felt at risk of harm.</p> <p>There is no clear pattern of abuse.</p>	<p>There is a pattern of increasing or ongoing verbal or psychological abuse. This may include damaging belongings, name-calling, and threats to hurt or kill the other person, a family member or a pet.</p>
<b>Violence</b>	<p>There is no physical violence or threat of violence in the relationship.</p> <p>Neither person feels at risk of being hurt or harmed.</p> <p>Both partners behave in ways that keep the other safe (e.g., safer sex practices)</p>	<p>There have been a few times when one person felt at risk of harm.</p> <p>There is no clear pattern of abuse or violence.</p>	<p>There is an increasing or ongoing pattern of pushing, slapping, shaking, choking, punching or forced sexual contact.</p>

### Being Prepared for Disclosures and Distress

Addressing the topic of abusive relationships may cause some students to be distressed or show other signs that they have been involved in or witnessed an abusive situation. Dealing with sensitive issues encourages students to examine their own beliefs and experiences. Teachers need to act with sensitivity and discretion when handling sensitive student information that could cause embarrassment or distress to the student or family.

To maintain both student safety and engagement, it is helpful to be familiar with [trauma informed practice](#), use inclusive language and to acknowledge feelings and stories. It is also important to strongly emphasize a respect for confidentiality among all class members.

- Respect and reinforce confidentiality and sensitivity in the classroom.
- Anticipate where discussions will lead to protect students from revealing inappropriate personal information.
- Before starting these lessons, talk to the school counsellors so they are aware there may be disclosures of abuse.
- Ensure your students understand that disclosures of abuse cannot be kept confidential. Disclosures are the first step to getting help for a student who is experiencing abuse.
- Share with students what they can expect if they disclose abuse, e.g., acknowledgement, honouring their disclosure, redirection to

For more information on reporting and responding to disclosure see the video and related materials at [Recognizing, Reporting and Responding to Abuse in Schools.](#)

discuss further outside of class and assurance of connecting them with support.

- The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act requires you to report the abuse of a young person to Child and Family Services or Delegated First Nation Agencies. You can locate your local office by visiting <https://www.alberta.ca/childrens-services-offices.aspx>
- Reports can also be made to the **Child Abuse Hotline** at 1-800-387-5437. Abuse includes physical abuse and sexual aggression in any form.

For more information, review [Responding to Child Abuse: A Handbook](#), published by the Government of Alberta or visit [How to Help and Report Child Abuse, Neglect and Sexual Exploitation](#)

Refer to your school division's guidelines about disclosures and reporting.

### Language and terms

Talking about anatomy, physiology, and sexual development in terms of people, parts and processes is more accurate than talking about it in terms of assigned sex (female and male) or gender identity (girl and boy). For example, not everyone who gets periods is a girl, so saying "when someone gets their period" is more accurate than saying "when a girl gets her period." This also helps make sure that everyone is included in the discussion, including trans, nonbinary and intersex youth.

However, some students may find this language confusing and will benefit from using gendered terms more frequently e.g., "when a girl gets her period, she may choose to use period underwear". It's important for students to be clear about what may happen to them and saying people who get periods may be too abstract, resulting in confusion. Terms can be used together when explaining concepts e.g., "when someone is first starting to get their period, it may be irregular. Not all girls have a regular period at first."

Students may have questions about their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE). Teachers play an important role in helping students feel seen and affirmed when they come to school so that they feel good about their gender expression and identities. These lessons use inclusive language and acknowledge different identities and relationships to acknowledge all students as they develop their sexuality. Learn more about [gender identity and expression](#).

## A. Group Agreements and Check-in

Ensure [group agreements](#) (ground rules) are established before beginning this lesson. For classes that have already established group agreements, quickly reviewing them can help ensure a successful lesson.

Start with a check-in activity as appropriate for the group. You may want to answer the question box questions from the last class as part of the check-in.

## B. Introduction to Healthy Dating

It's important that students have had the opportunity to talk about qualities and skills for friendship before this lesson begins. Acknowledge that not everyone dates, gets married or has children. Some students may not have the prospect of dating relationships (e.g., their family doesn't allow it) even as they see similar age peers beginning to date. However, learning about healthy dating helps all students grow self-confidence and independence.

- 1. Relationships are when people are connected and do things together. We have relationships with family, friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, teammates, teachers and others. Today, we are going to talk about healthy dating relationships. What is a dating relationship?*
  - Sometimes friendships turn into “more than friends” as the friendship and attraction become stronger.
  - They might go out on dates – doing things together as more than friends.
- 2. What does your family and/or community think about dating? Why does it matter?*

Some families have rules about dating, like how old you have to be, who supervises or what you are allowed to do on dates.
- 3. Do you need to date? Do all teens date?*
  - Not all teens date. Some people never have a dating relationship in their life and that's ok. Many people are happy to be around family and friends.
  - Media, friends, or family might make it seem that there is pressure to date but it's important to do what is right for you.

