

Healthy Relationships Curriculum

Suggested Instruction: Weeks 6-9

Description

Using an interactive activity and group discussion, students will understand the behaviors that define healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships, and become familiar with campus and community resources designed to support those who are impacted by power-based personal violence.

Learning Outcomes

- **Objective 1:** By the end of this lesson, students will be able to identify evidence-based behaviors of healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships.
- **Objective 2:** By the end of this lesson, students will know where to seek more information and resources pertaining to power-based personal violence.

Connection to Intended Learning Outcomes and Class Objectives

1. ***Develop a sense of community and connection to Texas A&M:*** Knowledge of and experiences with healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships will vary. As students acknowledge similarities and differences around this topic, their self-awareness will grow which may serve as a catalyst for them to have more open discussions about relationships and seek out additional learning opportunities during their time at Texas A&M University.
2. ***Have an increased awareness of campus resources:*** One of our learning outcomes is to have students become more aware of campus and community resources that educate on and respond to power-based personal violence. We make this information accessible through our [Healthy Relationships legacy website](#), wherein anyone may access the name, mission statement, contact information, and confidentiality status of these resources through campus-specific drop-down lists.
3. ***Develop the skills to achieve personal and academic goals:*** The conversation about healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships extends beyond romantic partners. It also includes family, friends, classmates, coworkers, employers, etc. As students grow within their fields of study and prepare for their professional and personal lives, it is important they understand that they deserve healthy relationships while also knowing how to respond should they see or experience unhealthy or abusive behaviors in any environment.
4. ***Be equipped to contribute to a respectful and inclusive environment:*** Students will navigate many different types of relationships during their time at Texas A&M University. This lesson gives students the space to learn about healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships as well as how to act when they or someone who they know are being disrespected or hurt.

Instructor Roles and Responsibilities, Materials, Methods for Instruction, Preparation, and Instructional Outlines

Instructor Roles and Responsibilities

- **Topic Sensitivity:** Discussing healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships can be sensitive for students who have experienced or witnessed any type of sexual violence, including but not limited to: child abuse and neglect, dating violence, domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, and/or stalking. We advise that you preface your instruction with the following language:

“Today, we are going to look at the characteristics of healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships. Part of this will be a discussion, but you will also be working with scenarios in small groups. This can be a difficult topic to address, especially for those in the room who might have been directly or indirectly impacted by relationship violence. As we engage with the topic today, please be respectful in your dialogue and interactions with each other. If you feel that you need to take a break to give yourself some space from the content, please feel free to do so. Should this content bring up any activating feelings, resources will be shared during and at the end of the lesson for additional support.”

- **Mandated Reporting:** As a Texas A&M University faculty, staff, stipend instructor, or stipend peer mentor who is teaching this course, you are required by law to report any disclosure of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence that occurs on our campus to the Department of Civil Rights and Equity Investigations (Title IX). Rarely will a student disclose to you during classroom discussion. However, some may come to you during office hours to discuss current or past abuse. In any instance, it is important that you make every attempt to tell your students about being a mandated reporter before they disclose to you. If you were to wait and tell a student this information after a disclosure, it may cause them concern and stress. Please also remember: if you receive a disclosure and subsequently file a report with Title IX, the student who is impacted by abuse still has the choice whether they want to respond to any outreach from that office. A report *does not* automatically initiate an investigation, hearing, or resolution.

Civil Rights and Equity Investigations Title IX Coordinator:

Jennifer Smith, J.D.

Email: CivilRights@tamu.edu

Phone: 979-458-8407

Location: YMCA Building, Suite 308

365 Houston St.

- **Questions You May Not Know How to Answer:** We acknowledge that many instructors and peer mentors are not experts in violence prevention and response work. Should you receive a question that you are uncertain of how to answer, please connect your student(s) with Student Life and Civil Rights and Equity Investigations (Title IX). We will follow-up with you and the student(s).
- **Maintain Curriculum Fidelity:** This lesson is built to take 40 minutes of your class time, but you can dedicate up to 80 minutes to the lesson. You have two options in how you want to approach this content:

- o Option 1: You may deliver it over one class period, where the entire time is dedicated to the lesson itself (you wouldn't want to schedule students to do their personal presentations on this day)
- o Option 2: You may deliver it over two consecutive class periods, giving about 30-40 minutes of your class time to the lesson each day. Should you choose this option, do the introduction, activity, and small group discussion during class period 1 and the large group discussion and resources over class period 2.

