

Healthy Relationships:  
Teen Dating Violence Curriculum

9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade

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# Healthy Relationships

## Lesson One: Stay or Go

Requirements:  
large, open room

### Objectives:

- \* To foster an environment of interactivity and discourse
- \* To examine our own limits and expectations in regards to our romantic relationships
- \* To recognize similarities and/or differences among our peers in regards to those expectations and limitations

### Process:

Facilitator will divide the room into two sections. One half of the room will be designated the “stay” section while the other will be designated the “go” section. The exercise begins with participants standing in a single file line (if possible) along the imaginary dividing line of the room. Participants should be lined up in such a manner that the designated sections (“stay” and “go”) are on their right and left sides, not in front of and behind them.

Participants will be asked to imagine themselves as the main character in a narrative. At certain points in the narrative, the facilitator will pause and ask the participants to make a decision. The participants’ decision will be marked by their moving to either the “stay” or “go” section of the room. Decisions should be based on honesty and personal opinion, not on what a participant feels the facilitator would want them to decide or what a participant sees their peer deciding. Make sure to impart this to the participants.

After each individual decision has been made (to stay or go), participants will be allowed the opportunity to explain to the rest of the group why they made the decision they did in that particular circumstance. A student should not be called upon to defend or explain their position. A student will express their opinion if, and only if, they wish to exercise such an opportunity.

At such time that a student is expressing his or her opinion, the facilitator should be sure that others are listening respectfully and allowing the participant the opportunity to be heard.

### Stay or Go

1. Ever since school started this year, you've been interested in getting to know a particular person in your 3<sup>rd</sup> hour class. They have just moved into town, you think they're pretty hot and they seem very cool. One of your friends knows how you feel and tells you they heard this person might like you as well. You see the person you're interested in at lunch and the two of you strike up a conversation. They tell you about a party this weekend and ask if you'd like to meet them there.

*Participants who accept this invitation should move to the "stay" side of the room.  
Participants who do not accept should move the "go" side.*

2. When you get to the party, this person is already there. You were kind of nervous about how things would go but as soon as you get there, they smile and walk right over to you. The two of you talk all night and really hit it off. Before your ride leaves, they ask if you'd like to do something else another time; they don't care what, they just want to hang out with you.

*Participants who accept this invitation should move to the "stay" side of the room.  
Participants who do not accept should move the "go" side.*

3. It's your first real date. You've decided to go to the movies Friday and then hang out with some friends. The movie they want to see is not the movie you want to. You ask if maybe you two could decide on another movie that both of you would want to see. They tell you that they really want to see that particular one, there's nothing else out, and the movie you want to see looks really stupid. "I can't believe you'd want to see that," they say, "let's just go to the one I want to see and you can pick one later". The fact that they said you'd be going to other movies later doesn't escape you and you think this might be a good sign.

*Participants who go to the movie that the other person wants to see should go to the "stay" side.*

*Participants who insist on doing something else entirely or going to their movie, should go to the "go" side.*

4. The movie wasn't really that bad, actually and you've been dating for about two weeks now. You've had lunch together everyday and every night when you get home from school, this person calls you and the two of you talk for hours. You can't seem to spend enough time together. You're talking on the phone one night when they get very quiet on the other line. You ask if something is wrong and they say that nothing is, it's just that they want to tell you something but they are afraid to. After much coaxing, they tell you that they think they love you.

*Participants who stay in the relationship: “stay”*  
*Participants who leave the relationship: “go”*

5. Some of your friends have been complaining lately that they haven't seen you in a while. You realize that they're right. For the past two weeks, you've spent most all your time with the person you're dating. You promise them that you'll go to a movie with them this weekend. When you tell the person that you're dating about your plans, they seem to get very disappointed. They tell you that they had something special planned for the weekend and that they wish you would have checked with them first. You try to explain that your friends miss you and you miss them but they tell you not to worry about it, if you'd rather hang out with your friends then go ahead.

