

Consent and Healthy Relationships

“Therefore encourage one another and build up each other,
as indeed you are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11)



Definitions: *Consent occurs when one person voluntarily agrees to the proposal or desires of another. Consent is an ongoing process of discussing boundaries and what you're comfortable with. If someone agrees to an activity under pressure of intimidation or threat, that isn't considered consent because it was not given freely. Unequal power dynamics, such as engaging in sexual activity with an employee or student, also mean that consent cannot be freely given. Sexual consent cannot be given by individuals who are underage, intoxicated or incapacitated by drugs or alcohol, or asleep or unconscious.*²

Supplies Needed

- Tech to play videos
- Flip chart, white board or three-colours of post-it notes
- Markers
- Your choice of empty boxes, Jenga pieces, toy building blocks or anything else stackable – enough for each teen to have their own

- Limiting contact with other people
- Ignoring partner's feelings
- Making all the decisions without asking partner
- The “silent treatment”
- Name calling
- Humiliation in public
- Humiliation in private
- Blaming partner for all faults/problems
- Threats
- Cutting off family and friends
- Controlling the money
- Yelling
- Throwing things
- Destruction of property
- Physical aggression/violence
- “If I lose you, I will kill myself”
- “If I can't have you, no one can”

Discussion Questions

-  How are things we've just listed a problem for teens today?
-  Are you familiar with these issues in teen relationships? Or know anyone who experiences any of these behaviours in their relationships?



Game: Continuum

- Rate these forms of abuse on a scale of 1-10, 1 being least severe and 10 being most severe of these forms of abuse:
 - Jealousy
 - Drastic mood swings
 - Explosive anger
 - Mind games
 - Making fun
 - Constant criticism
 - Guilt trips
 - Insults about women in general
 - Always demands all of partner's attention



Intro: Markers of Unhealthy love

- Watch this [Tedx video](#) about the five markers of unhealthy love. The five listed, are:
 - Intensity
 - Isolation
 - Extreme Jealousy
 - Belittling
 - Volatility

2. RAINN, “What Consent Looks Like”: <https://www.rainn.org/articles/what-is-consent>



Game: That's Love... That's Not Love

Have group decide if these examples show love, or not love

1. In the first week or two they were dating, a partner said, "I love you, I can't live without you, you're the best thing that ever happened to me."
2. Giving a partner gifts.
3. Not being allowed to hang out with friends anymore because their partner wants to take up all their time, preventing them from being with friends.
4. Moodiness – nice one minute and mean the next, you never know what to expect.
5. Planning date nights throughout the week.
6. Calling all the time wanting to know who their partner is with, where they are, and doesn't want them looking at or talking to other people.
7. Saying, "I'll kill myself if you leave me."
8. Missing your partner when they are away.
9. Saying, "If you do this, this will happen."
10. A partner who is always arguing, it seems they're always "picking a fight."

Discussion Questions

- How easy/challenging is it to see some of these signs of unhealthy love?
- What are some examples in your life of unhealthy love?



Activities

Activity 1: Case Studies

Directions

The following case study exercise was adapted from resources on ["Community Solutions to Sexual and Domestic Violence Virginia."](#)

- Read aloud the case studies below and discuss which of the five markers of unhealthy relationships they represent, if they represent a healthy relationship... or somewhere in between.
 1. Michael is at his boyfriend Tom's house playing video games when he mentions he is going to the beach with his family the next weekend. Tom immediately jumps to his feet and shouts "No you're not, because you promised me that we would go to Six Flags that weekend! If you go to the beach, we're through Michael!" To make his point, Tom grabs a vase and smashes it on the floor. Shaken, Michael promises Tom that he won't go with his family.
 2. Paige and Nick have been dating for a few months and Paige is really hoping Nick will ask her to prom. After weeks of wishing Nick will ask, Paige decides to take matters into her own hands and plans a cute and romantic "promposal" for him.

Nick says yes but is a little embarrassed because he thought the man was supposed to ask and just hadn't planned his yet.

3. While at the food court, Jamie passes a couple kissing at a nearby table. At second glance, Jamie is shocked to see that the guy is her boyfriend Darique. Jamie is angry. She storms out of the nearest exit, finds his car unlocked and takes out his baseball bat. She begins to smash in his windows and then she trashes the inside of his car. She immediately calls him and says, "You should come outside to your car and see what happens when you cheat on me!"
4. Devon and Kyra have been dating for several years and decide to apply to the same universities so that they can continue to date while away at school. Devon gets into the University of Calgary, which is his first choice, but Kyra does not. In the end, they both decide to go to University of Ottawa to stay together.
5. Yusuf and his girlfriend Aaliyah are at a party. Yusuf is playing pool with some of his friends when Aaliyah walks up to talk to him. She touches his shoulder, and he misses the shot. Yusuf turns around and yells at Aaliyah, calling her stupid in front of everyone at the party. Then he looks her up and down and says, "What are you wearing? You look terrible!" His friends laugh.
6. Sally and Karen have just met because they were placed as lab partners for science class. Within a week of dating, they begin to say "I love you" to each other and feel depressed when they are apart for even 5 minutes.