*Given the scope and nature of this lesson, we recommend **two class periods** for instruction should it fit within your course plan.*

- This lesson plan and activity is built with intentionality by individuals who have a background and certifications in violence prevention and trauma-informed response. What we have provided to you minimizes the potential for students to become triggered and provides resource connections should students become activated by the content. Therein, it is your responsibility as an instructor to:
 - o Ensure you and your peer mentor follow the lesson plan and activities as written. If you have an idea for how to adapt the lesson plan to meet the needs of your students, we welcome it. However, please be proactive and vet your idea through OSS and our instructional planning team to make sure the content is evidence-informed and does not unintentionally include information that is inaccurate or harmful.
 - o Any deviation from this lesson plan that results in learning outcomes not being met, triggering of students, or the delivery of information that is not evidence-informed becomes your responsibility and liability as an instructor, not OSS or Student Life.

Materials

- **The lesson plan which includes detailed scripting.**
 - o Accessible to instructors and peer mentors in the Canvas course materials.
 - o There are two copies of the lesson plan: one for instructors and peer mentors who teach it during one class period, and another for those who teach it over two class periods.
- **Healthy Relationships Curriculum Website.**
 - o Accessible at <https://tx.ag/HealthyRelationships>. This replaces a formal PowerPoint for the lesson, is more comprehensive than a PowerPoint, and is an ongoing resource for students, past and present, of the Hullabaloo U course. Launch this on your screen within your classroom and encourage students to access it on their own device (phone, laptop, tablet) or share with a peer.
 - o **First tab (main page).**
 - Definitions of healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships.
 - Definition of interpersonal violence.
 - Green Dot and STAND Up training information.
 - List of campus and community resources.
 - List of Title IX definitions and Title IX reporting procedures.
 - o **Second tab (Scenario Activity).**
 - Relationship scenario summaries.
 - Digitized relationship scenarios.

- Group debrief questions.
 - One Love Foundation: signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships.
 - Power and control wheel.
- **Scenario Activity Cards.**
 - Accessible to instructors and peer mentors in the Canvas course materials.
 - **Students:** Students can venture through their assigned scenarios by:
 - Using the digitized versions of their scenario on the Healthy Relationships curriculum website.
 - Using physical cards that you print out for each group. These cards are in your Canvas course materials.
 - **Instructors and Peer Mentors:** You have a physical set of cards for each scenario, which are located within your Canvas course materials. These cards are exact to the student cards, with one notable exception:
 - We identify to you where each evidence-based behavior of a healthy, unhealthy, or abusive action occurred within the scenario. Each behavior is highlighted in a different color, and a footnote is provided with an in-depth explanation of why that indeed is a sign of the evidence-based behavior in question.

Methods for Instruction

- **Environment**
 - In-Person: Be strategic about how you place your students into groups, considering the layout of your room. Students in a group should be situated in as much of a circle as possible (even if they must turn their chairs around to see each other) and they should all be able to hear each other.
 - We highly encourage you to use technology within the classroom to launch and display the [Healthy Relationships Curriculum Website](#), and have your students work in their groups on their own personal devices to go through their assigned scenario (each scenario can be accessed on the Healthy Relationships Curriculum website). Students who do not have personal devices can ask to share with a peer who does.
 - You may instead choose to print the scenario cards that are in your Canvas course materials and bring them to your class. If you choose to go this route, make sure to print at least two sets of the cards for each scenario, as you might have multiple groups working on the same one depending on the size of your class.
 - Virtual: If you are teaching in a virtual environment, you will use the breakout room function in Zoom to sort students into groups and assign them a scenario. Students will need to use the [Healthy Relationships Curriculum Website](#) to access and work through their assigned scenario together. You will then close the breakout rooms after 15 minutes, and students will proceed to share their findings during the large group discussion.

- Note: we discourage the use of a hybrid environment for this lesson. With the way the lesson plan is designed, there may not be enough students on Zoom to create a group. Another consideration is: who is going to check-in on the breakout room(s) periodically to make sure they are progressing through the scenario, especially when you have groups in a physical classroom space? If you can reasonably divide these responsibilities between yourself and your Peer Mentor, then it can work well. If there are too many concerns, select only one teaching environment (in-person or virtual).

- **One Class Period or Two Consecutive Class Periods**

- **One Class Period:** This lesson can be completed within one class period. When choosing this approach, we recommend that you dedicate the entire time to the lesson. This class period is one where you would want to forgo assigning students to give their personal introduction/presentation. The benefit to choosing to complete this lesson in one class period is that you maximize your time for other topics throughout the semester.
- **Two Consecutive Class Periods:** This lesson may also be completed over two subsequent class periods. We have built a second script that shows you what to complete during the first class period (an overview of the lesson, scenario activity, and short discussion within groups) and what to complete during the second class period (larger groups discussion and resources). The benefit to choosing this method is that the lesson will be less rushed and allows students to have a richer discussion about the topic. You may also choose to do other activities on either day of the lesson, including students' personal presentations.