*Participants who go out with friends: “go”*  
*Participants who break plans with friends for partner: “stay”*

6. You and your partner are still talking most every night and having lunch with each other every day. Your friends ask if you'd like to hang out with them the following weekend and you want to say yes but you're kind of afraid of how the person you're dating will react. You explain this to your friends and they say that the person is too jealous and is taking up too much of your time. You decide that you will go out with your friends no matter what this time. When you tell the person you're dating that you'd like to hang out with your friends this weekend, they get angry and start yelling at you. “I thought we talked about this,” they say, “if you'd rather be with them, fine but you have to make a decision. Is it them or me?” You hang up; confused and disappointed. When you are out with your friends that weekend at a party and the person you're dating is there as well. Before you can go up and speak with them, a friend from a neighboring town whom you have not seen in some time approaches you. You are very excited to see this friend and you exchange hugs and then talk for ten minutes or so, catching up. Your friend explains that they are expected elsewhere and that they have to leave. You exchange hugs again and promise to call them. As your friend leaves you search for your dating partner. You go up to talk to them but they're very rude to you and say, “I think I understand why you didn't want me around. If you want to be with that person you were just hanging all over, go follow them. You didn't want to come to this party with me, so why are you talking to me now, you ho?” They then storm off.

*Participants who stay in the relationship at this point: “stay”*  
*Participants who leave: “go”*

7. The next night, the person calls to ask if the two of you could go somewhere to talk. You agree and when you meet, they apologize for the way they acted. They explain to you that they really love you and want to spend all their time with you.

They hate being away from you and they don't really like your friends. They tell you that they think your friends are trying to keep the two of you apart and that's what made them so angry. They explain that in the town where they moved from, they were cheated on by their ex partner and that's why they have such a difficult time with trusting you. They tell you they wouldn't blame you for leaving them but they hope you don't. Especially today. When you ask what is so special about today, they tell you that it marks three months since you first started dating and hand you your anniversary gift. It's a cell phone with unlimited minutes.

*Participants who stay in the relationship: "stay"*

*Participants who leave: "go"*

### Summary:

- \* Identify and discuss some of the behaviors that made people leave (jealousy, name calling, possessiveness, etc.).
- \* Identify and discuss some of the behaviors that made people stay or return after they left (apologies, gifts, etc.).

# Healthy Relationships

## Lesson Two: Jealousy, Love, and Expectations

### Requirements:

Chalk or dry erase board  
Poster board or flip chart

### Objectives:

- \* To identify attitudes toward jealousy
- \* To identify level of acceptance of abuse in relationships
- \* To identify and verbalize expectations in relationships

### Process:

Discussion point one:

One of the major themes to the exercise done in lesson one was jealousy.

What are some personal experiences you have had with jealousy?

Is jealousy an acceptable part of a dating relationship?

Is it a sign that someone cares or a sign that someone doesn't trust you?

Can it be a sign of both?

Are there limits to jealousy? Is there an acceptable amount of jealousy? At what point do we draw the line of acceptability?

How important is trust in a relationship?

In what ways did jealousy make itself evident in the scenario relationship in lesson one?

What happened as a result of the jealous behavior?

Is jealousy destructive or constructive to a relationship?

Discussion point two:

Let's look back to the relationship discussed in lesson one and imagine that it is a female friend of yours in the relationship, not you. Your friend asks to talk with you and another friend after school privately. When the three of you sit down to talk, she tells you that over the weekend she went to a party with her partner and ran into an old friend. She and the friend talked for a while and caught up and gave each other hugs when the friend left. At that point, her partner told her to go outside where they could talk privately. Once outside, your friend confides in you, her partner began to call her a slut and accuse her of

cheating. She tried to protest and explain herself but her partner would not listen. She grew embarrassed and attempted to walk away but her partner grabbed her by the arm and pushed her against the side of the house. You ask if her partner had ever done anything like this before. She answers that her partner has never laid a hand on her in the year that they have been dating. She explains that she is confused. She loves her partner very much, her partner has apologized, but she is unsure of what to do next. What advice do you give?

*Let the discussion go awhile making sure that everyone hears each other out and doesn't interrupt. Common suggestions may be to:*

- \* *just leave*
- \* *give the partner another chance (because it is a "first offense", they are in love, and the guilty party apologized)*

*Write participant suggestions on the poster board or flip chart and save for lesson three.*

As there seems to be disagreement to what advice to give, whether or not jealousy is acceptable and, if so, to what extent, let's try discussing what our expectations are in relationships.

