



AFTERSCHOOL EXCHANGE ACTIVITY

RELATIONSHIP RESPECT

PREPARATION

Grade Levels: 9 through 12

This activity would be most effective if delivered in one 70-minute session.

Prerequisites

Before beginning this activity, watch the video listed below or preview the clips on the Web. Review the facilitator tips at the end of this activity and make copies of any handouts you'd like to use in this session.

Materials Needed

Students will need:

- Markers

Group Leader will need:

- A copy of the video *IN THE MIX: TWISTED LOVE*, or the ability to project the digitized clips on a TV or a projector
- Flip chart paper
- Chalk board or white board
- Markers

Academic Goals

Participants will:

- identify the characteristics of a healthy relationship
- define the term “right” and how rights apply in dating/romantic relationships
- affirm the importance of communicating expectations of behavior to dating/relationship partners

Social Goals

Participants will:

- develop their active listening skills, allowing peers to speak and share their opinions and experiences
- develop their group speaking skills as they outline characteristics of healthy and respectful relationships

STEPS

Warm-up (15 minutes)

1. To prepare for the session, write the following statements on separate flip charts and post them around the room, attaching them to the walls, if possible:

- “Some people choose to date or be in relationships because...”
- “Dating is fun when...”
- “Dating is not fun when...”
- “A healthy relationship is...”

2. When the participants arrive, explain that this session will focus on dating relationships. Acknowledge that some participants may be dating, while others are not. This session is designed for all of the participants because at some point in their lives, most people will be involved in a romantic relationship. This time may come four weeks or four years from now.

3. The group will participate in a “carousel” about dating relationships. There is a series of statements posted around the room. Each participant should take a marker and complete the sentence on the chart paper for themselves. They should not put their name on the paper. Once each participant has completed each statement, they should return to their seat.

4. When all participants are seated, have a volunteer read each chart aloud for the group. Have a brief (1-2 minute) group discussion about each statement. Summarize by explaining that this session will focus on respectful dating/romantic relationships.

Activity 1 (20 minutes)

Preparing to Watch the Video

1. Explain that the group will watch a short clip from a television series for teens on PBS called “In the Mix.” The group will see two domestic violence counselors and two real teens talking about their real relationships. Their statements may bring up some strong reactions. This is natural, but comments should be held until after viewing the video. Distribute the Video Viewing Guide and ask the students to think about the questions on the handout as they watch the video clip:

- Are the relationships the interviewees are discussing “healthy?” What evidence do the participants see to support their views?
- How were the teen interviewees benefiting from their relationships?
- All four of the interviewees talk about “self esteem.” What does “self esteem” have to do with healthy relationships?

2. If you can't show the clip from the Web, cue the video about four minutes into the episode, to the beginning of the section titled “Emotional Abuse.” Stop the tape when the woman says “So I kept thinking I’m not such a great girl if he’s not saying these things.”

Discussion of the Video

1. Give the group a moment to individually think about the clip that they just watched. Then, ask the group, “What emotions did you feel when watching the clip?” Some answers may include: sadness, confusion, anger, helplessness. Validate all answers and write them on the board.
2. Ask the group to think back to the questions that were posed before watching the clip. Ask these questions to the group again, giving time to discuss each answer. Confirm or suggest that it is important to identify behaviors that are not healthy to help the group define the characteristics of a healthy relationship. The next activity is going to help the group define a “healthy relationship.”

Activity 2 (30 minutes)

The Relationship Bill of Rights

1. Ask the group to define what a “right” is. Confirm or suggest that *rights* serve as rules of interaction between people. For example, if someone has the “right to be safe” this means that others do not have the liberty to make her/him unsafe.
2. Most people think that “basic rights” by their nature, are due to all people, unlike privileges, which have to be earned. An individual is expected to respect the rights of others in exchange for the assurance that the others will respect the same rights for him in turn. This means no one has the right to take another person’s rights away from him or her, no matter how upset they may be.
3. Write the words “physical, emotional, sexual, social and economic” on the board or flip chart paper. Explain that the group will work together to create a Relationships Bill of Rights that outlines the *physical, emotional, sexual, social and economic rights* everyone should have when dating someone.

Ask the students to visualize a healthy, respectful relationship. What does it look like? Sound like? Feel like? Record the participants’ responses on the board or flip chart paper under the appropriate category, or ask the students which category or categories their answers apply to. Their answers will be the foundation for the “Relationship Bill of Rights.”

