Healthy Relationships Online

Created: November 2012
Last Updated: July 2018

Estimated time:	120 minutes ● [10 minutes] Activity #1 ● [15 minutes] Activity #2 ● [25 minutes] Activity #3 ● [20 minutes] Activity #4 ● [40 minutes] Assignment ● [10 minutes] (Optional) Closing Reflection Depending on the time you have allotted for each group meeting, we suggest you engage in the final three exercises of this learning experience ("Activity #4," "Assignment," and "(Optional) Closing Reflection") in your second group convening.
Group or individual activity:	Group
Ages:	13-18 years old
Grades:	Grades 8-12
Online / offline elements:	This learning experience contains links to online resources to help facilitate a group-based discussion, with an offline writing assignment.
Areas:	Main area: Positive / Respectful Behavior Additional areas: Safety and Well-being
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Learning Goal

Participants will explore qualities that constitute healthy and kind relationships as well as how online behaviors play a role in both healthy and unhealthy relationships. Participants will also examine the opportunities and challenges around the intersection between social media and relationships in their own peer group and learn how to promote upstanding among their peers.

Materials

- Flip chart (or posters)
- Marker
- [One per participant] Paper
- [At least one per participant] Colored pens or pencils
- [At least twelve per group of 2 participants for Activity #2 and one per participant for Activity #4] Sticky notes (alternatively, cards and tape)

Resources

- Article: [Teenagers Leading Happy, Connected Lives Online](#) - by KJ Dell'Antonia (The New York Times)
- Article: [Healthy Relationships](#) - by Loveisrespect
- Article: [Technology and Relationships: The Pros and Cons](#) - by Marisa Cohen (WebMD)
- Article: [Characteristics of Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships](#) - by Youth.Gov

Activity #1: Relationship Vocabulary Shoutout

[Gather participants into a circle.]

SAY:

- Today, I want to talk about how what we do online has an impact on the health of our relationships. We'll also talk about what you can do to be an "upstander" for others, and recognize when your friends need help with some of their problems in relationships.

ASK:

- Who's heard of the words "bystander" or "upstander"? What do these words mean to you?

[Listen to 2-3 responses.]

SAY:

- Like you suggested, a bystander is someone who observes some kind of act take place. For today's exercise, we're talking about acts related to unhealthy / unkind relationships. An upstander is someone who does something positive in response — maybe through supporting the victim, helping to stop the act, or another response, depending on the situation.
- Now let's talk about relationships: first, we should recognize that "relationships" is a pretty broad term. For our purposes, we're going to define a "relationship" as any connection between peers. For example, you may be connected to your peers as friends, schoolmates, or as members of the same out-of-school activity (e.g., film club). Whenever we talk about healthy relationships, a tough question always comes up: "What exactly is a healthy relationship?" Everyone has different ideas around this topic, and there are a lot of good answers.
- To make sure we're all on the same page, let's think out loud about words that can describe healthy relationships — friendships, schoolmates, a variety of relationships! We know that sometimes things can go wrong in all kinds of relationships, so let's talk about healthy behaviors unique to various types.
- Let's play a small game. As we go around in a circle, let's each say one word that describes healthy relationships. I'll start. I think relationships can be _____ (supportive, caring, kind, etc.).

[Write down what participants say on the flip chart / poster.]

SAY:

- Great! Thanks for contributing! Let's take a look at these words.

ASK:
- ● Do we agree with them?
- ● Do you have anything extra to add?
- ● Based on these words, can someone come up with a one-sentence definition of a healthy relationship?

[Guide the group in developing a shared definition of a healthy relationship.]

Activity #2: Gallery Walk

[Divide participants into pairs.]

SAY:
- ● Now that we have a pretty good list of the things we think about when we talk about healthy relationships, it's time to switch our focus a bit and take a look at our own experiences with relationships on the Internet.

[Write one question from the possible list below on a flip chart / poster and affix the flip charts / posters around the room.]

- ● I'm going to give each pair some sticky notes and a pen. On the posters around the room are different questions. When I give you your materials, you can move around to the posters. Write your answers down on the sticky notes and put them on the posters. If you have more than one answer to a question, write down each answer on a separate sticky and put them on the posters. You'll have 8 minutes to complete this task. Have fun!

Possible poster questions:
- ● Who do you interact with using technology?
- ● What platforms, services, or websites do you use to interact with people?
- ● How have the Internet and mobile technologies (like tablets or mobile phones) given you opportunities for creating / maintaining healthy relationships?
- ● How can you keep in touch with people thanks to mobile devices and computers?
- ● What challenges do the Internet and mobile technologies pose to creating / maintaining healthy relationships?

● What kinds of friendship drama have you seen or experienced because of things that were posted online?

[Collect posters at the end of the activity and gather the group together again.]

 ASK:
   ● What are common answers to each of these questions?
   ● Are there any things that you think are missing?
   ● Are there trends that you notice?
   ● How has technology changed your relationships with your friends?
   ● Has technology made things easier or more difficult? Why?

Activity #3: Scenario Discussion

SAY:
   ● Now we're going to discuss a scenario connected to technology and relationships called "over-texting."
   ● Does anyone know what "over-texting" is?
[Listen to 2-3 responses.]
   ● Over-texting is when someone sends so many texts to another person that the other person becomes overwhelmed.

