

# Ontario Dress Purple Day: Lesson 3



## Activity: Roleplaying Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships

**Grade Range:** Grades 9-12

**Task Time:** 45 minutes

**Activity Objective:**

The purpose of this activity is to explore how different scenarios are dealt with in the context of a healthy relationship versus an unhealthy relationship.

**Materials Needed:**

- Handout on Healthy vs. Unhealthy Characteristics in a Relationship
- Chart paper (one sheet for each group of 4-5 people)
- Markers for writing

**Activity Description:**

1. Divide the class into groups of 4-5 individuals and give each group a piece of chart paper and markers. Have the groups divide their chart paper into two sections by drawing a line across the middle of the sheet. Also give them the handout on Healthy vs. Unhealthy Characteristics in Relationships
2. Explain to the class that they are to come up with a conflict scenario that can happen in a relationship. Suggest to the class that they focus on a variety of relationships and not just romantic ones (e.g., family, online, authority figure such as teacher or coach, friendship etc.). Circulate and check in on each small group.
3. They will then write out the scenario from the perspective of an unhealthy relationship on one side of the chart paper and from the perspective of a healthy relationship on the other side. They can incorporate items from the Healthy vs. Unhealthy Characteristics in Relationships handout. Each small group will then be asked to act out the scenario from both perspectives
4. Read out to the class the following sample scenarios to help them with their brainstorming:

**SCENARIO 1**

**Unhealthy scenario:** Jordan and Amari have been dating for just over a year. Recently Jordan has become more controlling in the relationship. Jordan demands to know where Amari is going and with who, and wants to read all text messages from other friends. When Amari tries to talk to Jordan about this behaviour, Jordan gets mad and shuts down the conversation. Jordan does not like Amari's new friends and threatens to leave the relationship if Amari continues to hang out with them. Amari does not want to lose Jordan and feels silenced and isolated in the relationship.

**Healthy scenario:** Jordan and Amari have been dating for just over a year. Recently Jordan has become more controlling in the relationship. Jordan demands to know where Amari is going and with who, and wants to read all text messages from other friends. When Amari talks to Jordan about this behaviour, Jordan listens with respect and tries to understand how Amari is feeling. Jordan tells Amari about feeling jealous of Amari's new friends. Both agree that they need to respect each other's space and friendships outside of their relationship and that it is okay that they do not spend all their time together. Jordan and Amari make a plan to talk openly when either is feeling uncomfortable or insecure so they can create solutions together to help support the growth of their relationship.

## 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 really 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 at home. 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.

5. Have each small group come to the front of the class, post up their chart paper, and then act out the scenario from both the healthy and unhealthy perspectives
6. For each scenario, engage the class in a discussion around:
  - *What happened in the healthy scenario? The unhealthy scenario?*
  - *What were the main differences between both scenarios in terms of how individuals handled the conflict?*
  - *What did you notice about the power dynamics in the healthy scenario? In the unhealthy scenario?*
7. After each small group presents, have the class brainstorm some common characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships that were represented throughout the different scenarios. Keep track of characteristics on chart paper.

**Adaptations:**

- Small groups can be assigned a relationship context (family, friendship, online, authority figure such as teacher or coach, romantic relationship). Ensure that a variety of relationships are covered.
- Instead of having the small groups do a role play, they can be given a scenario and asked to determine and explain if they think the relationship depicted is healthy or unhealthy. The teacher/facilitator can provide the scenarios or have the students create some and rotate them around.

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## Activity: Characteristics of Health – Unhealthy Relationships

Grades 9-12

### Healthy Relationships

A healthy relationship is based on trust and respect. It is when ...

- You feel safe and secure
- You are able to express your thoughts and opinions
- You listen to each other
- You feel like you can be yourself
- You enjoy each other
- You treat each other with respect
- You feel like your gender, race, ability, sexual orientation, language, culture, and religion are respected
- You are able to have friendships outside of the relationship
- You try and help one another during difficult times
- You can have differing opinions and interests
- You can have privacy
- You can compromise, apologize, and talk things out
- You can say "No" to things you don't want to do

### Unhealthy Relationships

An unhealthy relationship is based on power and control. It is when ...

- You are not able to be yourself
- You are scared to disagree
- You feel fearful or threatened
- You feel isolated and alone
- You feel the person doesn't respect you when you say "no"
- You are being hurt physically, sexually, and/or emotionally

- You are being blamed for their behaviour
- You are being criticized, often feeling embarrassed or humiliated
- You are made to feel ashamed or different because of your gender, ability, sexual orientation, language, culture, and religion
- You are being told how to dress
- You feel the person is jealous and controlling
- You are being lied to
- You are constantly ignored
- You are being told that you are wrong, stupid, crazy, or worthless
- You feel you have to change yourself in order to make the relationship work