

Ontario Dress Purple Day: Lesson 3



Activity: Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationship Scenario Swap

Grade Range: Grades 7-8

Task Time: 45 minutes

Activity Objective:

The purpose of this activity is to examine different kinds of unhealthy relationships, and explore the power dynamics within them and possible ways to get help in these relationships.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper (one sheet for each group of 4-5 people)
- Markers for writing

Activity Description:

Prep: Facilitator writes on the board the following questions before the activity:

- *What makes the relationship unhealthy?*
- *What healthy qualities are missing in this relationship?*
- *Who has the power or control in this relationship? How might the person without the power or control feel?*
- *How can the individual(s) in the relationship get help or support?*
- *Is this relationship worth saving? Why or why not? If so, what healthy boundaries need to be set?*

1. Divide the class into groups of 4-5 people and give each group a piece of chart paper and markers. Explain to the groups that they will be brainstorming together to create scenarios that show a youth in an unhealthy relationship. Advise the groups to be creative and to think of different types of relationships (e.g., family, friendship, online, with authority figures, romantic relationship, etc.).
2. They will then swap their scenarios with another group to answer the questions written on the board.
 - Have the groups write their scenarios at the top of the chart paper so there is room for the other groups to answer the questions underneath.
 - Go through each question on the board and clarify any questions about them.
 - Provide the students with the following example of a scenario (please choose from the two below) to help them with their work:

SCENARIO 1

Unhealthy scenario: Terri and Kelly are good friends, but Kelly dislikes how Terri sometimes makes mean comments about her appearance. She doesn't feel comfortable confronting Kelly about this. When she finally decides to, Terri denies this and says Kelly is overreacting and refuses to listen to her. After talking to Terri, Kelly feels worse and more unsafe in this friendship.

Healthy scenario: Terri and Kelly are good friends, but Kelly dislikes how Terri sometimes makes mean comments about her appearance. She doesn't feel comfortable confronting Kelly about this. When she finally decides to, Terri listens attentively and said she didn't realize she was hurting Kelly. She apologizes for her behaviour and they talk about how to make their friendship stronger.

SCENARIO 2

Unhealthy scenario: David lives with his father but finds his relationship with him very difficult. When he comes home from school he never knows what kind of environment he will find. Sometimes his father seems happy, but often he is angry and aggressive. David can't say anything right. When he tries to talk to his dad about how he finds his mood swings difficult, it turns into a fight where David is the one in the wrong. David's fights with his father are growing in intensity and lately they have occasionally become physical.

Healthy scenario: David lives with his father but finds his relationship with him very difficult. When he comes home from school he never knows what kind of environment he will find. Sometimes his father is happy, but often he is angry and aggressive. It seems like David can't say anything right. One day, David tells his father over dinner that he is really unhappy with their relationship and would like it to get better. His father listens to him and asks him what bothers him. David explains how he never knows what kind of mood he is going to find him in, and that he feels anxious around him. His father acknowledges that he has been feeling frustrated because of problems at work and apologizes for his mood swings. He says that he wants to do better because he really cares about David. David notices a positive change in their relationship in the following weeks.

3. Circulate while the small groups are creating their scenarios and provide feedback as needed.
4. Once all the small groups have created a scenario, ask them to pass their scenario to the group beside/near them (can be in clockwise or counter clockwise order, whatever works for the class). Have each group read the scenario and then answer the first question on the board by writing directly on the chart paper underneath the scenario. Have them number their answer (e.g., if answering Question #1, have them write #1 and so on). Rotate again so a different group answers the second question and so on until all the questions are covered.
5. Take up the scenarios as a class and have the different groups who answered each question explain their reasoning.
6. Emphasize that we all relate to one another through a variety of different kinds of relationships that can be healthy or unhealthy. It is important to recognize the signs of an unhealthy relationship so that we can put down boundaries or get help navigating them.

Adaptations:

- To ensure different types of relationships are covered, each small group can be assigned a general context (e.g., family, friendship, online acquaintance, romantic relationship, authority figure, etc.).

- The students can be asked to act out a skit that depicts the signs of an unhealthy relationship, the setting of healthy boundaries, and/or getting help.