Let's make two lists:

The first list will be things that we look for in dating partners. Our answers should not be physical characteristics like, "good looking" or "nice body" but characteristics of a person's personality. We'll label this list "cool".

*Write participant suggestions on the poster board or flip chart and save for lesson three.*

The second list will be things that we do not want in dating partners. Again, answers should be personality characteristics. We'll label this list "not cool".

*Write participant suggestions on the poster board or flip chart and save for lesson three.*

## Summary:

- \* Explain how important it is to recognize expectations and limitations in relationships.
- \* Discussion: is it important to let someone know, at the onset of a relationship, your expectations and limitations?
- \* Would lists like these have made it easier to make our decisions to stay or go in lesson one's exercise?

# Healthy Relationships

## Lesson Three:

### What is Abuse?

#### Requirements:

Flip chart or poster boards from lesson two  
(Advice, Cool, and Not Cool lists)  
Handout: Love at first sight or warning sign?

#### Objectives:

- \* To identify and define relationship abuse
- \* To identify the warning signs of relationship abuse
- \* To correlate expectations and limitations to abusive behaviors or warning signs of abusive behaviors
- \* To begin to develop empathy for those in abusive relationships
- \* To develop an understanding of how best to help a friend in an abusive relationship

#### Process:

Ask participants for their definition of an abusive relationship. What constitutes abuse for them?

Ask participants for their opinion of how abusive relationships begin. Are they always abusive or do they start good? Explain that all relationships, even abusive ones, begin well (if they didn't start off well, they probably wouldn't start off, would they?).

Pass out handout.

#### Discussion:

Love at first sight, or a push for quick involvement is not, in and of itself, abuse but it can be an indication of abuse to come. One thing that love does is create an emotional bond between two people which makes it more difficult to end the relationship. The love, in cases of abusive relationships, is used to excuse jealousy which, in turn is used to isolate an individual from her or his friends, family, hobbies, or anything else that would take away from time spent with the abuser. This is called **emotional abuse**.

An example of this can be found in the scenario in lesson one when the imaginary partner became upset that the participant wanted to hang out with friends (point 5). What is important to understand here is that this type of abuse (isolation) can feel good. On the surface it seems that the abuser wants to spend all of her or his time with their partner. An important distinction to make would be; does the abuser want to spend all their time with their partner or does the abuser prefer the partner spend all their time with the abuser?

The goal of this first stage of abuse is to gain **power and control** over a partner. If, through, jealousy and guilt trips, an individual is able to make their partner ask not what they would want to do in a particular situation but, rather, what the abusive partner would want them to do, the abuser, in effect, is the decision maker. The abused partner has relinquished, out of love for their partner and the wish not to hurt them, their power to make their own decisions. This type of abuse knocks out the support system of an individual. The effect it has is like knocking out a leg from a tripod. Generally speaking, doing so will make the tripod unable to support itself.

If emotional abuse does not gain power and control for the abuser or, when this first stage of abuse ceases to be effective, the second stage of abuse is employed: **verbal abuse**. Verbal abuse is when the abuser attacks the self esteem of their partner in an effort to make controlling them easier and to intensify the bond between them. If an individual believes that she or he is ugly, stupid, worthless, and that no one else would want to be with them, it makes keeping the abusive partner in their life all that more important.

Let's look at it this way; you are in love with someone and, through the emotional abuse, you have made this person the center of your world. When the verbal abuse begins and they start telling you that no one else would have you and that they don't even know why they put up with you, you begin to doubt your self worth. Seemingly, all of your friends have dropped you and the only person you can trust and confide in is your partner. They are all you have. What's more, you love this person and desperately want them to stay involved in your life. The only way to do that, seemingly, is to do what the abuser wants you to do. Again, it cycles back to power and control. The effect of this stage is like knocking out a second leg from a tripod. It almost ensures that it will fall. If for some reason it does not, however, the abuser moves to the third stage of abuse.

