

# Grades 7 & Up

## Durham Region Public Health Human Development and Sexual Health Curriculum Support Document

### Relationships

#### Suggested Materials:

- flip chart paper
- markers
- chalk board/white board

#### 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.
- 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 Line

Introduce the idea of an intimacy line: 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 story (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 story (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 story? What sorts of things would you share with them?”

*(possible answers: classmates, team mates, neighbors, 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.)*

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.

### 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?”
- “Let’s say 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?”
- “Would anything be different if they were the same gender?”
- “If they were drinking or high, would it change anything?”
- “Let’s say that 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?”

### 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 2: Relationships

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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 3: How does it End?

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### Teacher Prompt:

Distribute the scenes below (see Appendix for student handout) to groups of students and have them discuss the scenarios and give possible endings to the scenes. You can supplement student responses with the bullet points below.

### Scene One

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

- Explore what "sex" means in this scene.
- Explore the stereotype of young men "always wanting sex".
- Explore the reasons why an individual may not want to have intercourse (Cultural or religious reasons? Fear of pregnancy or infection? Performance anxiety? Body image? Asexuality?)
- Remind students that less than 50% of grade 11 students in recent surveys have had sexual intercourse.

### Scene Two

You are hanging out with someone you are attracted to. Things are going well and as you say good-bye, they lean in for a kiss. You feel a little uncomfortable. What would you do?

- Why might someone feel uncomfortable? (different relationship with personal space, not feeling ready yet)
- Could someone feel uncomfortable and yet want to kiss?
- What words or body language could someone use if they do not want a kiss, they are not sure if they want to kiss, or they might like to kiss but not right now?
- Why would someone not want to kiss now? (maybe worried about breath, worried they do not know how to kiss well, maybe they know they have a cold sore coming)

### Scene Three

You've just been asked to go on a movie date 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?

- What are the pros and cons for each outcome?

## Scene Four

- a) A friend recently shared with you and a group of friends a picture of their new partner that you felt was a little intimate. What would you do?
- Ask students if it is common for friends to share intimate pictures like this?
  - How are these pictures usually shared? (Let someone else see it on their phone? Text the pic to a friend?)
  - What are the potential risks or impacts of this kind of sharing?
  - Even though it is common for youth to have/share this type of pic, it is against the law, even with consent:
    - To ask anyone under 18 for a sexualized picture (creation of child pornography)
    - To have sexualized pictures on your phone (possession of child pornography)
    - To share sexualized pictures (distribution of child pornography)
  - In Canada, posting a sexualized picture of anyone without their consent is against the law.
  - Needhelpnow.ca is a website that can help you with: removing a sexual picture/video from the internet, cyberbullying, and helping you help a friend.
- b) You are in a relationship and your partner has been asking you to send them naked pictures. You don't really want to, but your partner keeps asking. What would you do?
- This is a coercive aspect of the relationship – discuss that consent needs to be freely given for all sexual activity, including the sharing of nude pictures.
  - Brainstorm ways you can refuse to do this (exact words you can use, safe places to have the conversation, people to go to for support)
  - If you decide to send nudes, they are likely to be made public. Try not to include features that can identify who you are like your face, birthmark, or tattoo.

## Scene Five

- a) You are 12 years old. Your younger sibling has a good-looking babysitter who is 15 years old. One day, the babysitter asks you for a kiss. It makes you feel very special that someone older finds you attractive. What would you do?
- As the person initiating the sexual activity, the 15-year-old has the responsibility to get consent for sexual activity, including this kiss.
  - However, the 12-year-old cannot legally consent to sexual activity with someone two years or older than they are.
- b) You are 14 years old. You're working at a wading pool and your manager is 17. You are into each other and you'd like to start a physical relationship. Should you?
- According to Canada's age of consent laws, though this attraction is mutual and their ages fall within the close-in-age exceptions, the 17-year-old is also in a position of authority, so the 14-year-old cannot consent.

## Scene Six

Two of your friends have been dating and they just broke up. One of them is really angry about it and wants to get back at the other one. How can you support your friend with the hurt of the breakup and deal with rejection?

- Some people say “The best revenge is to live well.” Ask students what this might mean.
- Ask them to come up with a list of positive actions that people can take to help overcome breakups.
- Ask them for specific examples about dealing with breakups and social media.

## Scene Seven

You’re at a party and it looks like two of your friends are going to hook up. Both of them are pretty drunk. What do they need to know?