## C. Healthy or Unhealthy?

In the lesson on friendship, students were encouraged to think about the qualities of a good friend. It can be useful to remind students that they learn about relationships from family, movies, TV, songs, books and friends. Some of those relationships show healthy relationships, some show unhealthy ones.

- 1. No matter what type of relationship we are in, a healthy relationship makes us feel happy and safe and an unhealthy relationship can make us feel sick, stressed, or unsafe.*
- 2. Dating relationships are like all relationships - healthy dating relationships make us feel happy and healthy; unhealthy dating relationships can make us feel bad. Thinking about what you want*

*from a boyfriend/girlfriend/person you're dating helps make sure your relationship is healthy and happy.*

3. Write **Healthy Relationships** ☺ and **Unhealthy Relationships** ☹ on the board.
4. As a class, create a list of characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships. You may need to provide examples for students to get this activity started. Some ideas are shown below.
5. Consider using sticky notes – students can write or draw pictures of the characteristics.

Healthy Relationships	Unhealthy Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Honesty</li> <li>• Kindness</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Fun</li> <li>• Acceptance</li> <li>• Sense of humour</li> <li>• Good self-esteem</li> <li>• Things in common</li> <li>• Good communication</li> <li>• Supportive</li> <li>• Good listener</li> <li>• Independence</li> <li>• No fear of the other person</li> <li>• Allows you to be you</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No trust</li> <li>• No respect</li> <li>• Mean</li> <li>• Name calling</li> <li>• Poor communication</li> <li>• Fighting</li> <li>• Arguing</li> <li>• Controlling</li> <li>• No fun</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Jealousy</li> <li>• Lies</li> <li>• Other person tries to change you</li> </ul>

6. *This list might be a bit different for everyone. For example, to some people it's important that the other person needs to like the same hockey team as you do, but to other people that's not important.*
7. *When someone becomes your boyfriend/girlfriend/person you date, they need to be a very special friend, so you want to make sure that they have the same kinds of qualities you would have in a very best friend.*

## D. From Friendship to Dating

During adolescence, relationships provide opportunities for self-esteem and personal growth. Friendships and dating provide teens with the opportunity to develop skills and behaviours for building and maintaining healthy relationships.

1. *Many dating relationships start out as friendships. What are some things that friends might do together?*
  - Watch a movie, play games, go for a walk, go to a sports game, talk on the phone, chat on social media.
2. *How do you know when a friend has become more than a friend and they are your boyfriend or girlfriend?*
  - Sometimes you find that you want to spend more and more time with them.
  - You feel extra excited to be with that person and you might want to be alone with them.
  - One of you asks the other if they want to be boyfriend or girlfriend.
3. *What is a crush?*
  - Strong feelings that you really like someone; when you are around or think about them your heart might race, you giggle, or you may daydream about being with them.
  - *Most people get crushes; they may be a celebrity like a singer or sports personality but could also be someone in your daily life.*
  - *Sometimes crushes are on people who would not be OK to date, like someone much older than you or someone already in a dating relationship.*
  - *Crushes can be private - you don't have to tell anyone about your crush, and you don't have to do anything about your crush if you don't want to.*
  - *Crushes don't always last very long.*
4. *Sometimes, when a person gets a crush on a friend, they think about dating them. A healthy dating relationship is deeper than a crush – it's about a special friendship of shared care, respect and trust, not just about excited feelings.*
5. *What is a date?*
  - When people who are or want to be more than friends go out together
6. *When people start to date, they still do lots of the same things friends do together. There are some things people do with boyfriends/girlfriends/partners but not with regular friends. What are some things of these things?*
  - Romantic walks, holding hands, kissing, cuddling, touching.



7. *When you get a crush on a friend, you might want to ask them on a date. If you want to ask a friend on a date, they have the choice to say no, which might make you sad. That's ok. Not everyone you ask on a date will say yes. Dating is a choice.*
8. *When a friend gets a crush on you, they might want to ask you on a date. You also have the right to say no if someone has a crush on you and asks you. This is part of learning about relationships and dating. Dating is a choice. If someone asks you on a date and you don't want to, you can say "No thank you. Thanks for asking."*
9. Show the video **So You Wanna Date** <https://youtu.be/tTSuJYf0SF4>

## E. Getting Ready for Dating

It is important to teach that asking a stranger for a date doesn't fit with healthy dating and can put you in danger. Dating someone you know and have something in common with is safer and healthier.