The third stage of abuse is **physical abuse** which includes pushing, hitting, restraining, or threatening, whether the threats are direct or implied. If you ever watch a nature show about gorillas, you'll see that they are very territorial animals. If one gorilla enters another's territory, the territory holder will go (pardon the pun) ape and start beating its chest, screaming, and generally making quite a fuss. This is a way of displaying dominance; of saying "I'm one big, bad gorilla...back off or I'll stop beating my chest and start beating you". This implied threat is similar to when abusers don't actually hit their partners during arguments but they do hit the wall, throw things, slam doors, or generally make a big fuss. It puts fear into a partner that they could be that wall, that door, that thing.

The effect of physical abuse is that it knocks out the third and final leg of the tripod: the freedom from fear. Once all three legs are gone, there isn't a leg to stand on and the abuser, more often than not, achieves power and control over their partner.

### Wrap-up:

In lesson two, we talked about advice to give to a friend after they confided physical abuse. Was it suggested to give this person another chance under the assumption that this was a first offense? Was it really a first offense? The danger in defining abuse as physical abuse only is that ignores the preceding stages where the groundwork is being laid to make physical abuse possible.

Looking back to the cool and not cool lists, do we see any behaviors that coincide with these forms of abuse?

How do these forms of abuse apply to our scenario in lesson one?

What can be gained by expanding our definition of abuse? Will it keep people safer or less likely to be abused?

# Healthy Relationships

## Lesson Four:

### Getting the Picture

#### Requirements:

Flip chart or poster boards from lesson two  
(Advice, Cool, and Not Cool lists)

Love at first sight or warning sign handout, enlarged and put on flipchart  
Picture, addendum B

#### Objectives:

- \* To foster empathy for friends in abusive relationships
- \* To develop an understanding of how difficult it is to leave an abusive relationship
- \* To better understand what we can do to help

#### Process:

Ask for five volunteers. The first volunteer stays in the room while the other four leave and go to a hallway where they cannot see or hear what is happening in the room. The facilitator will tell the first volunteer and the class the rules of the exercise which is very similar to the children's game telephone. The facilitator will look at the photo (appendix B) without allowing anyone else to see it. The facilitator will then describe the photo to the first volunteer. The volunteer may only hear the description of the photo once and may not ask for repetition. The first volunteer must try to remember as much of the description as possible and relay the information, without the aid of the class or facilitator, to the second volunteer. After the facilitator describes the photo to the first volunteer, choose another participant to bring in the other volunteers, one at a time, back to the room. The information is passed, one by one, until all volunteers have heard the description. The final volunteer is asked to repeat the description to the class at large. The description is as follows:

In this photo I see,

- four people fishing together
- three are seated, one is standing
- they are dressed in a similar fashion
- one has a beard
- three of them have their lines in the water, one does not
- it seems to be either early morning or late afternoon

Afterwards, the class will judge how well the group did.

Discussion:

Did the information change?

How so?

Was any added?

Was any missing?

What did they forget?

As a facilitator, repeat the original description, asking participants to try to imagine the scene. After repeating the information, show the volunteers the picture first to see if they “got the picture”. Then show the remaining participants. Did any of them “get the picture”? What was the picture that they had in their mind?

Sometimes we think we have all the information but, on closer examination, we find we can't fully comprehend the situation. An example of this may be when friends are in abusive relationships. Refer back to the advice the participants gave in lesson two. Was the suggestion to “just leave” made? Is “just leaving” as easy as it sounds?

Discussion:

Why do people stay in abusive relationships? What makes it difficult for them to leave?

*Common answers may be...*

- *they love the abuser*
- *they think the abuser loves them and that the abuse is a sign of love*
- *fear of being hurt more*
- *fear of being alone*
- *they hope the abuser will change*
- *they hope they can change in order to change the abuser*

At what stage of abuse do these fears arise or become most prevalent?

Discussion:

All these reasons can be pared down to three main categories: Love, Fear, and Hope.

When looking at hope, it is important to consider a few things. First of all, let's discuss the hope that a person can change in order to change the abuser. Many times, a person in an abusive relationship feels responsible for their own abuse. That is to say, they feel like they bring the abuse on themselves. Whether they are making their partner hurt or angry by hanging out with other people or whether they feel that the abuser is yelling at them, calling them names, or hitting them because they did something wrong that made the

abuser do those things, a person who is being abused can feel like changing their own behavior (doing whatever the abuser wants them to do) will end the abuse. Unfortunately, this doesn't work. It only makes the abuser's hold stronger and makes it more difficult for the abused partner to escape. Yet the belief that an abuser will change is a difficult one to dismiss. One of the things that makes it so difficult is that it seems the abuser is changing all the time...