Preparation

- Choose whether you want to lead this lesson during one class period or over two consecutive class periods. Access the appropriate lesson plan in your Canvas course materials.
- Thoroughly read through this lesson plan and script. Divide Instructor and Peer Mentor responsibilities.
- Familiarize yourself with the following information, located on the [Healthy Relationships Curriculum Website](#)
 - Definition of healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships
 - Definition of interpersonal violence (also referred to as power-based personal violence)
 - Step In Stand Up campaign
 - Green Dot and STAND Up initiatives
 - Confidential and non-confidential resources for your campus & community
 - Title IX definitions and reporting procedures
 - One Love Foundation: 10 signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships
 - Power and Control Wheel
- Familiarize yourself with the Healthy, Unhealthy, and Abusive Relationship Scenarios. Go to your Canvas course and download the Instructor version of the healthy relationship scenario, unhealthy relationship scenario, and abusive relationship scenario. Walk through each scenario, noting that we have highlighted where the evidence-based behaviors occur and included rationale within footnotes. Print a copy of each scenario and bring

these with your (or have them accessible through your device). These will help you during the large group debrief.

- Determine whether you want your students to use the digitized versions of the scenarios on the Healthy Relationships Curriculum site, or whether you want to print sets of the scenario cards that we provide as PDFs with your Canvas course materials. We recommend whatever you feel is best for you and your students.
- Think about how you will divide your class into groups for the scenario activity. You need at least three groups, and it is recommended that each group have no more than 5 students. Should you have a larger class size, create additional groups. It is acceptable for multiple groups to be assigned the same scenario (e.g. two groups have Healthy Relationships, two groups have Unhealthy Relationships, and two groups have Abusive Relationships).
 - We recommend creating your groups ahead of the lesson. Based on the dynamics of your class, diversify your groups as much as possible. Particularly for the abusive relationship scenario, it will be helpful to assign a few of your students who have demonstrated emotional maturity up to that point in your class.
- Familiarize yourself with the summaries for the Healthy, Unhealthy, and Abusive Relationship scenarios. You will need to read these as a part of the large group discussion. These are located on the [Healthy Relationships Curriculum Website](#) and on the top of the Instructor version of the printable cards.
- Review the instructions for the large groups discussion that have been provided with the lesson plan. Think about how you want your groups to present the information from their scenarios. If you only have three groups, each will have a student spokesperson who can share the three evidence-based behaviors they learned about and where they happened in the scenario. If you have multiple groups assigned to the same relationship type, you can have each group share one or two examples of the behaviors and where they presented.

Instructional Outline: One Class Period (40 minutes)

A. Introduction – 5 minutes.

- Launch the Healthy Relationships curriculum website.
- State the lesson objectives.
- Read the trigger warning on activities and discussion including specific instances of relationship violence.
- Read the healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationship definitions.

B. Scenario Activity - 15 minutes.

- Break students into groups. You will need at least 3 groups (because there are 3 relationship types, and each group will be taking one). There should be 4-5 students per group. If you have a larger class, break students into more groups of 4-5 and have, for example, two groups per each scenario type.
- Assign each group one of the relationship scenarios to read through: healthy, unhealthy, or abusive.
- Each scenario will have six cards. These six cards will provide context, highlight three evidence-based behaviors of the relationship type, and then provide a conclusion where those evidence-based behaviors are defined.
- As a part of their small group debrief, their job is to identify within the scenario at least one example of where each evidence-based behavior happened.

C. Large group debrief – 15 minutes.

- Instructor and/or peer leader engages the whole class in large group debrief.
- This will consist of instructors and peer mentors guiding students to explore the following: exploring:
 - Among each relationship type, what were the evidence-based behaviors and how are the defined?
 - Where in the scenario did these behaviors show up?
 - Do your students understand, based on the context of the scenario, the relationship was healthy, unhealthy, or abusive? The goal is for students to make the distinction between relationship types by identifying these behaviors and naming them. The purpose is not to debate evidence-based behaviors.

D. Resources – 3 minutes.

- Direct students to where they can find confidential and non-confidential resources on Healthy Relationships website, which are cataloged by campus.
- Highlight the Step In Stand Up campaign and continuing prevention education opportunities.

