Building Healthy Relationships

Elementary

Time Required: 1 hr

Learning Objectives:

- Identifying unhealthy attitudes and behaviour in relationships of all kinds including 2SLGBTQ+ relationships
- Fostering healthy relationship skills that address sexism, consent, and boundaries
- Encouraging critical thinking skills to assess risk in relationships
- Using Catholic Social teaching to promote equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society.

Notes for Educators:

This educational activity is an opportunity for students to learn what separates healthy and unhealthy relationships and create awareness about exploitative behaviour in relationships. Human Trafficking relies on relationships of power, control and dependency and making students aware of this could significantly protect them from being exploited.

Materials:

- Some pencils and pens, one for every two youth
- Journal or blank paper
- Some black pieces of paper, one for every two youth
- Flipchart or chalkboard
- Flip chart markers or chalk
- Scissors and tape
- One photocopy of *"Is this healthy? Relationship Situations"* Worksheet cut by scenario to provide one scenario to each student/group

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Reflection:

Write or post the following for students to reflect on prior to the lesson. Give students about 5 minutes to jot down ideas.

Matthew 7:12 tells us "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them." What does this rule mean in our relationships? (answer, prove, extend)

Activity One

Introduce the topic with the video *Healthy vs. unhealthy Relationships* and by discussing how by learning to have healthy and equal relationships (with reference to the golden rule from the reflection) will help students set healthy boundaries and have more successful relationships as adults.

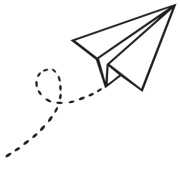
Briefly review how good communication — good listening and expressing your feelings and views — is key to good relationships. Acknowledge that a relationship is a product of the effort both partners put into it. Discuss how learning to deal productively and respectfully with conflict is important in building a satisfying relationship.

Distribute a scenario from *"Is this healthy? Relationship Situations"* to each pair and one by one, ask them to read it out loud to the group and decide if it is healthy or unhealthy. Briefly review each scenario with the group.

Classify each *"Is this healthy? Relationship Situation"* on the chart or board using a two-column chart with "healthy" and "unhealthy" headers by taping each scenario under one of the two.

Possible questions to ask youth for each scenario include:

- How did the characters communicate?
- What was the conflict?
- How can the two characters deal with it?
- What do gender expectations have to do with this scenario?
- Did the characters show respect for both themselves and their friend?
- Do the characters demonstrate Christian morals?



- Was there consent in their interaction?
- Did the characters respect each other's boundaries?
- What kind of relationship is this?
- What could you say if you were the character who was being treated without respect?
- Is one partner trying to gain financially from the actions of the other?
- How can the characters respond to unhealthy attitudes/behaviour? (focus on responses that build self-esteem and self-appreciation)

Please note that scenarios are nuanced, situational and contingent to other factors. Address and discuss any "grey areas" to encourage critical thinking from your students. For instance, the scenario "he often tells her how much he cares for her", could be positive, but could also be a sign of emotional exploitation and control if there is a presence of violent behaviour in the relationship.

Put the whole group into pairs. Ask each pair to make their own *Is this healthy? Relationship Situation* over the next 5 minutes. Ask each pair to present to the whole group, their peers will identify if the scenario is healthy or unhealthy.

Activity Two

Ask each group to brainstorm the qualities they would want and admire in a healthy and equal relationship. Ask them to present and list those qualities on a different flipchart.
The list can include: active listening, respect, emotional management, transparency/honesty, good communication skills, consent, empathy, loving, equitable and supportive, among others.

Wrap Up

Ask youth to identify where someone could go or phone if they were in an unhealthy relationship. For example, guidance departments, priest, chaplain, friends, an adult they trust, a local crisis centre or a women's shelter.