### The Cycle of Abuse

Again, abusive relationships don't start out of the gate as abusive (otherwise, they probably wouldn't start); most of them start out seemingly perfect. Love enters the picture very quickly and very deeply, the two spend a lot of time together, and everything seems perfect. This is the **cool stage** of the abusive cycle.

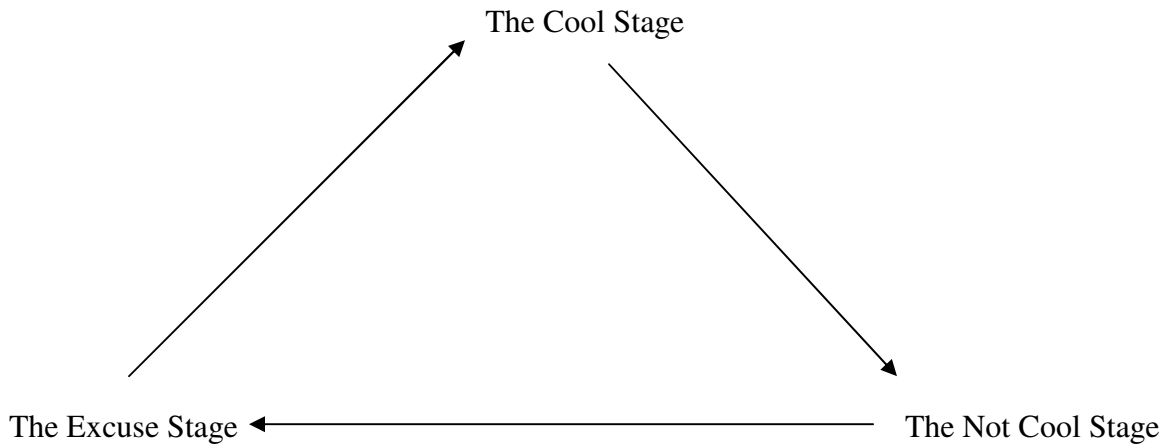
When abuse does enter the picture such as a partner jealously "freaking out", calling their partner a name, or hitting their partner, a person will generally say to their selves, "hey, this isn't cool... I don't like being freaked out on, I don't enjoy being called those names, I don't want to be hit". To keep the linguistic theme in place, we will call this stage where abuse enters the **not cool stage**.

This abusive stage is generally followed by a particular type of apology. The type of apology it is usually followed by is an excusive apology. In other words, an apology followed by an excusive reason why they did it:

"I'm sorry I hit you but you cheated on me"  
"I'm sorry I called you a slut but you were flirting with that guy" or  
"I'm sorry I freaked out- it's just that I love you so much and I'm afraid you're going to leave me"

These apologies are usually followed, at least in the beginning, by a promise never to hit, call names, freak out, or otherwise repeat the behavior again. We call this stage of the abusive cycle the **excuse stage**.

The excuse stage is the lock on the trap, if you will, because after the excuse stage, the abuser returns to the cool stage and everything is seemingly cool again. It seems they will make good on their promise to never hit, call names, or freak out again. In abusive relationships, though, this promise is short-lived. After a brief return to the cool stage, the abusive cycle makes its way round to more abuse, followed by more excusive apologies and promises to change, followed by a brief return to the cool stage. The whole time, it looks like they are really trying and really changing and the more we believe someone is trying and the more evidence we think we see that they can change, the more chances we are likely to give them. Especially when we think it's our fault in the first place.



What makes this trap so frightening is that the more times a relationship goes around the cycle, the less time is spent in the cool stage and the excuse stage and the more time is spent in the not cool stage. On top of that, we know that the longer abusive relationships continue the more severe and dangerous they get.

### Wrap-up and homework:

Looking back on everything discussed for the last four days, ask the participants to come to the next session prepared to discuss the following:

What can teens do to end dating violence?

