

HELP! I NEED TO GET OUT!

Abuse
HIV
Intergenerational relationships
Risk
Violence

- ✓ 1. To help learners understand what characterises healthy and unhealthy dating relationships.
- ✓ 2. To promote healthy teen dating relationships.
- ✓ 3. To help learners develop techniques for leaving unhealthy or abusive dating relationships.

40 minutes

Blackboard and chalk / markers and paper.
Hand-out: Are You Headed for Trouble? (provided)

PROCEDURE

- 1 On the blackboard, draw a table with two columns. Label the first column 'HEALTHY Relationships' and the second 'UNHEALTHY Relationships'. Ask learners to brainstorm the characteristics, attitudes and behaviours in a dating relationship that make it either healthy or unhealthy. Write the learners' suggestions on the board.

Expect answers such as:

| HEALTHY RELATIONSHPS | UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHPS |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can make own decisions • Committed • Can compromise • Have freedom in the relationship • Share feelings • Have good communication • Respect • Share responsibilities • Honesty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abusive (physically or emotionally) • Controlling • Unequal power • Jealousy • Fear • Unable to express feelings • Harassing • Large age difference • Threatening |

Make sure to include having a large age difference between partners in the 'unhealthy' list. **Inter-generational relationships** are a widespread problem in South Africa, and place young women at high **risk of violence** and **HIV**. Learners should understand that these kinds of relationships are often unhealthy because they can be unequal, with the older partner having more life experience, money and material goods (for example a car) and usually very different expectations of the relationship.

- 2 Give the class the Handout: 'Are you headed for trouble?' Ask learners to reflect on the lists they have drawn up in comparison to the Handout. Have they covered all relevant unhealthy behaviours?
- 3 Facillitate a discussion by asking the following questions:
- a. What are the benefits of being in a HEALTHY relationship?
 - b. What are the implications of being in an UNHEALTHY relationship?

- 4 Ask learners to reflect on the descriptors in the 'Unhealthy Relationships' column. Ask them to think about how a friend may feel if she/he is in an unhealthy relationship?

Expect answers such as:

- Trapped
- Isolated
- Sad
- Fearful
- Anxious

- 5 Ask learners to suggest ways that someone may change their relationship from one that is unhealthy (or worrisome) to one that is healthy.

Some suggestions may include:

- Having open conversations.
- Being honest about feelings.
- Being respectful of one another.
- Making compromises with a partner.
- Telling their partner what they expect of them.
- Telling the partner when they have behaved in ways that were hurtful or upsetting.

- 6 Learners should know that unhealthy relationships are sometimes not worth saving. You may love a person, but may also recognise that being in a relationship with him/her is not healthy. Unfortunately, getting out of unhealthy relationships is also not always easy. Discuss some of the steps to take in getting out of an unhealthy relationship.

Some of the suggestions may include:

- Finding a safe way to tell a partner that you want to break up – for example, when someone you trust is nearby to ensure your safety.
- Finding a trusted adult to assist you in telling your partner you want to leave the relationship.
- Getting a protection order against your partner if they don't respect your decision to leave the relationship.
- Getting help from a school counsellor, or community leader.
- Using resources like NGOs and other organisations that may be able to assist you
- Making sure you have a safety plan in case your partner gets violent when you break up. (see Ch9, Ex3).

7 Remind learners that the first step in leaving an unhealthy relationship is to recognise it for what it is. There are many sources of support if they need to end their relationship – parents, friends, peers, teachers, school counsellors and NGOs may help them to do so.

TEACHER TIPS



General

Although this exercise doesn't ask learners about personal experiences, and so should not carry a risk of triggering adverse reactions from learners who may have been or are **victims** of an abusive relationship, any discussions of these topics require sensitivity on the part of the teacher.

Remember that in every class and school there are likely to be **perpetrators** and **victims** of domestic violence, and some teens may be part of relationships where there are large age differences. It is important for teachers to be mindful of this fact, and to make sure that the discussion doesn't single out individuals or vilify people.



Making the Link with Gender and Violence

This exercise helps learners reflect on healthy and unhealthy relationships in general. It also allows them the opportunity for personal reflection on worrisome behaviours and relationships. Learners who are in abusive relationships may not realise that they are victims of domestic or dating violence, and may not know what they can do to protect themselves. Learners who are perpetrators of dating violence (or are at **risk** of becoming perpetrators) may also not have identified that their own behaviour may be abusive. This exercise is a non-confrontational way of raising these issues with these learners.

This exercise is useful because it also discusses ways in which to change unhealthy relationships into healthy relationships, and provides learners with strategies and resources for exiting relationships that are not good for them.



Assessment Ideas

Ask the learners to develop a package of information that they can give to a friend who is in an abusive relationship and does not know what to do. The package of information should include the handout 'Recognising the Warning Signs of Abuse' (provided), leaflets/brochures about dating and domestic violence, places where they can go for information, and sources of support.



ARE YOU HEADED FOR TROUBLE?

➔ RECOGNISING THE WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE

- Make fun of or disparage the people that you care about, like your family and friends?
- Insult you, call you names or put you down?
- Pressure you to do things that you are not comfortable with, for example sexual activities?



DOES YOUR PARTNER



- Act in a way that is very controlling, for example, telling you what to do or how to act, how to dress or who you can and can't speak to?
- Constantly check up on you – asking you questions like where you are, what you are doing and who you are with?
- Make you worried about how they will react to things you do or say?
- Believe strongly in rigid and stereotypical gender roles for girls and boys?

- Behave jealously?
- Abuse substances and/or alcohol?
- Isolate you from those you care about?
- Have an explosive temper?
- Blame you for their anger?
- Own weapons?

- Rush you into committing when you don't feel ready?
- Have a history of behaviour problems such as fighting, mistreating other people or hurting animals?
- Threaten or intimidate you, your family or friends?

- Constantly check up on you – asking you questions like where you are, what you are doing and who you are with?
- Talk badly about their previous partners, blaming only them for the failure of the relationship?
- Keep you from spending time with family and friends?
- Act too serious about your relationship too quickly?
- Stop you from breaking off the relationship?

IF YOUR PARTNER DOES THESE THINGS, YOU MAY BE AT RISK OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE.



RECOGNISE THE WARNING SIGNS, TALK TO SOMEONE AND GET HELP!