- Explore the issues of consent, intoxication, and the law, and the role of bystanders.
- Explore how drugs and alcohol can lower our inhibitions so we may end up doing things we regret, that can have negative consequences that can put our health at risk...
- Draw parallels between someone being too intoxicated to consent to sexual activity versus being too intoxicated to sign over their car or condo for very little money. A contract signed under these conditions would never survive a court challenge so why do some people feel it is ok for sexual activity?
- Have them imagine a situation where they were so intoxicated they ended up having sex with someone they would not have sex with sober. How would they feel afterwards?

## Scene Eight

Two same-gender friends are hanging out. One person thinks they’re just friends watching a movie. The other person wishes it was a date. What can they do about their crush?

- What are the risks of revealing a crush?
- Are there additional risks for friends of the same gender?
- What is it like to have a crush on a friend who doesn’t share your romantic feelings? What impact could this situation have on a friendship?

We have provided specific suggestions for discussing each scene. For any scene, you may want to consider how the situation might change if one person is asexual? What if they are trans or non-binary? How does the situation change if the person hasn’t felt comfortable yet to share these identities?

For further information about Child Pornography or the Age of Consent laws in Canada:

<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/clp/faq.html>

## Activity 4: Dealing with Breakups

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

### Teacher Prompt:

Introduce the concept that we all spend our lives entering, exiting, and nurturing all types of unique relationships. Relationships can vary in length and significance in our lives. Not every relationship is satisfying and some relationships can have a negative impact on our health. Recognizing warning signs in relationships is important so students can take appropriate action to get support and keep themselves safe.

*\*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) Write on the chalkboard/whiteboard/smartboard the headings “In Peer Relationships, In Intimate Relationships, and In Online Relationships”. Then ask the class, “What are some relationship warning signs?”

See some example answers below:

In Peer Relationships	In Intimate Relationships	In Online Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bullying</li><li>• Spreading rumours</li><li>• Calling people names</li><li>• Isolation</li><li>• Telling private information</li><li>• Put downs/insults</li><li>• Not feeling safe or valued</li><li>• Lack of reciprocity (one person is always giving or taking)</li><li>• Unreliable (not dependable)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not feeling safe</li><li>• Abusive (physical, sexual, financial, threats, intimidation, emotional/psychological, verbal, spiritual/religious)</li><li>• Jealousy</li><li>• Controlling behaviour</li><li>• Commitment issues</li><li>• Not getting along with family</li><li>• Value clashes</li><li>• Unreliable (not dependable)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Making them share passwords</li><li>• Sharing pictures without consent</li><li>• Making them “unfriend” or block people</li><li>• Impersonating the person online</li><li>• Forcing them to share intimate pictures</li><li>• Creeping/monitoring your online activity/location</li></ul>

- b) Debrief the activity with students, noting the similarities and the differences among the three columns. Also discuss how we can support someone who may be experiencing warning signs in their relationships. Have the students brainstorm ways they can support their friends.



## Helpful Resources:

[Kids Help Phone](#) (1-800-668-6868)

[Teen Health Source](#)

[LGBT+ Youthline](#)

## Activity 5 - How to break up?

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

### Teacher Prompt:

Introduce this topic as a discussion and ask students how they feel about break-ups and how someone can break-up. Determining if and when to break up a relationship can be difficult. There is no one “right” way to break up. The act of breaking up is as unique as each relationship.

*\*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.*

However there are some general recommendations on how to break up:

- Be honest about your own feelings if you can (ex: I’m just not into this)
- Be clear (ex: I am not going to change my mind about this)
- Be respectful and understanding (ex: I’m sorry if I hurt your feelings)

Sometimes people will react to a break up in ways we cannot predict, therefore we need to think about safety.

- If someone has been violent, it may be safer to break up remotely
- Have a trusted friend/adult close by
- Consider breaking up in a public place

### Ways to breakup

Step 1: Label various areas of the classroom with the following:

- in person
- over text/social media
- indirectly from a friend
- over the phone (video call)
- ghosted (withdrawing from all communication)

Step 2: Ask students to move to the label that represents their preference in relation to the following questions:

- If you were breaking up with someone, how would you do it?
- Would it be different if this were a three week relationship versus a five month relationship?
- Could a shorter relationship be even more significant than a longer relationship?
- If you were being dumped, how would you like the person to handle it?

## Helpful Resources:

### [Dealing with Rejection](#)

## 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](http://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.

*Adapted with permission from Toronto Public Health (October 2022)*



HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT

Durham Health Connection Line | 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729  
**[durham.ca/sexualhealth](http://durham.ca/sexualhealth)**

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