# Healthy Relationships

## Lesson Five: Bringing it All Together

### Requirements:

Flip chart or poster boards from lesson two  
(Advice, Cool, and Not Cool lists)

Love at first sight or warning sign handout, enlarged and put on flipchart  
Picture, addendum B

### Objectives:

- \* To inspire action
- \* To give a sense of ownership and empowerment
- \* To cultivate possible solutions to teen dating violence
- \* To review lessons learned

### Process:

After a brief review of the stages and cycle of abuse, turn the floor over to the participants for their suggestions toward possible solutions. If no one is prepared, remain silent for 3 minutes. At the end of that time period, inform the participants that during those 180 seconds of silence, fifteen different women in the United States were just beaten by their abusive partners (one woman every twelve seconds). Our silence is too costly. Doing nothing is dangerous.

Possible solutions:

Teens teaching teens. High Schoolers get trained to talk to other High School students and Jr. High students about dating violence.

Help administration develop written policies on responding to teen dating violence.

Create “safe zones” or hotlines where students can confide in other students.

Invite the local resource agencies (police, domestic violence shelters) in to your school.

Volunteer at a domestic violence agency.

Write your Senators and Representatives.

Create a student led task force to research other solutions.

Believe friends.

Support friends.

Don't blame victims.

Speak out against the "lesser" abusive behaviors like jealousy or name calling.

Expect and demand the best out of your own relationships, don't settle.

Treat others with respect.

Hold a march.

Throw a dance to raise funds for a domestic violence shelter.

Make tee shirts with messages of peace.

Put resource materials (brochures with hotline numbers) in school bathrooms.

Write and record a song about dating violence.

Write a curriculum.

Start an awareness poster campaign/contest.

Write a letter to the editor.

Start a petition for funding.

Have a unified moment of silence.

Write and perform a play.

When given the opportunity, vote.

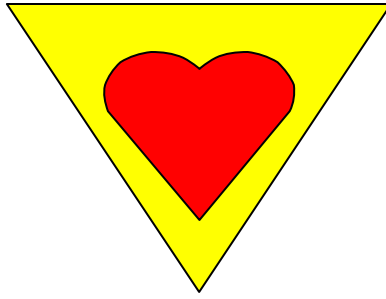
"Never doubt that a small, dedicate group of people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has" - Margaret Mead

Learn.

Teach.

Do.

# Addendum A



## Love at First Sight? Or a Sign Telling You to Yield?

A push for quick involvement, or love at first sight, can sometimes be a warning sign of abuse to come.

The love is used to excuse the jealousy...  
“If he didn’t love me, he wouldn’t get jealous”

Which excuses the guilt trips...  
“He’s insecure, so when I hang out with other people he worries”

Which are used to isolate you...  
“Sorry. I wish i could hang out with you but you know how he is”

Which is useful for controlling you.  
But it doesn’t stop there...

### 1. Emotional Abuse



- a. Jealousy
- B. Guilt trips
- c. Isolation from friends

(takes away emotional independence)



### 2. Verbal Abuse



- a. Put downs
- b. Devaluing ideas
- c. Name calling

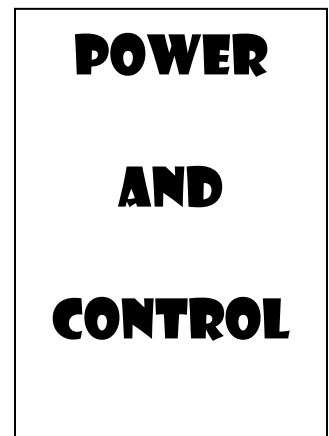
(attacks self esteem)



### 3. Physical Abuse

- a. Threats (direct or implied)
- B. Restraining
- c. Pushing or hitting

(takes away freedom from fear)



## Addendum B



Like outlandish heroes, a flock of men clad in traditional surf fish traps stalks their wooden poles. As long as their island remains poised to give Asia's economic sea girth, the 18 years of ethnic war have stifled development and kept many Sri Lankans working the land and sea like their ancestors.

# SRI LANKA

By Priit J. Vesilind

Photographs by Steve McCurry

**A continuing ethnic war tarnishes the pearl of the Indian Ocean.**