1. Before class, print copies of the **Getting Ready for Dating** handout. Consider whether your students will complete the checklist individually or in a group, and how much staff assistance they will need.
2. Give each student a copy of the **Getting Ready for Dating** handout.
3. *Some things are important to think about before asking someone out on a date. Imagine you want to ask someone out on a date. Talk about the questions as a group, and write down your answers.*
4. Use the discussion points below to debrief the activity.

### How will I ask the person out?

- In person, message them, have a friend ask them out. However you ask, be honest and polite.
- Think about what you want to say before you ask. You could even practice it in front of a mirror.
- You might feel nervous or excited or worry that they may say no. That is common.

### What if they say no?

- Everyone has a choice, and no one has to date if they don't want to.
- If they say no, you may feel disappointed or upset. These feelings are normal.
- Even if you are feeling bad, it's important to be respectful. Say "Ok" and stay calm.
- It's important to not bother the person you asked out by following them around or calling them. This is not kind and can be scary for the other person.

**Where will we go on our date? How will we decide? Will it be a group date?**

- Many teens start to date by going on 'group dates', with another couple or other friends.
- Group dates can be more fun and comfortable. They can be safer because that way you aren't alone with someone, especially if you don't know them well.
- Deciding where to go together can be fun. Maybe suggest seeing a movie, then decide together which to see. This shows the other person you value their feelings and ideas.
- Dates don't have to cost money. You can go for a walk, play video games, watch school sports or visit a free event.
- If you are planning something that costs money, decide together, before the date starts, how you will pay for the date.

**How will we get there?**

- Will parents take you? Will you take the bus? Be sure to make plans to get home, too.
- Sometimes a parent or older sibling will take you and stay with you as a chaperone to make sure you are safe.

**What will we talk about?**

- Think about how you can get to know the other person by thinking about questions you can ask them.
- Consider what you have in common e.g., if you both like hockey, you can talk about teams you like.
- Easy questions about favourite foods or movies can be a good way to start.

**Who will I tell about the date?**

- It's important to tell your parents/family about dating and where you are going.
- If parents are uncomfortable with you dating, it's important to talk about why.
- You may want to tell your friends about your date – this can be exciting! Check with the other person first to make sure they are ok with telling others online or in person. For some people, dating is private.

**How will I make sure I'm safe?**

- Make sure your parents know where you are going and what time you will be back.
- Consider taking a cell phone for easy communication.
- Go somewhere public with lots of people, like a park or a coffee shop.
- Make a plan with your parents about what to do if you feel uncomfortable or scared.

**What happens if we don't have fun?**

- Sometimes dates don't work out and that's OK. It's part of learning about dating and relationships.
- If you don't have fun be honest and thank the other person for going out. Relationships sometimes end after the first date.

## F. Ending Relationships

Consider reviewing **Ending Relationships** from [Lesson 6: Being a Good Friend](#) as part of this activity.

1. *Just like friendships, some dating relationships end naturally like when someone moves away or because the relationship doesn't work out, or the people don't have as much in common as they thought. It's ok to end a relationship, even after just one date.*
2. *What are some ways you could end a relationship?*
3. *Some people might be scared of ending a relationship because they are worried about how their boyfriend/girlfriend/person they're dating will treat them. This can happen when the relationship is abusive. That means that someone is getting hurt in the relationship. If there are threats, hitting, forcing you to do things you don't want like kissing, it is abusive. If you think you might be in an abusive relationship, or that you might get hurt if you end an abusive relationship, it is very important to tell an adult you trust like a parent or teacher.*

## G. Question Box

Answer any questions from [question box](#) in the previous lesson. Have students submit any new questions and address them next class.

- Some students may need assistance from staff, either during the class or in between classes, to record their questions.
- Hand out paper to each student.
  - Students who don't have a question can write something else on the piece of paper, such as something they learned or just a comment about their day.
  - When everyone writes something down, the people with questions feel safer writing them.

- Use a box or bag to collect the papers.
- Answer the questions during the **next class**. This allows you time to review the questions and prepare responses.

## H. Closure

- *Today we talked about dating relationships. You don't have to date if you don't want to. If you want to date, be sure to talk to your family about it so it fits with your values and is right for you.*
- *What is one thing you learned? How do you feel after talking about dating relationships?*
- *Who can you talk to about what you learned today?*

# Getting Ready for Dating

Imagine you want to ask someone out on a date. Answer the questions below to learn about what you need to think about before asking.

How will I ask the other person out?

What will I say if they say no?

Where will we go on our date? How will we decide? Will it be a group date?

How will we get there?

What will we talk about?

Who will I tell about the date?

What will happen if we don't have fun?

## Healthy Dating Relationships

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