Building Healthy Relationships

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? Dating 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 for romantic/dating relationships? (answer, prove, extend)

Activity One

Introduce the topic 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.

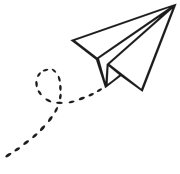
Briefly review how good communication — good listening and expressing your feelings and views — is key to good romantic relationships and good friendships. Acknowledge that a relationship is a product of the effort both partners put into it. Discuss how learning to deal productively and respectfully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

Distribute a scenario from *"Is this healthy? Dating Situations"* to each youth or 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? Dating Situation"* on the flipchart 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.

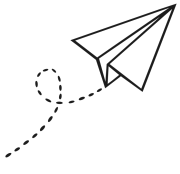
Put the whole group into pairs. Ask each pair to make their own *Is this healthy? Dating Situation*
over the next 5 minutes. Ask each pair to present to the whole group, their peers will identify if the scenario is healthy or unhealthy.

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.

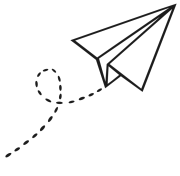
Wrap Up

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.



Is this healthy? Dating Situation

They block each other on social media during an argument.	You take turns picking the band or television show you'll watch.	Your partner says they don't like your friends, you can't follow them on Instagram anymore.
Your partner leaves you on “seen” as a way of giving you the silent treatment.	When she doesn't return his cell phone calls right away, he keeps calling her phone. Sometimes she has 83 missed calls.	Your friend pressures you to sell your pictures online, if you don’t they treat you badly
You are just getting to know each other and he sends you unrequested intimate pictures	They both feel like they can trust each other and it matters to him what she thinks and it matters to her what he thinks.	Two guys scroll through TikTok and talk about women’s bodies in an objectifying way. One asks the girl in the group how much he would have to pay for her to do that.
When they get angry at each other, they don't speak about it right away but they always talk it out later.	Even when you have different ideas about life, faith and school, you can respect each other's views.	He tells his friends that he 'scored' with her last night when all they did was hang out.
He feels like he always has to be leading and in control when they are together.	Your friend asks you to party and drink with a group of men you feel uncomfortable with	Your partner has been “perfect” so far yet they recently started calling your parents “too controlling” and keep asking you to escape with them
Your partner keeps a close count on whose posts you like and comment	When they go out with all of their friends to the movies, they sit together but still talk and laugh	He encourages her to stop going to church with her family to spend more time with him.



	with the group. They don’t feel threatened but think this is fun.	
When they are together, they get along well and have fun. When they are in front of his friends, he acts cold and unemotional.	Your partner insists on sharing each other’s social media passwords	He threatens him with “outing” him with his family if they break up
When he doesn't agree with her, he laughs at her and tells her she is stupid.	When one of you has some good news, you celebrate together. You might even get each other a present.	He often tells her how much he cares for her.

