



Every Student Matters, Every Moment Counts

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Grade: 8th Grade ▾

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NSES Alignment:

- HR.8.CC.1 – Compare and contrast the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- HR.8.SM.1 – Explain the criteria for evaluating the health of a relationship.
- HR.8.CC.2 – Describe the potential impacts of power differences such as age, status or position within relationships.

Advance Preparation: n/a

Learning Objective: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Characterize, in their own opinion, at least one relationship trait as either healthy or unhealthy. [Knowledge, Skill, Attitude]
2. Name at least two types of power differential in relationships, as well as their implication for the relationship. [Knowledge]
3. Describe at least two ways in which an unhealthy relationship can become a healthy one. [Knowledge]
4. Apply their understanding of healthy relationships to a couple represented in the media. [Knowledge, Skill]

Procedure:

Step 1: Ask, “How many of you can think of a couple in your lives – it could be family members, friends, siblings, whoever (without naming names) – who you think are in a healthy relationship?” After some students have raised their hands, ask, “How many of you can think of a couple (without naming names) you’d consider to have an unhealthy relationship?”

Say, “I bet if we described all of these relationships we would not agree about whether they were healthy or unhealthy. That’s because we each have received a variety of messages about how people should behave in relationships. These messages have a big impact on whether we see something as healthy, unhealthy – or a mix. So today we’re going to take a look at some things that can happen in relationships – and whether you think these things mean a relationship is healthy or unhealthy.”

Explain to students that you will next break them up into pairs for an activity. Break the students into pairs. Give each pair one of the healthy vs. unhealthy relationship cards. Ask them to talk together about whether they think the

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relationship described is a healthy relationship or an unhealthy relationship. Tell them that once they've decided, they should turn their sheet over and write down why they think it is unhealthy, healthy or somewhere in between. Explain that they are "Team One," and so should only complete the first line on the back of the sheet, not the second. Hold up a sheet to demonstrate as you are giving these instructions.

Tell them that once they've finished writing their reason(s), they can bring their piece of paper up to the front of the room and tape it up where they feel it goes on the healthy/unhealthy continuum. Point out that there is a lot of space between the Unhealthy and Healthy Relationship signs, so they can put their card under one of the signs, or somewhere in between if they feel like it has some healthy or unhealthy characteristics, but isn't completely one or the other.

After about 5 minutes, if all of the cards are not up, encourage students to stick their cards up on the board. Ask them to stay in their same pairs.

Step 2: Starting at one end of the continuum, read each of the cards. Once you have read them all, ask the students to look at what's up on the board and comment on what they notice. Their responses will depend on where the cards have been placed (the activity is intentionally opinion-based, so the board will likely look different each time).

For example, students might say, "These all seem really unhealthy," or "None of the cards are either completely unhealthy or healthy."

Ask, "Are there any up here that you would want to move? Which one(s) and why?" As students indicate particular cards, take them down and read on the back why the pair of students who had each card chose to place it where they did. Ask whether that changed their view. Because this is an opinion-based activity, do not actually move any of the cards, just discuss a few.

Step 3: Ask, "In which of these relationships do you feel like one person has more power than the other person?" Point to the example of a girl who has a girlfriend who is ten years older than she is. Ask, "In what ways could the older girlfriend have more power than the younger one?" Write a "P" on that card to indicate that there's the potential for one partner to have more power than the other.

As students mention other examples where they feel like there could be a power difference, write a "P" on each of those.

Say, "Power can come in different forms. Sometimes, people realize there's a power difference and are okay with it – and other times, a power difference can lead to a really unhealthy or even abusive relationship. I'm going to ask you to keep the idea of power in mind as you do this next part of the activity."

Step 4: Ask one student from each pair to come up to the board and take one of the cards, not the one they originally worked on, and return to sit with their partner. Tell them that they should talk about what's on the card, turn the card over and read why the other students labeled it as they did. Then ask them to discuss what would need to change in order for them to feel like this card could go underneath the "Healthy Relationship" sign. Have them write their answers in the space provided. Tell them they have about 5 minutes in which to do this. As they are working, take the "Healthy Relationship" sign and move it to a more centered location on the board.

Step 5: Go around the room and ask the pairs to share what they came up with as specific steps or things their couple could do to make their relationship healthy. Paraphrase the characteristics they share and write them on the board beneath the "healthy relationship" sign.

For example, if students were to say, “They need to stop checking each others’ phones,” you might write “Trust” on the board and “cell phones” in parentheses next to that. If any of the next pairs repeat something that was already said, put a check mark next to that characteristic.

Step 6: Ask students to look at the list they generated and what they think of what they see. Again, because this list is generated from the students, it may look different each time. Process the list by asking the following questions:

- Are you surprised by what’s received the most check marks here? Why or why not?
- Is there anything missing? Is there anything else that would help make a relationship healthy that wasn't mentioned?
- How easy or challenging is it to do some or all of these? For the ones labeled as “challenging,” ask why they think that is.
- Ask, “What about the idea of power? Where do you see power reflected in this list?”

Say, “What relationships look like and how they work can be different – but as you see here, there are certain characteristics that people will agree mean that a relationship is healthy. When a relationship is healthy, it’s good for both people involved – and it doesn’t have a negative impact on the people outside of the relationship who are still a part of the couple’s lives, like friends and family members.”

Describe the homework assignment and distribute the worksheet. Tell students that you created a list of characteristics that tend to be considered part of healthy relationships, which will include some of what they generated on the board as well as some other ideas. Ask them to talk about a couple they know – whether in real life or from a movie or tv show or a couple from a book or they’ve read about online -- and say whether they think they are a healthy couple based on those characteristics.

Distribute the Before You Go exit slips to the students and ask them to complete them and hand them to you on the way out of class.

Recommended Assessment of Learning Objectives at Conclusion of Lesson: Teachers will be able to assess how well they have reached the first three learning objectives during the in-class activity, discussion and process.

Homework: n/a