E. Appendix – no time used during class period. This is for instructor and peer mentor reference. Following the Healthy Relationships lesson, Student Life's Substance Misuse and Violence Prevention unit could provide supplementary trainings (e.g. Green Dot bystander intervention or STAND Up trauma-informed care) or instructors/peer mentors may want to use one of our supplementary activities to build healthy relationship strategies.

- Provides continuing opportunities for instructors to request follow-up, supplementary trainings for their classes.
- Green Dot and STAND Up trainings and opportunities.
- Supplementary lesson for boundaries and consent.

Instructional Outline: Two Consecutive Class Periods (30 minutes each class period)

CLASS PERIOD 1

A. Introduction – 15 minutes.

- Launch the Healthy Relationships curriculum website.
- State the lesson objectives.

- Read the trigger warning on activities and discussion including specific instances of relationship violence.
- Read the healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationship definitions.

B. Scenario Activity - 25 minutes.

- Break students into groups. You will need at least 3 groups (because there are 3 relationship types, and each group will be taking one). There should be 4-5 students per group. If you have a larger class, break students into more groups of 4-5 and have, for example, two groups per each scenario type.
- Assign each group one of the relationship scenarios to read through: healthy, unhealthy, or abusive.
- Each scenario will have six cards. These six cards will provide context, highlight three evidence-based behaviors of the relationship type, and then provide a conclusion where those evidence-based behaviors are defined.
- As a part of their small group debrief, their job is to identify within the scenario at least one example of where each evidence-based behavior happened.

CLASS PERIOD 2

C. Regroup students – 5 minutes.

- Students to get back into their groups from the previous week. Quick review of their evidence-based behaviors for the relationship type (located on the final card of their scenario).

D. Large group debrief – 30 minutes.

- Instructor and/or peer leader engages the whole class in large group debrief.
- This will consist of instructors and peer mentors guiding students to explore the following:
 - Among each relationship type, what were the evidence-based behaviors and how were they defined?
 - Where in the scenario did these behaviors show up?
 - Do your students understand, based on the context of the scenario, why the relationship was healthy, unhealthy, or abusive?
 - The goal is for students to make the distinction between relationship types by identifying these behaviors and naming them. The purpose is not to debate evidence-based behaviors.

F. Resources – 3 minutes.

- Direct students to where they can find confidential and non-confidential resources on Healthy Relationships website, which are cataloged by campus.
- Highlight the Step In Stand Up campaign and continuing prevention education opportunities.

F. Appendix - no time used during class period. This is for instructor and peer mentor reference. Following the Healthy Relationships lesson, Student Life's Substance Misuse and Violence Prevention unit could provide supplementary trainings (e.g. Green Dot bystander intervention or STAND Up trauma-informed care) or instructors/peer mentors may want to use one of our supplementary activities to build healthy relationship strategies.

- Provides continuing opportunities for instructors to request follow-up, supplementary trainings for their classes.
- Green Dot and STAND Up trainings and opportunities.
- Supplementary lesson for boundaries and consent.

Activated/Triggered Students: Some students in your classroom may be more personally connected than others to unhealthy and abusive relationships. Reading through scenarios and/or hearing certain words & definitions can cause re-traumatization for students in this situation. Here are some steps to help a student who may experience discomfort or distress during this lesson:

→ Step 1: Do not call out the student in front of his/her/their peers. Instead, take note of what is happening and give that student some space to process on their own terms.

- If you are in a physical classroom space, they may leave the room for a moment or ask you if they can step out.
- If you are in a digital environment, such as Zoom, they may turn off their camera or privately message you or your peer mentor.

→ Step 2: You or your peer mentor should gently check on the student.

- If you are in a physical space, step outside and ask how they are feeling about the lesson. If they are uncomfortable, allow them to choose whether they want to rejoin the lesson or leave.
- If you are in a digital space, message them and ask if they are okay and how they are feeling about the lesson.
- In either instance, the student needs to be the one to decide whether they want to continue their participation. It is never okay for anyone to force a distressed student to come back into a space by using attendance, participation, or grading policies as motivators.

→ Step 3: Determine whether the student wants to or can rejoin the activity or discussion.

- If so, give them the independence to reenter the physical or digital space.
- If not, provide them with information about your campus and community resources:
"I understand and respect that this content is difficult for you. Is there an office or person on campus who you'd like to get you in contact with? I can share a list of resources here on campus and in the community, and that might help you decide whether connecting with or talking with someone is what you want or need right now."

Regardless of their decision with resources, make sure they are safe or can get to a place (home, friend's house, parent's house) where they feel safe.

→ Step 4: Follow-up.