ASK:
   ● Has anyone ever experienced over-texting?
   ● If you were the person receiving the texts, what would you do? Why?
   ● If one of your friends approached you and said that they were facing this situation, what advice would you give? Would you take action? What different types of actions could you take?
      ○ Follow-up: Taking these actions to help your friends is also called "upstanding."
   ● What might stop someone from standing up for their friend?
   ● Let's pretend that one of your friends asks their friend to stop texting them so much. What happens if their friend starts coming to their house all the time, constantly asking to see them? The problem seems to be getting worse, which can be termed "escalation." What advice would you give to your friend if the problem escalates?

- If the problem does escalate, can you still respond as an upstander in the same way as before? What actions could you now take to be an upstander?

SAY:
- "Over-texting" is only one example of a situation where technology can get in the way of a healthy relationship.

ASK:
- What are other examples?
- What are some solutions to these problems?
- What has our discussion so far told us about the role of technology in relationships? [Guide a discussion about the positive and negative impacts of technology on relationships.]

Activity #4: Spectrum Activity

SAY:
- Let's take a look at specific behaviors in healthy and unhealthy relationships and where they fall on a spectrum from healthy to unhealthy.
- I am going to hand each of you one sticky note. On the sticky note is an activity that happens in relationships, like "texting your friend 24/7" or "exchanging social media passwords." Once I give you a sticky note, I'd like you to stand up and move to the front of the room. On one side of the room is the healthiest relationship behavior, and on the other side is the unhealthiest relationship behavior.
- When you come up, think about how healthy or unhealthy the behavior on the card is, and stand in a line. For example, if you believe that "texting your friend 24/7" is less healthy than "liking and re-sharing everything your friends post" then stand close to the unhealthy side.

Suggested card topics:
- Texting your friend 24/7
- Exchanging social media passwords
- Reading your friend's text messages without their permission
- Talking to strangers / people you don't know well online
- Posting rude comments on someone's social media post

- Texting "good night" or "good morning" (maybe every day) to someone you care about
- Talking about an argument you had with a friend publicly on a social media platform
- Liking and re-sharing everything your friends post
- Posting content on social media using your friend's account (in their name)
- Tagging your friends in photos from a party
- Spreading gossip about your schoolmate on social media

[As participants come up and organize themselves, ask them about why they are standing where they are, and encourage participants to move around if they feel the need.]

[Once participants have arranged themselves into a spectrum, ask them to place the sticky notes on the wall in the front of the room and take a step back so that they can see the spectrum in its entirety.]

ASK:
[If they choose to do so, participants can answer the first two questions below through a discussion, versus writing them down on sticky notes and placing them on the wall in the front of the room.]
- Are there any other unhealthy behaviors you can think of?
- Are there any other healthy behaviors you can think of?
- Is there only one correct order for this spectrum? Why or why not? Do you all agree?
- We put these specific behaviors on a spectrum from healthy to unhealthy. But, might there be situations when a healthy behavior turns unhealthy? Or vice versa? When might that happen?
- If X is an unhealthy behavior [choose a specific behavior that participants affixed closer to the 'unhealthy' side of the spectrum], what would you do to resolve it?
- How would you talk to someone if you were not okay with what they were doing?

Assignment

SAY:
- We've talked a lot today about technology and relationships. Now that we've got you thinking, how can you share what you've learned with others? What kind of

activities can you create to encourage your peers to become upstanders if they witness any type of unhealthy behavior in relationships?

[Split participants into groups of 3 or 4.]

SAY:
- We have two suggestions right now, but if you've got a different idea, go ahead and do it! You have 30 minutes:
  - Suggestion #1: Develop an outline for a possible event for members of your school or community exploring the role of technology in relationships. This event could be a documentary screening and discussion, a campaign like "Spread the Love Week," or even a presentation! Provide examples of how you could use social media, like Facebook or Twitter, to advertise the event. Feel free to create visuals alongside your outline (e.g., drawings, a meme, etc.).
  - Suggestion #2: Create a story about a relationship (e.g., a relationship between siblings, or a relationship between friends at school) and how it might be affected by social media. You can act out a short play, create visuals (e.g., comic strip), or write down a hypothetical Facebook newsfeed or Twitter conversation . . . let's be creative!

[After the 30 minutes are up, ask groups to share what they've created and engage them in the discussion questions below.]

ASK:
- What topic are you addressing? What do you want people to learn from your idea?
- How will this idea benefit your school / community / friends?
- Who is the target audience?
- How will you advertise your idea to your target audience?
- How do you think your audience will react?

[Optional] Closing Reflection

SAY:
- We hope that you've all thought about healthy relationships a little more deeply, especially in terms of how technology can impact your relationships. We also

wanted you to think about ways to encourage your friends to "upstand," or to stand up for themselves and others when they see something that makes them uncomfortable or something that hurts others.

ASK:
- What were some of the things you learned?
- What was your favorite activity? Why?
- What was your least favorite activity? Why?
- How can you take what you learned and apply it to your life?
- How would you describe what you did to your friends?
- What was something new or surprising?
- Do you have any other questions about healthy or unhealthy relationships?