In facilitating this discussion, ask the following questions:

Physical

What do all people deserve physically in a relationship? Possible answers include: to be safe from hitting and other physical harm, to be touched gently.

Emotional

What do all people deserve emotionally in a relationship? Possible answers include: to be listened to, to have the right to your own opinions, to have your values, religious or political beliefs be respected, to have your culture and race appreciated.

Sexual

What do all people deserve sexually in a relationship? Possible answers include: to say yes, to say no, to change your mind.

Social

What do all people deserve socially in a relationship? Possible answers include: to have friends outside the relationship, to have hobbies and interests different from your partner.

Economic

What do all people deserve economically in a relationship? Possible answers include: to be economically independent, to work, to earn, save and invest money, to decide when and how to share that money.

After discussing each heading briefly (3-5 minutes each), conclude by asking them to look at the board and, if necessary, add to the list with some of the following questions in mind: Does the list describe a respectful relationship? Is anything missing? Is this type of relationship easy? Is it possible? Is it worth the effort?

In the discussion, confirm or suggest the following points:

- Respectful relationships are ideal, but not impossible. They take practice and effort.
- The reality is that disagreements and fights will occur even in the best of relationships. Partners can be emotional and angry with each other without being abusive, calling each other names, or hurting each other.
- Many people have insecurities and uncertainties in intimate relationships. These are not an excuse for abusive behavior.
- In a respectful relationship, partners make a choice to listen to, empathize with, and understand their partner's concerns even when emotions run high.
- Everyone has the right *to feel safe* in relationships, to be listened to *respectfully*, and to be able to *communicate* with them without fear.
- The Relationship Bill of Rights applies even to those of us who may never have seen or experienced this type of relationship.
- Is it important to discuss your expectations in the beginning of the relationship (i.e. how far you see this going, your values and comfort levels).

Closing (5 minutes)

Thank the group for their participation in the session. Compliment them on something that they did well as a group (speaking at one time, agree to disagree, respecting other people's opinions, etc).

As a closing, ask the participants to go around in a circle and state one or two things that they would like to teach a friend about today's session.

Facilitator Tips

Helpful resources to aid in the facilitation of this activity can be found in the handouts from the Communities Overcoming Relationship Abuse (CORA) Teen Dating Violence Prevention Curriculum (<http://www.corasupport.org/download/Teen-Outreach-Handouts.pdf>) and the Teen Relationship Web Site (<http://teenrelationships.org/respect/respect.htm>).

CORA's Teen Dating Violence Prevention Curriculum includes a blank handout that can be given to the participants to complete before having the class wide discussion.

This topic can be especially sensitive and elicit anxiety responses from participants. Anxiety responses may include giggling, leaving the room, disengaging or being disruptive during the conversation. If a participant gives a response that is intentionally disruptive or provocative, ask how the response applies to the discussion. While it is important to control the discussion, try to avoid either silencing or re-wording the students. Involve them in the process by using their own words and acknowledging their ideas.

Extension Activities

1. Create a **poster campaign** for the Relationship Bill of Rights. Have the participants work in groups to create posters highlighting the Relationship Bill of Rights and hang them in the public spaces (hallway, gym, lobby, etc) of your after school program.
2. Create audio or video **Public Service Announcements (PSAs)** about the Relationship Bill of Rights. Have the group organize the airing of the PSA on local television or radio stations.
3. Use **role plays or skits** as a way to practice healthy communication. Have the group create scenarios illustrating partners communicating their expectations for the relationship in a respectful and healthy way.
4. Use **journaling or small group discussion** to help participants define their *bottom line*, the boundary that is created when someone communicates that they will not accept certain types of behavior. For example "If my partner calls me a name I will consider breaking up with him/her." This method has the advantage of enabling a group discussion of how different people may apply their rights differently.

CREDITS

This AFTERSCHOOL EXCHANGE activity was written by Ellen Lenihan, Producer and experienced after school educator, and Jennifer Weidenbaum, Associate Executive Director, Girls Incorporated of New York City, in connection with the PBS series IN THE MIX. (<http://www.pbs.org/inthemix/>) This activity was adapted from the Communities Overcoming Relationship Abuse *Breaking the Cycle: A Teen Dating Violence Curriculum* (1999), written by Ms. Lenihan.



RELATIONSHIP RESPECT

VIDEO VIEWING GUIDE

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