- It's encouraged that you check-in on your student the next day, by sending an email from your university account:
"Howdy [name]: I just want to reach out to make sure you're doing okay after yesterday's Healthy Relationships lesson. Please let me know if there is any way that I can help support you academically as we move through the rest of the semester. I'm including the link to the Healthy Relationships website, which lists all our campus and community resources. I look forward to seeing you at our next class meeting".
- The student may not respond to your email, but you know they have accurate information should they need or want to seek additional help outside of your classroom.

- Remember: if you have concerns about a student's well-being, even if they don't disclose an experience of power-based personal violence, you can still submit an anonymous Tell Somebody report (tellsomebody.tamu.edu). This will allow experts at Texas A&M to follow-up with the student without it being specifically linked to you.

Redirect Strategies

This lesson highlights healthy, unhealthy, and abusive behaviors in the context of different relationship types. It is common for students to have questions about how an unhealthy or abusive relationship with someone in their life, such as a partner, may impact their other personal, social, and professional relationships. Students may also have specific questions about how their identity impacts their experiences with healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships. To keep the lesson in focus, here are a few ways you can address these questions without completely getting sidetracked from achieving the intended learning outcomes.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What if I have a toxic relationship with my friends? Could that impact how I interact with my partner?

A: A toxic relationship with friends could impact how you interact with your partner - especially if those friends are spreading lies, encouraging you to fight or confront your partner, or convincing you to stay in a romantic relationship they know is harmful. But also remember that this is not an excuse to blame someone who's being harmed for staying in an unhealthy or abusive relationship - if they don't have a supportive network, then they may have nowhere else to go or feel trapped. That's why it's important that we all recognize when someone might be in distress - even if we don't know them very well - be willing to check-in and offer to listen & help connect them to resources.

Q: This scenario seems general. Do healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships vary based upon how someone identifies or where they come from?

A: One of our learning outcomes for this lesson was to help students understand the evidence-based behaviors of healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships. The scenarios are more general to ensure we reach that goal for today. But you make an important observation by asking this question.

Remember the definitions and characteristics of healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships. These fundamental characteristics don't change based on how someone identifies or the community(ies) they associate with. However: within healthy relationships, the way in which two people might choose to compromise or build trust might vary based upon their identity and resources available to them within the community. And especially within unhealthy and abusive relationships, the way in which someone may choose to manipulate or harm their partner will vary based upon their identity and community.

Example: as a part of one person's value system, they may want to wait until they are at least 1 year into a serious relationship before having sex. For a relationship to be healthy and grow in a healthy way, this is a value that a person could communicate to their partner early on - who may or may not be of the same value system - and compromise on other ways to personally connect until both feel comfortable engaging in sexual activities.

Example: the partner of an international student might say “if you try to leave this relationship, I’ll file a report with Title IX and jeopardize your student visa status.”

Example: within a same-sex relationship, one partner might exploit the fears of their partner about bullying, retaliation, harassment, or rejection if they try to seek help from formal resources or lie to them about what legal options are available for protection.

Example: in communities where there is high distrust of formal resources (such as social services and the police) or where it’s looked down upon to involve these types of resources in “personal issues” an abusive partner might say “if you report me, you’ll only bring shame to this community” or “what makes you think that if the police come up here to arrest me, that they won’t just arrest you too?”

If this scenario you’re reading was part representative of your personal identity or community, how do you think it might vary?

Q: What if a student experiences an unhealthy or abusive relationship, but is new to the campus and didn’t come here already knowing someone, like a friend or sibling?

A: *These scenarios gave a potentially beneficial situation of having a social circle. One of the friends was from high school, and the other was a classmate. But someone who is experiencing unhealthy and abusive relationships will not always have this type of social circle at Texas A&M or their college/university. This can be especially isolating for someone experiencing harm, and their partner may use that lack of outside social connection to do further emotional harm.*

Remember though that one of the friends in your scenario was indeed a classmate. There is a chance to form even working connections with your classmates, your Peer Mentor, and even us as instructors. If you have a job at or outside of the university, you can also build your social circle with coworkers. You don’t have to be best friends, but these environments give you the opportunity to build enough trust in someone who you could talk with and ask for guidance.

On the curriculum website is a list of confidential and non-confidential resources by campus. This website is always going to be available, so if nothing else we encourage you to use it and give the link to anyone you know who might need it. Starting with a confidential resource can be very helpful to safety plan or receive guidance on how to safely leave a relationship. We always encourage anyone who is experiencing an immediate threat of harm (such as someone attacking them or threatening them with a weapon) to contact 911 to preserve their safety.