Discussion Questions

- How are some of these scenarios harder to identify than others?
- How could you turn some of the unhealthy examples into healthy ones?
- How did these scenarios make you feel?

Red, yellow & green flag brainstorm integration

- On a piece of flip chart paper, white board, or three different colours of post-it notes, brainstorm three different categories of "flags"
 - *Red flag*: the extreme, obvious, and aggressive signs of unhealthy and abusive relationships
 - *Yellow flags*: the harder to identify, situational and cautionary signs of unhealthy relationships
 - *Green flags*: the signs of healthy relationships

Activity 2: Safety Plan

Directions

Give teens time to look through these scenarios below and make their own safety plan. They can think about these scenarios in general terms; with a partner or potential partner, a parent, a friend, a teacher, etc.

Activity 2: Safety Plan (continued)

The following steps represent a plan for increasing safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further violence. Although we do not have control over a partner's, parent's, or friend's violence, we do have a choice about how to respond and how to best get to safety.

Print a copy of this out for each teen so they can keep it and continue to add to it when needed.

Safety During An Argument

- If I have an argument on a date and I feel unsafe, I will:
 - 🗣️ (Who could you call to get a safe ride home?)
 - 🗣️ (What would you do if left in an isolated area?)
- If I have an argument at school and I feel unsafe, I will:
 - 🗣️ (Who could help you?)
 - 🗣️ (Where could you be safe at school?)
 - 🗣️ (What teacher/counselor do you trust?)
- If I have an argument at a house and I feel unsafe, I will try to have us discuss it in:
 - 🗣️ (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons, or in rooms without access to a door.)
- I will use _____ as my code word with my family and friends so that they can call for help.

Safety In My Home

- I will _____ if someone comes over and I'm alone and feeling unsafe.
 - 🗣️ (Who can you call to come over?)
 - 🗣️ (Who can you call if you need help?)
- I will _____ if I get in an argument and I feel unsafe.
 - 🗣️ (What exits are there in your house?)
 - 🗣️ (Where are all the phones that you can use to call the police?)
- If someone calls and I feel threatened I will:
 - 🗣️ (Can you screen your calls with an answering machine?)
 - 🗣️ (Change your phone number?)
 - 🗣️ (Could you have the telephone company trace the calls for a stalking report?)
- If I see someone standing outside I will _____ so that I can be safe.
 - 🗣️ (Who can help you?)
 - 🗣️ (Can you take pictures or document how many times it happens, to file a stalking report?)³

3. Adapted from House of Ruth, Inc., PO. Box 457, Claremont, CA 91711.

Activity 3: Asking for Consent

Directions

Watch [this video](#) together that show several examples of asking for consent.

Discuss:

- 🗣️ How do you know if someone gives you consent to hold hands, hug kiss, or touch?
- 🗣️ What do you do if consent is unclear?
- 🗣️ What are some forms of assumed consent in our lives (e.g., hugging friends/family, not needing to continue to ask for consent when in a relationship, etc.)
 - What are the ways we can normalize always seeking consent?

Integration: Practice!

Have the group get into pairs and ask them to switch back and forth asking consent for any movement, touch, or activity of their choosing. Some examples:

- 🗣️ Would you like to hug?
- 🗣️ Would you like to walk to the other side of the room?
- 🗣️ Do you want another cookie?
- 🗣️ Do you want a pop refill?

After each person has gone have a group discussion about how that felt.



Closing: Building Blocks

Preparation

- Gather your choice of empty boxes, Jenga pieces, toy building blocks or anything else stackable – enough for each teen to have their own.
- Invite each teen to take one block and write their name on it.
- Read aloud the text from 1 Thessalonians 5:11:
“Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.”
- Talk about what it looks like to build each other up rather than tear down. Invite each teen to write words of affirmation and encouragement on each other's blocks (make sure everyone has messages from each teen, so no one is left out). Once all the boxes are decorated with messages of encouragement, pile them on top of each other to make one free-standing structure.

Prayer

Incorporate words on the building blocks into a prayer of thanks for time together, healthy love in our lives and the chance to build each other up.



More Precious is the National Youth Project of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

www.claygathering.ca/nyp